Inauguraldissertation
zur Erlangung des akademischen Doktorgrades (Dr. phil.)
im Fach Ethnologie
an der Fakultät für Verhaltens- und Empirische Kulturwissenschaften
der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Titel der Dissertation

Passing Shanghai.
Ethnographic Insights into Expatriate Youths' Mobile Lives

vorgelegt von
Marie Sander

Jahr der Einreichung
2013

Dekan: Prof. Dr. Klaus Fiedler
Beraterin: Prof. Dr. Christiane Brosius

Die meisten Leute die hier herkommen mögen es erstmal überhaupt nicht.

Und dann mögen sie es.

Und dann wollen sie nicht mehr weg.

Und dann müssen sie weg.

Most people who come here at first don't like it at all.

And then they like it.

And then they don't want to leave.

And then they have to leave.

Antonia, sixteen years old

Contents

Acknowledgements

Preface

My parents still live in the village that I was born in. Whenever I visit them, I return to my childhood home – the house I grew up in. Although my parents like to initiate one renovation project after the next, it is a haven of continuity. When I reminisce about my own childhood, I remember how everything back then seemed endless and continuous. As a child and teenager my world felt stable. Nobody ever moved, and new students were rare at my school. Working with teenagers from different parts of the world in Shanghai has made me see my countryside childhood – one could maybe label it idyllic in the sense of family movies on TV – as strangely outdated. Although, I assure you, I grew up in the 1980s and 90s, not the 1950s. Moving to Shanghai and through a social world marked by mobility – the expatriate community – turned my "normal" childhood almost into something almost "exotic." This look back onto my stable childhood might not only have to do with spending much time with young people who themselves or whose friends are continuously moving, but also with my own moves later on in life. Although my parents always stayed put, I spent a high school year in the US, a university semester in France, months of fieldwork in China, and I have moved several times within Germany for education and career purposes. It is difficult to trace how my personal life has influenced my research agenda, but I can say that my first encounter with China in 2004, the expatriate community in Shanghai in 2007 – and probably my own struggles of returning to Germany, to this world of stability, after a year in the US as an exchange student at the age of seventeen – have left a few ponderable life questions.

Partly emerging from the experiences described here, this research project asks: How does it feel to live in a world of flux and high mobility? What kind of relations to places and people do expatriate youths consequently develop? What kinds of everyday practices do they follow in Shanghai? How do these teenagers look at themselves, their lives, and their futures? In short, what competences and strategies are important to pass Shanghai – to move in and out of the city over the time span of a few years – and to cope with the experiences that come along, to pass the stay? In this dissertation I offer some answers to these questions by exploring the perspectives of teenagers that I have talked to, spent time with, and sometimes befriended, over the last few years in Shanghai. Their perspectives of their own lives and experiences living in expatriate communities contribute to a larger view on the interdependence and contradictions between the aspired flexibility of twenty-first century identities and the rigidity of cultural divisions, based on nationality, ethnicity, gender, or class that are so present in our worlds.

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1: Gazing onto Shanghai. Photo by M. Sander

> Children are affected by migration in all regions of the globe, but the understanding of its effects is highly limited. Data collection, monitoring and research are needed to better understand how migration affects societies, families and children at countries of origin and settlement; to inform policies to mitigate adverse impacts, and to enable families and children to make informed decisions about movement.
>
> UNICEF[1]

This ethnography explores how children experience mobility by focusing on a specific, yet heterogeneous group: expatriate youth in contemporary Shanghai. It illustrates international youths' subjective and collective experiences and ways of managing migration processes. The young people, whose voices form the heart of this study, grow up in a particular mobile environment, as they themselves or their friends are continuously moving about every three to four years. They are young experts when it comes to the affects of migration. They are also a very privileged group of migrants that move with the (financial) support of their parents' employers. Nonetheless, migration unsettles. This ethnography describes experiences from the decision to move to the arrival and processes of emplacement, the making sense of the stays' purpose, and the moment of leaving again and moving on. Highlighting international students' everyday practices and narratives of the self, my work asks what competences and strategies are important for young people to pass Shanghai – to move in and out of the city over the time span of a few years – and to actively cope with the experiences that come along, to pass the stay.

1. Shanghai and its Expatriate Community

Today, foreign tourists, university students, and transnational professionals, as well as Chinese citizens returning from stays abroad, all contribute to shaping part of an Appaduraic ethnoscape (1996), joining together various cultural flows in the mega-city Shanghai. As these different kinds of transmigrants bring and follow transnational capital and global enterprises to Shanghai, many of them become part of Shanghai's heterogeneous international community. They shape, integrate, and identify with its spaces, and living and consumption practices. Shanghai, one of China's most thriving metropolises, hosts a considerably large expatriate community. The Shanghai Statistical Bureau lists a total of 152,104 foreigners residing in Shanghai for the year of

---

[1] http://www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge-pages/Migration-and-children, last accessed on January 15th 2013. (UNICEF 2013)

2008, including 33,472 Japanese, 21,730 US Americans, and 7,264 German citizens (Shanghai Statistical Bureau 2009). Sociologist James Farrer points out that unofficial estimates are higher. Based on his personal conversations with consular and chamber of commerce officials in 2006, he writes that "70,000 to 100,000 Japanese, 20,000 to 30,000 Americans, and 12,000 to 20,000 Germans were living in Shanghai on various types of visas" (Farrer 2011). The expatriate families under discussion all enjoy a privileged status. The parents' postings to Shanghai are usually tied to high financial benefits and packages that include fees for health insurances, travel costs, car leases, housing fees, and private international schools.

This community commonly labels itself expatriate, a term that derived from the Latin "ex patria" and refers to someone living outside their native country (Coles and Fechter 2008, 5). The term is commonly shortened to expat. In Shanghai it is understood as a Human Resource description of employees who have been posted to Shanghai by their companies; and, it is commonly used to refer to foreigners with a certain upper-class lifestyle in general. The actors of this study refer to themselves as part of this community and even label themselves "expat children." It is for this simple reason of self-ascription that I chose to work with the term expatriates. That "[t]his term has itself become an identity referent with a set of shared meanings understood by those who adopt the label, manifest in particular practices" (Butcher 2009, 1361), will become clear throughout the ethnography.[2]

It is difficult to pinpoint how many expatriate families come to Shanghai accompanied by under age children, as the Shanghai Statistical Bureau does not offer age-specific statistical data. However, if I take the student body of the largest thirteen international schools with English, French, and German language curricula in Shanghai and their different campuses into account, I estimate that there are 16500+ students for the school year 2011/2012.[3] All these students are of foreign nationality, as the Shanghai municipal government does not allow Chinese nationals to enroll in international schools. Although the majority of these schools offer education from kindergarten – sometimes even nursery school – onwards, there are many international kindergartens in addition to these schools. The actual number of children and youths with foreign passports in Shanghai must therefore even be larger.

---

[2] Some readers might wonder why I do not call these youths "Third Culture Kids" (TCKs). I will discuss the concept and my critique of the term "Third Culture Kid" in 2.3. and 2.4.

[3] The information was retrieved from the schools' respective websites. If no numbers were given I relied on the information provided on http://www.internationalschool.info/listing/international-schools-in-shanghai, which I accessed on August 15th 2012 ("International Schools in Shanghai - LittleStar Magazine" 2012).

In line with my ethnographic and thus qualitative approach I interviewed forty-three students during my year in Shanghai, some of them several times. All the youths I worked with were enrolled at an international school in Shanghai. The parents – or mainly the fathers – of those children that I accompanied were employed predominantly at foreign companies, ranging from logistics to the automobile industry, while one father worked as a manager for an international hotel chain and one father at a university. None of the youths I interviewed had parents working as diplomats or at the consulates. Shanghai is the business metropole. While all fathers were employed, only some of the mothers worked – mostly part-time.

Before examining the youths' everyday practices and sharing their opinions throughout the empirical parts of this dissertation, the following chapter, chapter two, briefly summarizes the current state of research on (migrant) youth, expatriates, and so called "Third Culture Kids." In the same chapter I proceed to present the theoretical framework around which the study is based, the theory and methodology of transcultural studies. Chapter three describes my own research questions.

2. The Current State of Research and Theoretical Frameworks

2.1. Research on (Migrant) Youth

Conceptualizing and Researching Youth

Developmental Studies, Sociology and Cultural Studies, and Anthropology contribute to today's overlapping landscapes of research on the social worlds of youth, children, and adolescents. Methodologies and approaches focusing on these groups are as varied as the definitions of the groups themselves.

Developmental Studies

Developmental Studies, based on a variety of methods ranging from clinical studies to survey studies to psychiatric interviews, are informed by psychological approaches particularly interested in the development of children and adolescents. Many psychoanalytic and neo-psychoanalytic theorizations, for instance the works by Peter Blos and Erik Erikson, (Blos [1962]1966; Blos 1970; Erikson 1968) underlie the discipline, setting foci on the universal development of children from early childhood through adolescence (see Smetana 2010, 15–18). Hereby, ongoing debates on defining "adolescence," be it biologically "as the period encompassing the onset of puberty and going until individuals are capable of sexual reproduction," or

sociologically as "the period when individuals begin training for adult work and family roles" (Smetana 2010, 11), inform their works. Smetana suggests following conventions of practitioners, defining ages eleven to thirteen as "early adolescence," ages fourteen to seventeen as "middle adolescence," and ages between eighteen and twenty-one as "late adolescence" (2010, 12).[4] In the 1990s, however, with a combined focus on psychological and social development and influences by anthropological studies, a more prominent discussion of diversity and consequently of "the universal and relative features of adolescent development" (Smetana 2010, 26) emerged in the discourse of Developmental Studies. This greater emphasis on diversity, according to Smetana (ibid.), converged with a shift towards a much greater consideration of the context of development.

Sociology and Cultural Studies

The context has always been the focus of study for Sociology and Cultural Studies. Investigations into youths' cultural practices from a sociological approach can be traced back to the US-American tradition, the Chicago School, and the British tradition of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham. The US sociologists in the early to mid-twentieth century focused on attempts to explain deviant activities. Interested in crime, drug consumption, and gang membership, they looked for collective normative behavior and moral codes specific to the groups (Hodkinson 2007, 3; Bucholtz 2002, 536). These scholars regarded youth as a difficult liminal phase, and delinquent youth as victims and products of the deprived urban environment (Moser 2000, 17). Interestingly, the Chicago School took a strong ethnographic approach (Bucholtz 2002, 536).

The Birmingham School originating at the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), in contrast, favored textual analysis of media and semiotic analysis of cultural form (Bucholtz 2002, 536). Although one of the most widely read studies of the CCCS was Paul Willis's (1990) ethnography of counterschool, white working-class boys, "lads" (Bucholtz 2002, 536; Hodkinson 2007, 5), the CCCS's specific focus was upon subcultures based around distinctive music and style. Their "prevailing view was that such subcultures represented an enactment of stylistic resistance; a subversive reaction by young people to a contradictory situation in respect of both age and class" (Hodkinson 2007, 4). The Birmingham studies therefore understood working-class youth's practices as responses to the conflict between their class-based position in society and the "hegemonic values of capitalism and consumption" (ibid.). The

---

[4] Speaking from a Developmental Studies' point of view, my ethnographic work has thus mainly centered on the age group of "middle adolescence" – although my youngest informant was nine years old, the majority of expatriate youth I worked with was between fifteen and eighteen at the time of first interactions.

scholars, in particular the works of Hebdige (1979), saw the subcultures under examination "carving out distinctive semiotic spaces for themselves" (Bucholtz 2002, 537) and regarded the creative practices of assembling the distinctive styles to be symbolically relevant.

Both the Chicago School and the CCCS's approaches are criticized today for their tendency to "seek out distinctive or deviant minority groups and to place emphasis on collective systems of norms and boundaries rather than to detail the complex positioning and movement of different individuals in relation to these" (Hodkinson 2007, 7) – a critique we could also apply to the studies on "Third Culture Kids," which will be discussed in subchapter 2.3. Furthermore, young women were excluded from the subcultural analysis in both schools, as Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber ([1975]1997) already pointed out in the 1970s (Bucholtz 2002, 537; Hodkinson 2007, 7). Another crucial point of critique is that the focus on the spectacular and the deviant excluded everyday aspects of youth culture (Hodkinson 2007, 7) – a critique that has also been raised in the field of studies concerned with transnationalism that now calls for research foci on the "mundane" (see for instance Conradson and Latham 2005, 228). In response to this criticism, Hodkinson (2007, 8), however, stresses that detailed research has continued to show that some youths actually do develop strong attachments to "substantive and distinctive cultural groupings whose particular norms and values dominate their identity and life-style for a period of time."

Sociology and Cultural Studies today have therefore recognized that a focus on collective deviance alone is too limited to understand the complex practices, values and identities of youth culture. Fragmentation, fluidity, consumerism, and media consumption have led to sociological studies' rethinking of "subculture," finding more "loose-knit and ephemeral elective cultural groupings, characterized by partial commitment and porous boundaries" (Hodkinson 2007, 10). Research on diaspora and the role of ethnicity in youth culture has also led to more emphasis on the shifting and "hybrid" nature of youth culture and cultural identities; most influential here might have been the work of Stuart Hall (for instance 1990; 1994; 1996; [1996]2012). With a focus on the fluidities, scholars have also noted the importance of locality (Hodkinson 2007, 12). Andy Bennett (2000), for example, shows that locality continues to play a role as "a relatively stable base for otherwise unstable and transient […] identities" (Hodkinson 2007, 12). In addition to the focus on multiplicities and fragmentation of youth culture, a burgeoning body of research about the everyday, unspectacular, activities of youth has been called for. It sets out to understand more deeply young people's lives. Studies of this kind include Paul Willis's *Common Culture* (1990). Studies on the everyday are

now "challenging the active subculture versus passive mainstream dichotomy set up by some variants of the CCCS subcultural theory" (Hodkinson 2007, 14).

The category "youth" in Sociology and Cultural Studies, therefore, in contrast to definitions of "adolescence" in Developmental Studies, is seen as a "discursive construct" (Bennett 2007, 23). In his article, "As young as you feel," Andy Bennett describes the metamorphosis of youth from a social category, referring to the cultural practices of young people, to "a discursive construct expressing an increasingly varied and, in many cases, conflicting range of political and aesthetic sensibilities" (2007, 34). Today's media, fueled by the marketing of products and practices helping older adults feel and look young, show that definitions of what it means to be young are contested. Consequently, divisions in terms of leisure and life-style preferences and practices across the generations become increasingly less obvious (Bennett 2007, 35). Despite this fuzziness of the boundaries between youths and adults, Andy Bennett supports the utility of the term by convincingly arguing that differences nevertheless remain. These are obvious "in terms of youth's economic marginalisation and legal dependency, and in the responses of the young and old to consumer goods and resultant patterns of taste and leisure" (ibid.). Furthermore, the "distinction between being *culturally* and *physically* young" (ibid., 34) is important, as the physical difference generates distinctions in cultural practice. Bennett exemplifies this point by describing practices at clubs and concerts, arguing, "the sheer levels of physical stamina they demand may ultimately present their own obstacles to participation in particular forms of 'youth' activity beyond a certain age" (ibid.).

Anthropology

Anthropology, as Bucholtz (2002) points out, had established adolescence as an important theme early in the discipline's making. The classic ethnographies by Bronislaw Malinowski ([1929]1968) and particularly by Margaret Mead ([1928]1929; [1930]1963; [1939]1948) are examples of early investigations into the role of initiation ceremonies and marital traditions in coming of age. However, Bucholtz notes that research has usually approached adolescence from a perspective that emphasizes the transition to adulthood. Anthropology, in contrast to the sociological and cultural studies approaches, did not investigate "youth as a cultural category." Rather, similar to Developmental Studies, it investigated "adolescence as a biological and psychological stage of human development" (Bucholtz 2002, 525); thus, it considered youth as a process. Anthropology's tradition of research on adolescence therefore focuses on change and development at the individual and cultural level. It analytically focuses on "the social staging of adolescence in particular cultural contexts in which the universal

developmental arc of adolescence is shaped by historically specific processes of social, political, and economic transformation, as well as by existing cultural practices" (ibid., 531). Bucholtz criticized these approaches because the teleology of the developmental process from adolescence to adulthood dominates this research tradition. While she agrees that the developmental issues are certainly part of the study of youth, Bucholtz reminds us that

> the lived experience of young people is not limited to the uneasy occupation of a developmental waystation en route to full-fledged cultural standing. It also involves its own distinctive identities and practices, which are neither rehearsals for the adult "real thing" nor even necessarily oriented to adults at all. (2002, 531–532)

Hirschfeld, investigating the marginalization of children in Anthropologists' research, makes similar claims for the younger age groups:

> By focusing on the adult end-state and adult influence on "achieving" it, children's activities are cast as ancillary or subordinate. As a consequence, the contributions that children make to their own development are often obscured if not effaced. (Hirschfeld 2002, 614)

Hirschfeld criticizes the underlying socialization theory – that emphasizes how adults intervene in children's lives and teach them – for inviting researchers to overlook and underestimate the contribution children themselves make "to the acquisition of cultural sensibilities" (ibid., 614). German anthropologist Weißköppel (2001, 42), based on earlier criticism on the "adult bias" by Baudler (1996, 146), argued that academia's view of childhood and youth and consequently its theorization of them, is based on perspectives of and definitions by adults. Likewise, Andy Bennett (2007, 30) criticizes the construction of youth by "empowered 'outsiders' – journalists and other social observers with access to the 'official' and 'authenticating' channels of the media," emphasizing that youths' voices, which are crucial for understanding youths' lives, are starkly absent from these portrayals.

This unreflected norm of an adult perspective is linked to the constant comparison between the categories of adolescence and adulthood. Bucholtz (2002, 532) consequently argues for a conceptional shift from the Anthropology of adolescence to the Anthropology of youth, rejecting the term adolescence as it always refers to an idea of "growth, transition, and incompleteness […], while *adult* indicates both completion and completeness." In Bucholtz's view, the category youth therefore understands

> age not as trajectory, but as identity, where identity is intended to invoke neither the familiar psychological formulation of adolescence as a prolonged "search for identity," nor the rigid and essentialized concept that has been the target of a great deal of recent critique. Rather, identity is agentive, flexible, and ever-changing – but no more for youth than for people of any age. Where the study of adolescence generally concentrates on how bodies and minds are shaped for adult futures, the study of youth emphasizes instead the here-and-now of young

8

people's experience, the social and cultural practices through which they shape their worlds. (Bucholtz 2002, 532)

Suggesting to shift focus from adolescence to youth, Bucholtz (2002, 544) urges future studies to "admit both the ideological reality of categories and the flexibility of identities" and to continue to draw on "theories of practice, activity, and performance to demonstrate how youth negotiate cultural identities in a variety of contexts, both material and semiotic, both leisure-based and at home, school, work, and in the political sphere."

My brief outline of the current view of youth in Developmental Studies, Sociology and Cultural Studies, as well as in Anthropology, has made clear that all disciplines have recently undergone great shifts in their emphasis and perspectives on youth in their research. In this context, this ethnographic study is framed in the Anthropology of youth that investigates the everyday practices, the common culture, and hereby focuses on the youths' own narratives of the self. In this light of understanding age as a collective identity and not as a trajectory, I privilege the experiences of the "here-and–now" over the process of development.

Having framed the recent shift in the studies of youth, I turn now to closely look at the state of affairs in Migration Studies concerned with children and young people.

Youth and Childhood in Migration Studies

> Little is known about children's particular understanding of (migrant) life, their concepts of their place of origin and their host society, their ways of building identity for themselves. This is true despite the fact that children make up a large proportion of migrants and despite the fact that children take on important roles in mediating between their world of origin and the host society. (Knörr and Nunes 2005, 14–15)

Knörr and Nunes (2005) acknowledge that recent approaches in the social and cultural sciences have started to consider children's own perspectives, their thoughts, feelings, and views of their social world, in research on childhood. The authors claim, however, that this shift has had relatively little impact on migration studies regarding children (ibid., 14). Dobson (2009), in her article "Unpacking children in migration research," explains the reasons for this lack of including children's perspectives in migration research. She argues that perceptions of children in migration research have long been based on ideas stemming from economic models, as a focus on economic aspects of migration was prominent. According to them, only adults are of economic significance; therefore focusing on children is irrelevant and therefore ignored. However, research on family migration and transnational families in particular have received increasing attention. It argues against the economic models, showing that children do in fact play a vital role in the migration process and contribute to its (economic) success (Dobson

2009, 356). Orellana et al. (2001, 588), for instance, argue that children are "an important reason why families move across national borders and sustain transnational ties." Children might sometimes even move without their families in order to gain valuable education that might consequently improve the socio-economic status of the whole family (Orellana et al. 2001; Waters 2005). This is, for example, the case for "parachute kids" migrating from South Korea to the USA. These children attend schools in the USA while their parents stay in South Korea. They not only work abroad "to advance their families' social and economic mobility," but even play the lead role in "a migration process that may eventually result in the chain migration of other family members" (Orellana et al. 2001, 581). Family migration research has thus been "vital in decentering a single 'lead' migrant" (Dobson 2009, 356).

However, despite the progress that has been made concerning the presence of children in migration studies – "from silent belongings to visible anxieties and active agents, demanding attention in their own right" (Dobson 2009, 358) – there are still few studies that capture youths' perspectives on the experience of migration. Dobson (2009, 355) thus notes: "[M]ore could be done to foreground the perspectives of children in their own right."

A few new studies have focused on children's perspectives. Dobson (ibid.) mentions, for instance, the work by Sporton et al. (2006) on asylum seekers in Britain. In their study, Sporton, Valentine, and Nielsen present insights into the underexamined experiences of child asylum seekers, working with children aged eleven to eighteen from Somalia. The authors skillfully highlight the children's narratives of the self and the role that their mobility plays in this process. Their work delineates the different challenges posed by immigration policy, racism, social exclusion, and different age expectations. It further demonstrates how elements that may provide stable identity references, such as the Muslim faith, are consequently of particular significance (Sporton, Valentine, and Nielsen 2006, 214). Sporton et al.'s work provides an impressive example of migration studies concerned with children: it identifies how "dominant narratives of childhood" (and asylum seekers) are constructed, and how children then position themselves within these powerful narratives, "actively negotiating and accomplishing their own identities in specific geographical sites" (ibid., 215).

Two other more recent contributions (Hatfield 2010; Hutchins 2011) have focused on the experiences and perspectives of children in the dynamics of family migration. Both studies address the cases of British households. These two articles are of particular relevance for my study, as the children's backgrounds are similar to those of my research project.

10

Hutchins's (2011) study explores the experiences of families who have recently moved from the UK to Australia. Her ethnographic accounts privilege the perspective of the children, aged five to seventeen at the times of the interview, and discuss the ways in which they experience and make sense of the migration. Hutchins particularly analyzes the decision-making process and illustrates how different unspoken conceptions of childhood influence this process, as parents often argue to make decisions in their children's "best interest." As "individual members of the family often have different interests, […] family migration decision-making is based upon a process of negotiating individual influence and power within the family" (Hutchins 2011, 1233). While her article lays open the parental power in these negotiations and demonstrates how this power often results in the young actors' exclusion from the decision-making process, Hutchins also identifies ways in which children actively attempt to influence the decision or the overall migration process.

Hatfield (née Dobson) (2010) addresses the issue of return migration and presents, through innovative fieldwork in domestic spaces in Britain, the experiences of "children as equal movers." The actors of her study are between seven and seventeen years old. They are members of households headed by a highly skilled migrant and have returned "home" after living in Singapore. Her work explores how the children understand and negotiate coming "home." Drawing additionally on photography by the children, she highlights the significance of their everyday practices and demonstrates children's specific home-making practices, that she finds to be often more "mobile, transient and smaller-scale" than those of adults.

2.2.   Ethnographic Studies on Expatriates

Although Dennison Nash's (1970) *A Community in Limbo* and an article by Erik Cohen (1977) have already adressed the topic, a new field of research on expatriates and forms of privileged migration has only recently (re)emerged within the disciplines of Anthropology and Geography, at the beginning of the Twenty-first century (among others: Beaverstock 2002; K. Willis, Yeoh, and Fakhri 2002; K. Willis and Yeoh 2002; Yeoh and Willis 2005; Fechter 2007a; Coles and Fechter 2008; Butcher 2009; Hindman 2009a; Hindman 2009b; Dobeneck 2010; Farrer 2010; Farrer 2011). This new research focuses on everyday practices, identity negotiations, emotions, and coping strategies and differs greatly from research in the field of Human Resource Management that is mainly concerned with the performance and (successful) management of expatriate professionals. Collective volumes such as Coles and Fechter's (2008) *Gender and Family among Transnational Professionals*, and *Going First Class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement* edited by Vered Amit

(2007), exemplify this new focus: they analyze everyday spaces outside the multinational company and also highlight the particular role of women in expatriate circles, women who are not employed in multinational companies but accompany their spouses abroad.

In the wake of these collective volumes, a range of articles have appeared, usually focusing on specific practices of privileged migrants. Geographer Georg Glasze (2006), for instance, brings the particularities of expatriate housing practices to the fore, describing the role of gated communities among expatriates in Saudi Arabia. Katie Walsh (Walsh 2006a; Walsh 2006b; Walsh 2008) focuses on British expatriate identities in Dubai, examining cultural practices of domesticity, intimacy, and consequent articulations of belonging and national identity. Heather Hindman (2009a; 2009b) pays detailed attention to the meaning-laden activity of shopping for expatriate women in Nepal and reveals that behind the shopping for art objects and an interest in cuisine lies the need for easily transferable elements in a world of constant movement. Food and art, unlike language skills and local friendships, "can be utilized as anecdotal parallels in future postings" (Hindman 2009b, 256). The collected objects at the next destination "act as means of transferring knowledge and status between locations" (2009a, 676), helping the expatriate women to recreate themselves. Willis and Yeoh (2002; 2005) contribute a comparative angle, writing on British and Singaporean Expatriates in Hong Kong and China based on material from 247 interviews that were conducted between 1997 and 2001. They also provide insight into the gendered experiences of privileged migration, a perspective they pursue further in their article on single British migrants in China (K. Willis and Yeoh 2008).

James Farrer in his works (2008; 2010; 2011) examines expatriates' nightlife activities, sexuality and intermarriage and their relevance in encounters with the "local" in Shanghai. In addition to his emphasis on the interaction with "locals," Farrer also broadens the view on expatriates themselves by investigating foreigners in Shanghai who are staying longer than five years. Foregrounding their narratives of emplacement, he questions the standard "equation of expatriates with highly mobile transnational elites" (2010, 15) and points out the increasing diversity of the expatriate community in social composition.

In addition to these writings with their particular foci, two complete ethnographies focusing on two distinct expatriate communities have appeared. Fechter's (2007a) *Transnational Lives: Expatriates in Indonesia* and Von Dobeneck's (2010) work *Mobile Eliten. Deutsche Entsandte und ihre Familien in São Paulo* on German expatriates in São Paulo both give detailed insights into expatriate communities' structures and

expatriates' everyday practices. Anne-Meike Fechter's work particularly concentrates on the boundaries present in expatriate life in Indonesia.

In the context of this increase in empirical works on expatriate communities, Fechter and Walsh (2010)[5] have begun to discuss the necessity for further theoretical conceptualizations of expatriates, calling for an integration and inclusion of studies on mobile professionals into the Migration Studies mainstream. The authors propose to link the subject theoretically with postcolonial theory, consequently integrating both topics together. The authors argue that this integration of research on expatriates into Migration Studies is necessary to contest limited notions of migration processes and images of migrants. In their own words:

> Consequently, one critique of mainstream Migration Studies literatures might be that they are producing somewhat skewed notions of 'who migrants are', leading to rather particular and limited notions of migration processes as a whole. (Fechter and Walsh 2010, 1198)

Besides pointing out the necessity for research on expatriates and the need to link them theoretically with other areas of study, the article also demonstrates the high educational, occupational, ethnic, and cultural diversity among privileged migrants. The authors stress that there is a class hierarchy within the category of "western expatriates" and further argue that this diversity in class "also challenges us to think about whiteness as negotiative, not as a racialised position that automatically awards a high status within the globalising city" (Fechter and Walsh 2010, 1200).

In the dissertation, I comment on the issue of Whiteness and its significance in the lives and experiences of youths. I address particularly the problematic, assumed equation that western/expat equals White (see chapter 13.2. in particular). Some expatriate students are from Asia or "look Asian," despite being born in the "West" due to their parents' migrant biographies. Furthermore, the concept of transculturation underpinning my research (see 2.4.) will enrich this discussion of linking experiences of (young) expatriates to the broader field of migration studies. The framework of transcultural studies supports my focus on the processes of negotiation of cultural complexities in the international students' lives, and particularly connects to theoretical debates. Chapter eight, for instance, addresses students' experiences and postcolonial concepts of belonging and home; chapter fourteen in particular reflects on the youths' narratives of the self and links their negotiations of cultural identity to theoretical aspects from recent concepts of the burgeoning field of transcultural studies. In addition to the need for such a theoretical framing of expatriate experiences, Fechter

---

[5] The same collection of articles in this 2010 issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* have also appeared in a collective volume entitled *The New Expatriates Postcolonial Approaches to Mobile Professionals* (Fechter and Walsh 2012).

and Walsh (2010, 1206–1207) identify the "super-diversity of migrants," the need to "widen our focus beyond the relationships between Western expatriates and host-country nationals" as promising areas for further research. They suggest to also "examine evidence of colonial dis/continuities in the relations between various transnational migrant groups," and point out the necessity to "produce research that does engage with locals' perspectives on expatriates in a variety of contexts" (ibid.). This ethnographic study's focus does not directly take into consideration Chinese locals' points of view. However, it is the called-for examination and acknowledgement of the "super-diversity of migrants" that it can contribute to due to its attention to the particular age group of fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds.

Although many of the qualitative research projects discussed above take ethnic, racial, and particularly gendered experiences of privileged migration into account, most of them neglect the age-specific experiences of children and adolescents. With the exception of Fiona Moore's (2008) contribution to Coles and Fechter's volume on gender and family (2008) that investigates the role of the German school for the German community in London, none of the publications have centrally focused on expatriate youth. However, even Moore's contribution does not focus on the children's point of view. This might firstly be due to the general scarcity of research on children and youth – especially on their own experiences and perspectives – in Anthropology, an issue that I discussed already in depth in 2.1. Secondly, this lack might be due to the difficult access to expatriate youths' lifeworlds. The everyday lives of expatriate youths are somewhat as difficult to explore as the expatriates' workplaces that Walsh comments on:

> [T]here is a tendency to focus on women's lives and the production of femininities (as in Fechter's chapter on 'expatriate wives'), often due simply to the methodological difficulties of accessing workplaces in sufficient depth and the relative time-rich status of the 'trailing spouse'. (Walsh 2010, 139–140)

The life of international school students is busy, similar to that of the working transnational professionals. They have school, schoolwork, and extracurricular activities to attend to throughout the day. Moreover, the private international schools are often as, or even more, inaccessible as corporate workplaces for ethnographic studies – a problem I will further explore in the methodology section under 4.2. While there have been a few qualitative studies on the everyday lives of working expatriates (for instance Butcher 2009) outside the research realm of Human Resources, there has been no in-depth examination into the everyday practices and experiences of expatriate youth.

2.3. Writings on Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

When expatriate children are the focus of studies, they are usually described and conceptualized as "Third Culture Kids." Well-received and popular among – at least the Anglophone – expatriate circles today, the concept of "Third Culture Kids" was originally introduced by John Useem and Ruth Hill Useem in the 1950s (see Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 20; Knörr 2005, 53; Richter 2011, 20). Studying American families living and working in India, the researchers described the parents' home culture as the first culture, the culture of the place of residence as the second culture, and "the 'Third Culture' to them was the culture of the expatriate community, which they understood as a 'culture between cultures' integrating cultural features of home and host societies" (Knörr 2005, 53).

Later, van Reken and Pollock's ([1999]2009) book *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* helped the concept gain its immense popularity. Their work is set out as a self-help book, aimed for use by members of the expatriate communities. Their ideas have been developed in various (parental) guidebooks (see for instance Pascoe 2006; Pittman and Smit 2012), on special website forums dedicated to TCKs[6] as well as in the expatriate press circulating in Shanghai, such as *That's Shanghai* and *City Weekend*. The common definition of the term is as follows:

> A third culture kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 19)

The findings of these studies, guidebooks, magazines, and websites (with a focus on Western children) discuss how a life outside the parents' home country and particularly a lifestyle of constant moving affects children. TCKs are represented as a group

---

[6] Numerous websites and blogs are dedicated to Third Culture Kids. www.tckworld.com is the oldest website and presents itself as the "official home of Dr. Ruth Useem, who first coined the term "Third Culture Kids"." Signing up promises you access to services and resources, such as Useem's study from 1960 to 1993. The website www.tckacademy.com , co-founded by Paulette Bethel and Brice Royer, offers material for teachers, educators, counselors, relocation specialists and others – a sign-up is also required. Brice Royer is also the founder of the website www.tckid.com. This site is based on the idea of an online community with individual accounts so people can share their views and experiences. It was founded in 2007. According to the website, that sees itself as "a home for Third Culture Kids," the community has about 21 000 members. The makers describe the aim of their site as "dedicated to help Third Culture Kids connect and find a sense of belonging." The Internet page www.denizenmag.com is "an online magazine and community dedicated to people who grew up in multiple countries, international school alumni, or Third Culture Kids." Interestingly this website, too, describes itself as an "online home" – a metaphor that can be found on all of the sites. Offering help in the "struggle with identity, relationships, visas and careers in our unique TCK way," the website in its introductory text also praises Third Culture Kids as "the citizens of the future." A further example of the recent rise of online communities is the website www.internations.org that offers a platform for expatriates in general, but – after opening an account – also offers information on Third Culture Kids. These websites were last accessed on March 18th, 2013. ("TCKWorld: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids (TCKs)" 2013; "TCK Academy's: The First TCK Expert Interview Series" 2013; "TCKID: A Home for Third Culture Kids and Adults (TCKs)" 2013; "Denizen - for Third Culture Kids" 2013; "InterNations: Expatriate Community for Expats Worldwide" 2013).

sharing many qualities, despite the different countries they grow up in. Pollock and van Reken ([1999]2009, 39) argue that "for TCKs the moving back and forth from one culture to another happens before they have completed the critical developmental task of forming a sense of their own personal or cultural identity." This quote reveals the container-like, or as Homi Bhabha ([1996]2012, 53) has put it, "absurd notion of an uncontaminated culture in a single country" that seems to occasionally underlie the reasoning of the TCK concept. Based on such a notion of culture, the authors see how the children's upbringing results in the "the paradoxical nature of the TCK experience – the sense of being profoundly connected yet simultaneously disconnected with people and places around the world" (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 38). The problem of belonging and identity formation are presented as the central problem for youths growing up as TCKs. This problem, they argue, is due to "an interplay of these factors – living in both a culturally changing and highly mobile world during the formative years" (ibid. 39). The general idea of development and identity building underlying all these arguments – adults possess a stable identity, children are still developing and somewhat adults-in-the-making – has been criticized by many scholars on youth in other areas (see for instance Bucholtz 2002; Hirschfeld 2002). I addressed this problematic conceptualization of adolescence as a "prolonged 'search for identity'" (Bucholtz 2002, 532) in chapter 2.1 in detail.

The authors also see other specific common challenges that many "TCKs" face, such as issues of relational patterns (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 131–143), "unresolved grief" (ibid.,165-182), and "uneven maturity" and "delayed adolescence" or "delayed adolescent rebellion" (Pollock and Van Reken 150-158 and Pascoe, 25). They also describe the benefits of being a "TCK," like having an "expanded worldview" (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 79–80), and developed "cross-cultural skills" (ibid.,107-110), "observational skills" (ibid.,112-110), "social skills" (ibid.,112-114), and "linguistic skills" (ibid.,114-118). Concerning the relational patterns, the frequent experience of goodbyes, according to Pollock and Van Reken, can sometimes lead to "patterns of protecting themselves" (ibid.,131) and struggles with a "fear of intimacy because of the fear of loss" (ibid.,139). But the authors also describe how TCKs "will go to greater lengths than some people might consider normal to nurture relational ties with others" (ibid.,131). "TCKs," according to them, place a high value on their relationships and often jump into "deeper levels of relationship" (ibid., 136). Unresolved grief is another issue that Pollock and Van Reken address, an issue that is related to losses expatriate children experience by moving. However, these losses are often hidden and unrecognized for a variety of reasons. The authors also attest that an "uneven maturity" troubles "TCKs." Although their experience with "TCKs" often lead

16

adults to view them as extremely mature, a maturity and comfort level with adults that most "TCKs" also perceive in themselves (ibid.,151), according to Pollock and van Reken, few spaces are available for "TCKs" "to test rules during their teenage years" (ibid.,152). "TCKs" are therefore often unclear about which norms to rebel against. This is an uncertainty that leads to a postponement in rebellion that usually manifests itself later, in college. The benefits of "TCK" life, including the expanded worldview and all the developed skills mentioned above are linked to the experience of difference and having to learn to deal with it through observing and adapting.

Although it appeared in 1999, Pollock and van Reken's book is based on surveys that were conducted in the early and mid-1980s with adults aged twenty-two to twenty-seven, who were asked to reflect upon their childhood and the impact that moving had on their lives. These "kids," in other words, were mainly born in the 1950s. Processes of globalization and mediatization have surely led to changes in the experiences of growing up abroad since then. The authors of the self-help book *Expat Teens Talk* (Pittman and Smit 2012) have conducted an online survey that offers more current results. The average expat teen respondent, according to their 248 questionnaires, is fifteen years old, has lived in three countries, has attended four schools and speaks two languages fluently. Based on the questionnaires, the authors also offer lists of issues expatriate teenagers have most questions about (top issue: "general worries/concerns/fears"), experimental behaviors they engage in (top behavior: "drinking alcohol"), and things they worry most about (top: "grades") (ibid., 175-176). *Expat Teens Talk*, however, is less concerned with investigating expatriate youth and offers only limited insights into expatriate youths' social worlds, but rather offers answers from parents, counselors, and other "TCKs" to pressing issues and questions the authors received from expat teens.

All the guidebooks, Pollock and Van Reken's *Third Culture Kids*, Pascoe's *Raising Global Nomads*, and Pittman and Smit's *Expat Teens Talk*, are written from within the community and offer to help expatriate youths facing problems of belonging and identity by establishing a feeling of community. Based on these publications, the concept of "TCKs" was also used and promoted in Shanghai's expatriate community centers and by school counselors. Ruth van Reken had even given a talk at the school of one of my informants. It is this reinforcement of the sense of belonging to a special "TCK," "Global Nomad," or expat community that the guidebooks and the talks in Shanghai promote that raised my awareness about something I would later call "TCK nationalism," a search for other scholars who seek to complicate or investigate critically the "TCK" issue outside the guidebook phenomenon.

Complicating the TCK Issue: Ethnographic Studies and the Concept

Academic writings (Selmer and Lam 2004; Franke 2008; Grimshaw and Sears 2008; Greenholtz and Kim 2009; B. E. Peterson and Plamondon 2009; Walters and Auton-Cuff 2009; Richter 2011) have taken up the "TCK" category. One of the few ethnographic works on "Third Culture Kids," however, is Danau Tanu's (2011) article "Vignettes from another Perspective: When Cultural Hierarchies Matter at an International School." In it she updates and complicates some of the dynamics described in the standard works on "TCKs," criticizing former research for its limited perspective – mostly Western researchers conducting studies on Western participants – that is likely to oversee how "'race, ethnicity, culture, finances and even the name of the country on our passport(s) impact upon our access to global mobility, ability to feel at home in different places, and the way others relate to us" (2011, 224). Having conducted ethnographic fieldwork at an international school in Indonesia, Tanu's accounts show how cultural hierarchies are prominent not only outside, but also inside international schools. Different labels, such as "Indonesian" or "White" – that seem to be linked rather to a native English speaker status and mannerisms than to actual physical appearance (ibid., 230) – are prominent in everyday discussions at school. While for the school administrators "the ideal student is the 'global citizen'," many of the students with Asian backgrounds are seen as "add[ing] to the school's overall sense of visible diversity," while "fall[ing] short on being 'international'" (ibid.). Internationalism renders the dominant Western culture invisible, establishing hierarchies of who is or is not "international." In Tanu's words: "International schools may be a multicultural bubble, but it is a bubble that is not immune to the dynamics at work in the world outside the school gates" (ibid., 231). Tanu's work highlights an aspect of my own ethnographic work: Expatriate Youth – although often forming a "we" – are a heterogeneous group. This heterogeneous group, as Tanu demonstrates, has inner divisions and hierarchies:

> Money and cultural hierarchies influence perceptions and interactions that take place on the campus. Racial and other identity labels are sometimes used to signify status and cultural difference, but their meanings constantly shift. Various forms of social assets, such as language, accents, mannerisms, and money, are used to make and vie for status. (Tanu 2011, 231)

In her work Tanu explains how these hierarchies influence familial relationships and peer as well as student - teacher relations at the international school campus. International school culture, she claims, is often westernized. For students with Asian backgrounds "cultural dissonance" may arise between "'Western' culture by day and 'Asian' culture by night" (ibid., 223). Tanu finds that in describing feelings of "cultural dissonance," former writings on TCKs only address repatriation or "life after the

expatriate microcosm." Observing these feelings (and I would add: the necessity to creatively cope with the different cultural worlds at home and at school), she witnesses "similar, though not identical" experiences of "Asian" TCKs and those "of second generation immigrants growing up in Western countries" (ibid., 223). These groups have seldom been put in the same context, and it is precisely in the reinforcement of this gap between "immigrants growing up in Western countries" and those treated as "TCKs" that anthropologist Jacqueline Knörr (2005) criticizes the concept of "TCK." While Tanu's work has revealed the heterogeneity of "TCKs," urging for a more sensitive look at the inner divisions of the "TCK" community, Knörr (2005) goes even further in her criticism of the "TCK" concept.

Knörr (2005, 54) notes that Pollock and van Reken have broadened the definition of the term to include "all children who move into another society with their parents," making "TCK" a more inclusive term, not distinguishing between "a Sierra Leonean refugee in the United States and an American son of an ambassador somewhere in Africa." Anthropologist Knörr, taking a long overdue critical stance against the "TCK" concept, rightly points out that this broadening covers up ideologies connected with the "TCK" approach and remains associated primarily with "Western children brought up in the so-called Third World" and not to immigrant children in Europe or the USA (ibid.). She criticizes the concept of "TCK" as an ideology that implicitly reinforces qualifying distinctions between "TCKs" (Western Children) and other (im)migrants, as well as between TCKs and the population in the "home country." On this point, she argues:

> [W]hereas the upper class of young, mostly Western migrants to - mainly - Third World countries are likely to be considered "Third Culture Kids," producing creatively a culture for themselves, the lower classes of young migrants - those from Third World or poorer countries migrating or fleeing to mostly Western countries - are likely to be considered immigrants with a cultural background, which does not fit their new environment and thus produce problems for themselves and their host society. There is an implicit - and qualifying - distinction made between TCKs on the one hand and other young (im)migrants on the other. With regard to the former, (appropriate) cultural creativity is emphasized; with regard to the latter (inappropriate) cultural conservatism. Academic approaches thereby largely and mostly implicitly reflect the - usually not so implicit - qualifying distinctions made in society at large. (Knörr 2005, 54)

Knörr succinctly points out the difference in everyday life, as well as in academic discourses, when it comes to the discussion of issues of cultural practices or cultural identities among privileged migrants – expatriate youths – and migrants coming to Western countries – immigrant youths. Whereas the "cultural background" of migrant youths in Germany, for example, is seen to cause problems, expatriate youths – Third Culture Kids – are associated with cultural creativity. While I acknowledge the "appropriate cultural creativity" of the "TCK" concept in general and the help the "TCK"

concept might offer for expatriate youths to realize that they are not the only ones with such experiences – especially after a move "back home," I nevertheless, agree with Knörr's position.

One way to save this well-meaning concept, which acknowledges creativity and offers support through creating a like-minded community, from its "ideology of difference" might be a radical extension of its use: "TCKs" should not to be reserved to qualify Western expatriates alone. Its broadening to include all migrant youths could aid to acknowledge the full range of migrant youths' creative practices and their universal potential to create "Third Cultures." When capturing (im)migrant youths' experiences, for instance in Europe or the USA, I suggest linking the "TCK" concept to approaches in postcolonial studies, such as Homi Bhabha's ([1994]2009) metaphor of the "Third Space" that describes a chaotic meeting space, "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space" (ibid., 56), where migrants discuss and create new multiple meanings and cultural affiliations. The "TCK" idea could help to simplify or ground the cultural creativity that lies in such concepts as Bhabha's. However, as my own empirical focus is obviously not able to contribute to this broadening, and as the concept is to me (still) containing ideologies of difference in its usage, I refrain from using it.

This rejection of the TCK concept does not mean that I think one should hide the – mostly implicit – ideologies of difference; on the contrary, such differences depending on social status and origin clearly affect the migration experience. "Global migration is far easier for highly-skilled workers and those with capital than it is for those without training or resources," wrote Massey (1995, 197). Other terms are more suitable than "TCK." For instance, the term "privileged migrant"[7], openly address the inequalities that "TCK" does not. Although "TCK" can be broadened and has the potential to address young migrants' creative potentials in dealing with mobility, I consider its current usage too narrow and normative for the aim of this ethnography. By following the concept I would *a priori* accept the children and youth under discussion as having "relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any" (Pollock and Van Reken

---

[7] For a discussion of the term "privileged migrant" and on what "privileged" can mean, see Vered Amit's (2007) collective volume *Going First Class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement*, in particular the contribution by Angela Torresan (2007) on middle-class Brazilian migrants in Portugal. While Torresan argues that migration outflows have always been inclined to choose people with above average access to resources, connections, or education in comparison to their fellow nationals, she also shows that terms such as "privileged" or "middle class" are evidently related to migrants' own "relative perceptions of their own well-being" (2007, 106). Based on the self-perception of the migrants she worked with, as well as their "ability to reproduce a desired middle-class status" (ibid., 121), Torresan found the term "privileged" fitting for her case study. I think the term "privileged migrant" is also well-suited to emphasize the expatriate youths social positions in my research, be it vis-à-vis myself, the average Shanghainese household, or many other migrants, or also in respect to their former position in Germany, as the move to Shanghai usually comes with additional financial benefits.

[1999]2009, 19). I argue that instead of choosing samples of self-defined TCKs, as former research has repeatedly done (Franke 2008; Richter 2011), it is important to look at practices of expatriate youth more generally – including everyday practices and identity performances that might contradict such a definition. All these studies based on the a priori TCK definition only investigate youth (or mostly adults on their past) that fit into the category, therefore automatically finding "homogeneity within heterogeneity" (Griese 2004, quoted in Richter 2011, 24). This might also be due to a methodological problem, because former studies have been built on interviews, surveys (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009), and have focused mainly on group discussions (Franke 2008) asking mainly *adult* "Third Culture Kids" about their pasts. They have also been based on the anecdotal fictional and biographic literature of those concerned (Richter 2011, 18). I think that these adult retrospectives may often be linked to established narratives making sense of the experienced.

It is thus the ethnographic practice that examines everyday routines that further distinguishes my study from former studies focusing on TCKs (with the exception of Danau Tanu's (2011) work mentioned under 2.3). My ethnographic work refrains from using the TCK definition to show that positionings in terms of cultural identity can differ in their features, meanings, borders etc. The term "expatriate" or its short form "expat," is better suited for my work. In chapter one I chose to deploy the term "expatriate" (or "expat") because the student interviewees at the international high schools in Shanghai all identified with it, regardless of their parents' occupation, nationality, or migration trajectories. "Expat" can be seen as an immanent term. In comparison to the "TCK" term, I want to add that although "expat(riate) kids" are often mentioned as a subcategory of "Third Culture Kids," next to "military brats"[8] and "missionary kids" (Richter 2011, 20), I use the term "expatriate youth." In my particular case, it conveys a broader definition than the conventional usage of "TCK." While "expatriate youth" is a suitable replacement of the "TCK" label for my study, it does not, however, offer any insights as an analytical concept to investigate international students' mediations of cultural complexities. I therefore suggest turning towards the notion of transculturality and related ideas.

---

[8] To my knowledge, the origin of the term "military brat" is unknown. Its popularity, however, traces back to Mary Edwards Wertsch's ([1991]2006) book *Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood inside the Fortress*. Despite its pejorative nature, the term is used among people who grew up with parents in the armed forces. The title of a thematic literature review by Grace Clifton (2004),"Making the case for the BRAT (British Regiment Attached Traveller)," suggests its possible historic origin.

2.4. Thinking Beyond "Third Culture Kids": Transculturality in Progress, Practice, and Perspective

There seems to be a common standpoint that in the vastest sense "transculturation is the process of individuals and societies changing themselves by integrating diverse cultural life-ways into dynamic new ones" (Hoerder, Hébert, and Schmitt 2005, 13). Transcultur/al/ation/ity is not a "given" concept, however, but has its own conceptual history. Since Wolfgang Welsch coined the term transculturality (Welsch 1999), a burgeoning field of transcultural studies has emerged. It has developed into an interdisciplinary field that scholars of various backgrounds have approached from different angles.

The philosopher Wolfgang Welsch (1999) developed the term transculturality to challenge the classical idea of single cultures and the more recent concepts of interculturality and multiculturality. He strongly criticizes these former concepts, suggesting that cultures are not "constituted in the form of islands or spheres" (ibid., unpaged). He introduces the idea of transculturality to right the misunderstanding that cultures have "the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness" (ibid.). The concept of transculturality, Welsch argues, "sketches a different picture of the relation between cultures. Not one of isolation and of conflict, but one of entanglement, intermixing and commonness" (ibid.). Furthermore, Welsch also acknowledges transculturality not only on society's macro level, but also on the individual level: "Work on one's identity is becoming more and more work on the integration of components of differing cultural origin" (ibid.). Unfortunately, as Gertraud Koch (2008, 14) already pointed out, Welsch's development of transculturation is rather generalizing and not based on specific examples.

Aoileann Ní Éigearteigh and Wolfgang Berg (2010a) in their collective volume, *Exploring transculturalism,* have taken up Welsch's (1999) idea of transculturality on the individual level and pursue a biographical approach to transculturality, presenting texts "of a range of curious, open-minded protagonists who managed, through perseverance and affinity, to adapt to new, alien cultures" (Berg and Éigeartaigh 2010b, 11). In the introduction, the editors explain that the volume focuses on transnationally mobile persons. The aspect of cultural identity they pursue is based on the underlying premise that certain individuals "find ways to transcend their native cultures, in order to explore, examine and infiltrate new, seemingly alien cultures" and that these experiences show that "it will become increasingly difficult to identify and separate people according to previously accepted delineations" (ibid.). The chosen protagonists, from their point of view, are defined as

22

transcultural personalities because of their willingness to rise to the challenge of living in unfamiliar, sometimes even hostile, societies, and forge new, hybrid narratives of identity for themselves, without compromising their own individuality and cultural heritage (Berg and Éigeartaigh 2010a, 16).

Éigearteigh and Wolfgang Berg term these individuals "transculturalists" and argue that looking closely at their experiences and narratives gives insights into "the conditions under which cultural change takes place" (2010b, 11). The editors add a critical aspect to their overtly positive portrayal of transcultural experience in their introduction. They point out that Welsch's (1999) optimistic outlook on transculturality as a state that "can help the migrant to overcome feelings of isolation, dislocation and foreignness" (Berg and Éigeartaigh 2010b, 12; in reference to Welsch 1999) ought to be regarded with care, as "people who cross borders continue to struggle with unfamiliar social norms and behaviours" (ibid., 12).

In a similar way, Nina Richter (2011, 117) has suggested transculturality as an identity model that appropriately explains "Third Culture Kids." Her work combines the rather applied concept of "Third Culture Kids," with a theoretical understanding of transculturality. Richter draws on the conceptualization of transculturality by Welsch and understands it as "jenseits des Gegensatzes von Eigenkultur und Fremdkultur"[9] (Welsch 1995 cited in Richter 2011, 117). She argues that "TCKs" encounter diverse cultural elements, span several cultures and are marked by being part of a third culture. Consequently, Richter argues, "Third Culture Kids" represent and articulate different cultures, cross-cultural values and norms ("kulturübergreifende Werte und Normen"), international experiences and intercultural competences as, citing Welsch (1995), "Fusionen bis in ihren Kern hinein."[10] Richter concludes that "Third Cultures Kids" are thus "transcultural personalities" (2011, 117).

While the concept of "transculturalists" (Berg and Éigeartaigh 2010b) and the understanding of TCKs as "transcultural personalities" (Richter 2011) both draw attention to experiences and narratives of individuals, they fail to acknowledge processes of change within "cultures" – and are unfortunately based on an understanding of homogeneity that is problematic. This derives from Welsch's misunderstanding of transculturality, in its perception of cultures as having a "nucleus" ("Kern"). For my work I find the terms "transculturalist," "Third Culture Kids," or

---

[9] The English translation of Welsch's essays translates "beyond the contraposition of ownness and foreignness" (Welsch 1999).

[10] Richter refers to the German article from 1995. However, I found the quoted citation only in the abstract on the website providing a full PDF of the article: http://www.forum-interkultur.net/Beitraege.45.0.html?&tx_textdb_pi1[showUid]=28. In the summary provided on the website Welsch writes, "Vielmehr sind Kulturen charakterisiert durch vielfältige Verflechtungen, Durchmischungen und "Fusionen" bis in ihren Kern hinein." This can be translated as "Cultures are rather characterized through manifold entanglements, mixing and 'fusions' reaching into their nucleus."

"transcultural personalities" too static. They evoke borders towards essentialized others. As Brosius and Wenzlhuemer (2011, 11) argue, "(t)he matter is even more complicated since we must reflect on the role of local notions of, for example, beauty, authenticity, or realism without essentialising them."

My work, nevertheless, aims to follow Richter's (2011) linking of "Third Culture Kids," or better "expatriate youths," with transculturality. However, my approach differs greatly from Richter's, as I, firstly, pursue an ethnographic research method. An ethnographic approach, in contrast to Richter's account that is based on established narratives of people who label themselves as "Third Culture Kids," can be fine-tuned – also to practices that contradict or impair the building of such "transcultural personalities" that Richter sees. Secondly, to go beyond the rather static concept of "Third Culture Kids," I find it helpful to look for understandings of transculturality beyond Welsch's notion of transculturality as a state of being. In the following, I will introduce concepts that see transculturality as a process, for instance Ortiz's early idea of transculturation that Welsch was unaware of when coining his term, and pay more attention to the dynamics of transculturality.

Transculturation

Fernando Ortiz (1970) developed the concept of transculturation already in the 1940s in his work, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar,* when analyzing tobacco and sugar production in Cuba. Based on empirical evidence Ortiz describes the rapid global spread of tobacco and assess the reasons for its change in "social significance as it passed from the cultures of the New World to those of the Old." He called this process "the transculturation of tobacco" (ibid., 183). He argued that transculturation defines what he saw as "the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here" (ibid., 98). This term, he claims, more adequately describes these historical events than "acculturation," the term that had been until then frequently deployed in describing similar processes (ibid., 97). Bronislaw Malinowski (1970, viii), supporting the new concept in the introduction to Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar,* claims that "acculturation" is "an ethnocentric word" that connotes the idea that "the "uncultured" is to receive the benefits of "our culture"." Malinowski argues that "by the use of the term *acculturation* we implicitly introduce a series of moral, normative, and evaluative concepts which radically vitiate the real understanding of the phenomenon" (ibid., emphasis in the original). This phenomenon, which Ortiz defines as transculturation, is in Malinowski's explanatory words:

> a process in which something is always given in return for what one receives, a
> system of give and take. It is a process in which both parts of the equation are

24

modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, nor even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent (Malinowski 1970, viii–ix).

It is the emphasis on the "new, original and independent" realities that makes Ortiz's understanding of transcultural processes, as Koch (2008, 12) puts forward, an early acknowledgement of the emancipatory potential that lies in the concept of transculturation. It shows, according to Koch, that "the dominant culture" does not remain uninfluenced in this process (ibid.). While Ortiz's concept of transculturation emphasizes the creative processes of new formations, it remains connected to the dangers of essentializing "authentic" cultures that then merge to transform into new ones.

Transculturality in Progress

Maya Nadig's (2004) concept of "transculturality in progress" is highly sensitive to the dangers of essentializing culture and describes migratory milieus, co-operative spaces, and transcultural relations as the "frames in which people with different cultural backgounds perceive the difference of cultures and negotiate their identity and self-design" (ibid., 9). Instead of talking about distinct cultures, Nadig suggests that "experiences, emotions, perceptions of others and strategic positions are consciously and discursively modelled along the forming of affiliations, the drawing of boundaries and differentiation between the alien and the own, selves and others" (ibid.). If we base our understanding of transculturality on a concept of culture that, as Maya Nadig (ibid., 10) suggests, sees culture "as plural and in motion" and defines it "as a practice," we can use transculturality as a concept to investigate "the development and transformation of identity constructs within the context of transcultural relations," and to focus on "the subsequently developed forms of translation, convergence, mergence, the new boundaries and differentiation." According to Nadig, transculturality leads us to analyze both "the context within which individuals and groups interact" as well as "the material, discursive and practical manifestations of cultural identity and their change to the extent that mutual (transcultural) understanding is either made possible or impaired" (ibid.). While many of the spatial practices I will discuss throughout my dissertation are linked to practices of boundary-drawing that often impair exchanges and understandings with local Chinese youth (see for instance the physical, social, and cultural boundaries of the gated communities, or the international schools described in part three, "Arriving"), the forms of belonging and identity positionings (discussed in detail in chapter fourteen) demonstrate students' own perspectives and identifications with in-between positions and their need to make (transcultural) understanding possible in various contexts. Focusing on such spaces of progress and in-

betweenness, Nadig shows that theoretical conceptualizations have made investigations in the same direction in cultural studies and in psychoanalysis. She argues that concepts of in-between spaces in regards to cultural identity and the intermediate spaces conceptualized in psychoanalytical approaches to identity both entail "mediating between inner/individual and outer/cultural reality, or between selves and others" (Nadig 2004, 17). The five exemplary individual self-reflective narratives presented in chapter fourteen of my dissertation represent such mediations. Student Arnaud (14.4), for instance tries to cope with differences between himself and his parents by reflecting and opening up creative spaces by producing music, theater plays, or writings. Xia (14.5) likewise tries to mediate the differences he perceives between his school zone and his home zone. Antonia (14.3) is more concerned with bringing together the shared values she experiences as Chinese and the shared values she considers German, which she found both influential on her own life and practices. Bjoern (14.1) is confronted with class differences between his social networks in Germany and in Shanghai and tries to find a space in-between that he finds comfortable in. In regards to the role of practices in these processes of mediations, I suggest to further draw on another concept of transculturality, that of "transculturality as practice" by Robert Pütz (2004).

Transculturality as Practice

Robert Pütz (2004), writing about entrepreneurs of Turkish origin in Berlin, conceptualizes transculturality as practice, as a solution to the contradiction of the theoretical standpoint of the non-existence of homogeneous cultures on the one side, and the everyday codifications of knowledge through the use of signs and practice in which such essentializations are permanently (re)produced, on the other. Pütz does not consider cultural embeddedness as something fixed. He argues that it is created through (communicative) practices in a specific situation. It is thus open to change (ibid., 29). Pütz admits that the different cultural symbolic systems are important for an individual's social practice but understands these as a "repertoire" the individual has access to and chooses from (ibid.). Using an interpretative and symbolic understanding of culture, his concept of transculturality as practice leads us to ask questions about the practice of drawing cultural boundaries (Pütz 2004, 11) rather than inquiring the state of seemingly homogenous cultures. Pütz points out that concepts of transculturality claim that individuals can articulate belonging to different imagined communities in whose construction processes they are permanently involved (ibid.,13). The self-positioning on both sides of certain borders can, according to Pütz's view, be seen as the ability of individuals to deal flexibly with codifications of identity (ibid.). He

takes up the idea of Wolfgang Welsch (1999) that individuals possess or have access to different cultural frames of reference. In consequence, Pütz (2004, 27) points out that with the help of the concept of transculturality the inner-outer differentiation that comes with every border is conceptually being shifted onto the individual.

Pütz's concept defines transculturality as a certain practice of specific subjects, which can be divided into "everyday transculturality" and "strategic transculturality" (ibid.,13). Pütz describes "everyday transculturality" as concrete routines with which the subjects are able to position themselves in different frames of reference ["Deutungsschemata"]. If these frames of reference are reflected upon by the actors and used on purpose, "everyday transculturality" becomes "strategic transculturality." "Strategic transculturality" is moving reflexively in the different symbolic systems (Pütz 2004, 28), similar to what has been described by Vertovec (1997, 294) as "milieu moving," which student Xia, an actor in my study, illustrates (see 14.5.) in his discussions of moving between school and home.

Furthermore, Pütz sees transculturality as a concept for observing ["Beobachtungskonzept"] (2004, 13) or analyzing ["Analysekonzept"] (2004, 28), as a methodological tool for the researcher. It is useful for sharpening one's focus and for shedding light on the cultural aspects of practices and their borders and entanglements. This shows that transculturality, as Brosius and Wenzlhuemer (2011, 11) put it, "can be used to relate to a particular research topic as well as to an analytical method."

In his description of practices, Pütz (2004, 30) also considers the researched actors themselves having self-reflective access to culture – a necessary premise to use transculturality strategically. It is Pütz's argument for self-reflective actors who continuously – sometimes strategically – re-position themselves by drawing from their "cultural repertoire" (ibid., 29) to simultaneous create this "repertoire" and the boundaries, that I find more convincing than simply being a "TCK" (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009) or a "transculturalist" (Berg and Éigeartaigh 2010b). It is to stress the young expatriates' self-reflexivity that I like to frame their mediations that I encountered as "transcultural perspectives."

Transculturality as Perspectives

Presenting and analyzing young people's views and narratives of their experiences of moving and consequent constructions of subjective cultural identities, I argue that one coping strategy all youths share is their acquisition of a transcultural perspective to reflect upon their own lives. I use the term "perspective" because a student himself (see interview with Xia, chapter 14.6) introduced the term to describe his challenges

and desires to deal with difference in his immediate environment. I argue that many students, especially those of bicultural marriages or parents with migrant biographies, develop such a transcultural perspective on their own lives. A perspective that is highly self-reflective upon their mobility, their positions, and the influences the family, the school environment, or Shanghai has on them. Many students develop this transcultural perspective, this self-reflexivity about their own entanglement as a coping strategy for a lifestyle of constant moving – be it in their own moving or that of close friends. This transcultural perspective on their own lives does at first sight contradict their everyday spatial practices of demarcation and class-consciousness. However, these actually go hand-in-hand: their own mobility might evoke a desire for stability on the one hand, and a desire to broaden one's point of view to manage the experienced differences, on the other. Dwelling on the move does not erase but may even evoke the desire to dwell and create familiar spaces – despite having the next move in mind. It is thus a constant negotiation between drawing boundaries and trying to cross them. A transcultural perspective sheds light on shifting and merging of different cultural practices, positions, and creative formations of new subjectivities. It can also serve, however, to inquire moments of boundary drawings and practices of distinction. I think this dialectic relationship is well addressed by the term transcultural as well as the term perspective.

My presence might have triggered some of the students' reflections and influenced these. I argue, however, that transculturality as a method, a specific perspective, is not only reserved for the anthropologist or the academic, but is a form of reflection acquired by many of the teenagers that shared their lives with me. Transculturality as perspective is a "heuristic device" (Brosius 2011, 28) for my own approach, as well as a means for the expatriate teenagers to make sense of their lives.

Based on these understandings of transculturality as progress, practice, and perspective and the recent research and calls for research agendas in the area of migration and youth studies across the various relevant (sub)disciplines, ranging from Anthropology, Sociology, Geography to Migration Studies, the ground is laid out to unfold my own research agenda.

3. Research Questions

This dissertation examines expatriate youths' everyday lives in Shanghai to determine how and in what ways young people deal with the moving experiences. The ethnography chronologically delineates the expatriate students' experiences from the decision to move, the arrival and attempts of emplacement, the rationalizing of the

28

stays' purpose to the moment of leaving and moving on. Following this central narrative, the transit space of Shanghai unfolds successively, allowing us for insights into its various spaces and its meanings for expatriate youths. It highlights how the majority of the teenagers understand Shanghai as a temporary place, a transitory space, a liminal phase in their lives. According to seventeen-year-old Giovanni, after having lived for three years in Shanghai, "You are only here for a temporary period. Like a long vacation."[11]

My study focuses primarily on the age group of fifteen to eighteen, but includes participants as young as nine. How I got to know and interacted with the expatriate teenagers of this study is described in detail in chapter four, where I reflect on my own position in the field and introduce the two peer groups that I mainly worked with. In addition to these two peer groups, I include many other voices as well to show the heterogeneity – in respect to migration experiences and cultural identity – of expatriate youth. The student directory at the end of the ethnography offers some help as it introduces all the actors that appear throughout my work. I have spoken to many more students, particularly at a Singaporean international school and a German school, whose voices have informed my project but who are not visible in this study as individuals. These students are not listed in the directory. Five students appear on the center stage of this study in part five, where I discuss their specific experiences and their perspectives on their own lives.

Three theoretical and thematic foci support this overarching main research emphasis on the expatriate youth's migration experience: firstly, a focus on the youths' own perspectives, secondly, attention to spatial practices and the importance of place, and thirdly, an emphasis on questions of cultural identity, belonging, and mediations of cultural complexities. These three foci shall enable me to understand and explain the experience of "passing" Shanghai by simultaneously reflecting on theoretical aspects and methodology.

3.1. Question 1: How Do Expatriate Youths Experience the Move to Shanghai?

My first research aim is to understand expatriate students' own perspectives on global mobility, to determine the significance of their own experiences with moving. This focus on the youths' own points of view responds to the calls for new research agendas and perspectives in studies of youth (see chapter 2.1.) and aims at understanding the age-specific experiences of the move to Shanghai.

---

[11] German original: Hier ist man nur vorrübergehend. Wie lange Ferien.

In order to capture these age-specific experiences, my work, although focusing on the lifestyle of a particular mobility, mainly addresses the everyday, rather unspectacular practices – such as school life or housing and homing practices. Secondly, and most important to me, this focus on the youths' own perspectives and experiences has informed my research perspective and methodologies (see also chapter four) and has led to many passages in my ethnography, in which the students' experiences are described through the youths' own words and testimonies. Thirdly, I focus on the youth's relations with each other rather than their relations with adults. I am well aware that hereby the relations to adults and parents might unfortunately be underrepresented. Nevertheless, I think overcoming the "adult bias" (Baudler 1996) and understanding youth's own perspectives, will also contribute to the larger picture of privileged migration. In this dissertation I examine age as a collective identity rather than as a trajectory (Bucholtz 2002). I therefore use the term "youth" or "youths," "young people" or the age-specific term "teenagers," and not the term "adolescent." I acknowledge processes of transformation, change and learning – as something that is present in all our lives. As I have worked with youths that were all enrolled at Shanghai's numerous international schools, I also refer to my research-partners as "students." Furthermore, I occasionally use the term "children" not in contrast to "adult" but in juxtaposition to "parents" similar to Hatfield's (2010, 247) understanding. I have done so to point out the young people's dependency on their parents. At the time of fieldwork, all of the actors of my study still lived with one or both parents. Recognizing their dependency on parents, the second research focus on specific places will explore youths' (re)gaining of own agency upon their moves to Shanghai.

3.2. Question 2: What Role Does Place Play in the Young Expatriates' Lives?

My second research focus on specific places in Shanghai stems from the research tradition of Urban Anthropology. [12] While early ethnographers focusing on cities investigated particular places within the city, later works in Urban Anthropology saw the necessity of considering the city as a complete whole with a central function in global

---

[12] The Chicago School of Sociology founded in 1915 laid the grounds for this field of study in particular with its later monographs in the 1960s and 1970s focusing on specific quarters, districts, and communities within the city (Wildner 1995, 6). Robert Ezra Park founder of the Chicaco School studied under Georg Simmel in Berlin (Hannerz 1980, 22), whose progressive writings contemplating on the living conditions of people in modern cities (Simmel 1903) could be seen as early stepping stones towards an *Urban Anthropology* (Wildner 1995, 6). *Urban Anthropology* has always been influenced by History, Sociology, and Geography (Hannerz 1980, 4) and for the beginnings in Chicago and the "remarkable pioneering work in urban ethnography carried out there particularly in the 1920s and 1930s" the boundary between sociology and anthropology can largely be disregarded (Hannerz 1980, 16). Only in the 1960s anthropologists, habitually concerned with rural societies, increasingly turned their attention towards cities, faced with urbanization in their "traditional fields" as well as with changes and so-called "urban problems" in their cities at home (ibid., 1). According to Hannerz it was then yet a decade later for the term *Urban Anthropology* to emerge (ibid., 2).

society (Wildner 1995, 2). My dissertation examines specific places, but aims to connect these to the larger experience of Shanghai as a rising mega-city, as well as to ties reaching beyond the city. With this emphasis I contribute filling the gap of research on geographies of youth that scholars have recently turned to (see e.g. the founding of the Journal *Children's Geographies*), as well as attune my work to methodologies in ethnographic studies that foreground the importance of place in a world of flux (see methodology chapter four).

Expatriate children have often moved several times during their lives. Consequently, strong global connections across multiple and large spatial scales are part of expatriate youth's everyday lives. The continuous presence of these places in the students' lives is obvious not only in narratives of migration experiences, but particularly through the constant comparison of Shanghai to former places of living. Furthermore, daily practices involve memories of other places that are constantly evoked through material connections (clothes or furniture bought elsewhere), sensories (food from home), and emotional paraphernalia (an email from a close friend abroad). Jennifer Robinson (2010, 16) stresses the importance of the imaginary in connections between cities. She calls for a perspective which examines "imaginative ways" through which people – even those who physically stay in one region – are involved in the constant process of connecting places. Robinson's argument shows that ties to other places are vivid in our everyday lives. "Within a topological imagination, making one's way in a city commonly entrains a wide diversity of other places" (Robinson 2010, 16). Her concept demonstrates that moving through and living in Shanghai is thus constantly tied to elsewhere. Acknowledging these strong global connections and the continuous presence of other places, we have to admit that global processes and cultural flows touch down somewhere. For children on the move with expatriate parents, this means that even growing up transnationally results in living somewhere particular, if only for limited time. Yeoh and Willis (2005, 270) point out that "transnational elites belong as much to the 'space of place' as to the 'space of flows'," and so do their children.

Consequently, my second research aim is to analyze expatriate youths' everyday spatial practices and their (dis)engagement with the "local" to find out what role "place" plays in their lives on the move. This is not an attempt to understand culture geographically, but to find out how young people embed different global elements in a host of particularities. The second research focus on "place" thus serves to capture the experience of certain places. Furthermore, it aims to understand how expatriate youths shape and use specific spaces as a source for identity and age performances. A mixture of theoretical approaches from Urban Anthropology, Cultural Studies, and

Geography inform and support this focus on places and the investigations of students' relations to the city of Shanghai throughout my ethnographic descriptions.

To understand the experience of specific places in Shanghai, Howes's ([2005]2006) idea of "emplacement" and MacDougall's (2006) notion of "social aesthetics" are used to highlight the sensorial and embodied experiences of the youths' preferred spaces in Shanghai. David Howes's concept of emplacement, suggesting a "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" ([2005]2006, 7), helps to pay particular attention to sensories and enables to recognize and highlight the importance of embodied and felt experiences in specific places. I understand emplacement as the bodily and physical experience of places, as the processes of engaging with the "here and now." Filmmaker and ethnographer David MacDougall (2006, 98) suggests paying attention to specific objects, such as "the design of buildings and grounds" or "the use of clothing and colors," and daily practices, "for instance the organization of students' time," to understand the "social aesthetics" of an environment. Understanding the "social aesthetic field" as a coalescence of different elements such as "objects and actions" (2006, 98), social aesthetics are "both the backdrop and product of everyday life" (ibid., 108). Analyzing the social aesthetic field means focusing on a specific community and its landscape. This includes its material environment and the humdrum practices occurring therein. His ideas relate to my own fieldwork experiences. For example, the concept explains how the social aesthetics of a classroom (the shape, lighting, and seating arrangements of the room that for students are intertwined with specific behavioral rules) are capable of influencing the range or depth of topics of the interviews I conducted at school. In these discussions school-related issues were more elaborated upon than leisure activities. In my own ethnographic work MacDougall's idea of social aesthetics thus helps to further understand how the materiality and atmosphere of certain places foster certain practices or discussions among the youths, whether it is the school premises (see chapter 9) that demand for certain behavior and conversation topics, or a nightclub (chapter 11) that promotes certain ways of dressing up. Examining these embodied experiences of particular places in Shanghai further helps to trace the overall experience of mobility and moving to China – the processes of arrival and emplacement. Furthermore, this focus demonstrates the students' active involvement in creating their own spaces as well as their roles in shaping Shanghai as a world city and stage for their own identity performances.

To understand how expatriate youths shape and use specific spaces as a source for identity and age performances, my dissertation draws on Doreen Massey's (1995, 204) argument that "space and place are never just the physicality of plans and bricks and mortar," but "products of our social interactions and imaginations," which we construct

"in a constant negotiation with each other." Space and identity constructions are reciprocal. Massey (1998) has shown that this is particularly true for age identities. This correspondence is strikingly apparent when looking at spatial ordering of the population. For example, who is allowed on a playground, in a cinema or bar, and who is not. In Massey's words:

> And indeed the very drawing of age lines and the definition of the spaces where particular age groups are allowed, is part of the process of defining an age group in the first place. The control of spatiality is part of the process of defining the social category of 'youth' itself. (Massey 1998, 129)

Massey's argument of reciprocity helps to analyze relationships between the identity constructions of the teenagers and specific locations in the city of Shanghai.

To find answers to this second research question that asks what role place plays in the process of privileged migration, I specifically investigate the expatriate teenage students' movements through and sensing of the city (chapter seven), as well as their housing, schooling (chapter eight and nine) and leisure spaces (chapter eleven and twelve). These detailed investigations of expatriate youths' spatial and social practices will lay the ground to find answers to my third research question, which aims to understand the youths' collective and cultural identity performances.

3.3. Question 3: How Do Expatriate Students Experience and Negotiate Belonging and Cultural Identity?

My third research aim is to demonstrate that expatriate youths live in a highly mobile and culturally complex environment and to understand teenagers' myriad ways to negotiate, forge, perform, and contest their forms of belonging and positions in their social worlds. Until now the "Third Culture Kid" concept has been commonly used to grasp expatriate youths' cultural identity positions. The concept addresses one aspect of expatriate lives that my fieldwork and my in-depth interviews with expatriate youths also reveal: growing up "on the move" and/or in a transient space – despite all its privileges and opportunities – demands coping with constant changes and losses and questions of belonging and identity. The "Third Culture Kid" concept answers the question of cultural identity as follows:

> The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 19)

This feeling of belonging "in relationship to others of similar background" will also become apparent throughout my ethnographic work. Analyzing everyday practices, ambitions, and aspirations (for instance chapter nine), as well as attitudes towards Shanghai's "locals" (especially chapter thirteen) my ethnography shows how students

are learning to perform a certain collective identity and to be part of an expatriate social network. While this form of belonging, tied to the idea of an "expatriate class," is visible on the surface, however, my ethnographic works also inquires other forms of belonging and identity positionings that are more subjective, individual, and mobile. For these identity performances full of contradictions I have looked for concepts beyond the "Third Culture Kid" ideology, which I already criticized under 2.3 for being based on an essentialized idea of culture and for reinforcing the gap between "immigrants growing up in Western countries" and those treated as "TCKs" (Knörr 2005). Based on a transcultural perspective, which I introduced in 2.4, I aim to analyze ideas of belonging and the contradictions and interdependence between aspired flexible identities and rigid divisions based on class, nationality, ethnicity, or gender. Listening to expatriate youths' voices and gaining insights into their everyday lives and practices, my ethnography shows that the teenagers maintain transnational connections through media usage, friendships, the school, the expatriate community, or the family while living in Shanghai. While sometimes all these connections help to establish a sense of belonging, other times they also lead to confusions and contradictions. Using transculturality as a heuristic tool for my dissertation project, I aim to unravel the expatriate discourses on cultural identity and the cultural entanglements students situate themselves in.

4. Methodologies and Materials

This dissertation is a qualitative study based on ethnographic fieldwork. While fieldwork is usually tied to the idea of "being there," it is less clear what and when "there" means and what we can actually call "the field." The idea to focus on expatriate youth arose from the lack of ethnographic material available (see chapter two). The focus on Shanghai had also personal reasons. Due to an internship and six months of prior fieldwork on so-called "trailing spouses" in Shanghai in 2007, I already had experiences of the city and moderate Chinese language skills. In addition to my familiarity with the city, the amounts of international schools and the size of the relative numerous expatriate community, suggested to focus entirely on the city of Shanghai. This focus on one city, however, needs to be understood in the context of expatriate youths' strong global connections across multiple and large spatial scales.

4.1. Framing the Field: Transnational Connections and Grounded Research

> Finally, there is a tension, evident in ethnographies of transnationalism and globalization more generally, that is connected to the difficulties of trying to use single-site research to trace the mobile practices of transnationalism in everyday life. (Walsh 2010, 140)

Dealing with the subject of migration, the lives of the researched – as I will show throughout the dissertation – are tied to and embedded in many locales and diverse transnational spaces. Katie Walsh (2010), in a review of Fechter's (2007b) ethnographic work on expatriates in Indonesia, has thus pointed out the difficulties of single-site research to trace such mobile practices. For the same reasons I was often asked why I did not follow a more multi-sited approach (Marcus 1995). While this sounds like a fascinating endeavor that could produce other insights, I agree with Falzon (2009) on his critique of multi-sited work, where he has pointed out that although a multi-sited approach at first sight seems to counteract a certain "incompleteness," the researcher's reflective choices inevitably limit the field in any approach: "Ultimately, both [single- and multi-sited approaches] are partial, because both have their self-/imposed limits. Multi-sited ethnography is no more holistically inclined than its predessor [sic!]" (ibid., 13). Ethnographer Hage, who researched transnational Lebanese communities, showed that a multi-sited approach in migration studies is often problematic.

> In my first couple of trips around the world, I found it relatively easy to stop in France, meet the family, leave for London, meet the other part of the family, leave for Boston and so on. But after a while the issue of landing and leaving became a far more difficult affair. It was not so easy to just land and leave as if I were floating above the cultures I was researching: people's problems, my own relation to them, people's expectations of me, my expectations of them, the questions I was asking, the social relations I was becoming aware of, all of these things changed and complexified the site. As they say, it was getting thicker. Increasingly, it was simply becoming impossible to do what I was doing at first: just hop around. In many ways thick ethnography is not a matter of choice but a function of one's degree of immersion. After a period of becoming more immersed in certain social relations, they force you to be either a thick ethnographer or no ethnographer at all. (Hage 2005, 465)

Choosing to ground my research in Shanghai, I therefore decided not to focus on the relations of one expatriate community to another or the relations of family members dispersed over the globe, but rather to see how these global relations touch down in the everyday spaces of expatriate youth – to become "a thick ethnographer" as Hage terms it.

Consequently, my methodological approach follows ideas of ethnography that promote the idea of grounding ethnographic research in particular sites, such as Zsuzsa Gille and Seán Ó Riain (2002) and Harri Englund (2002) have put forward. These

approaches argue that the focus on specific places, nonetheless, enables us to gain insights into the global networks of its actors.

> We have argued for a global ethnography that still locates itself firmly in places but which conceives of those places as themselves globalized with multiple external connections, porous and contested boundaries, and social relations that are constructed across multiple spatial scales. (Gille and Ó Riain 2002, 290–291)

Similar to Gille and Ó Riain's suggested perspectives on specific places as "globalized with multiple external connections," Englund promotes the methodological focus on sites in recognition of the global connections. Englund (2002, 286), however, rejects the concept of localization due to its inherent misleading dichotomy as the opposite of globalization, and suggests a "postglobalist" perspective that works with the idea of emplacement – a term Howes ([2005]2006, 7) has later formed into a full-fledged concept that focuses on the "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" – to enhance sensitivity to situatedness in a globalized world. Englund's perspective enables to stress the transformation of global elements in particular places.

> This perspective is postglobalist because it both builds on earlier insights into flows and circulations in a global space, and it recognizes specific sites and terrains as the conditions of their existence and transformation. Even the apparently most global phenomenon is continuously emplaced as it reaches its new destinations. As such, localization is doubly disqualified to capture the contours of emplacement. Not only does it evoke globalization as its logical opposite, it also conveys a sense of closure in local appropriations. If persons, institutions, and capital are always emplaced, the challenge is to understand the variable capacities of places to act as springboards for traveling, whether by people, ideas, or institutions. (Englund 2002, 286)

Englund's (2002) postglobalist perspective promotes my focus on Shanghai and the various specific places within the city and supports my theoretical and empirical interest in emplacement and urban spaces that I have formulated in chapter 3.2. In choosing specific sites within Shanghai, instead of following a multi-sited approach, I saw the advantage of being able to produce a sense of the specific local texture of expatriate youth culture(s), agreeing with Yeoh and Willis (2005, 270) who wrote, "transnational elites belong as much to the 'space of place' as to the 'space of flows'."

The methodological approaches by Gille and Ó Riain as well as by Englund, however, simultaneously ask to consider the global connections these places are part of: "Not only is the so-called local an emergent property of nonlocal processes, the so-called global also requires particular sites and terrains to operate" (Englund 2002, 266). Willis, Yeoh, and Fakhri (2002, 506) have pointed this out for expatriate lifeworlds: "[T]ransnational elites may be evidence of processes at a global scale, but this 'global' is constructed and understood by operations of particular individuals in local spaces." A postglobalist perspective is thus useful for my research to understand expatriate

youths' ways of living not only as outcomes of globalization, but to see the teenagers as mobile yet emplaced actors.

Ironically, in the end, I also conducted interviews and participant observation in Germany after the move of some students to Germany. While Shanghai as the research site and the age group of teenagers were roughly set from the start, the paths I came to follow were often improvised. Coleman and Collins's description of the production of a field emphasizes the strong role the researcher as an individual plays in the process of her work:

> [F]ields are as much 'performed' as 'discovered', framed by boundaries that shift according to the analytical and rhetorical preferences of the ethnographer and, more rarely, the informant. (Coleman and Collins 2006, 17)

This shifting of boundaries and the performativity of the field that Coleman and Collins describe is certainly true for my research project. It can be added that in addition to the researcher's standpoints, perspectives, and abilities, different gatekeepers can play a crucial role in the researcher's navigation through the vast field, allowing or restricting access to certain sites, events, or people. Let me describe in detail how over the course of three years I (and others) framed the field for this ethnography, how I chose to interpret all these experiences, and how I arrived to finally create this narrative.

4.2.   Anxious Approaches and Allotted Access

Eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork in Shanghai were conducted from mid August 2010 to early July 2011 with an additional short follow-up stay after the summer school break in September 2011 and another two-week stay in May/June 2012. While this is easy to write now, strategies to gain access to the "field," fieldwork opportunities, and durations and numbers of stays were less firm in the beginning.

Before moving to Shanghai in August 2010, I had contacted several principals of various English-medium schools via email, sending them my research requests, outlines of intended activities, and letters of recommendation. I tried contacting them again when a conference visit took me to Shanghai in June 2010, two months before my official fieldwork stay. When one principal of a British school was willing to meet up, I took a ten-minute opportunity to pitch my research project and was able to gain his support to conduct group interviews with students at his school – if the parents would give their consent. Individual interviews would be impossible, as I was not allowed to be alone in one room with students according to school policies. I was to contact him again at the end of the summer break in August. I returned to Germany for my last fieldwork preparations to finally leave for Shanghai in mid August 2010. I had not managed to secure an apartment or room earlier and was lucky to stay with a Chinese friend who I knew from my studies in France six years prior. It was then, in the heart of

Shanghai's former French concession, in an old lane house, that my fieldwork started. Sharing the kitchen in the hallway with Chinese neighbors and shopping on the local wet market, I felt far away from expatriate Shanghai. I spent the days looking for apartments, writing to schools again, and receiving no replies. The arrangements with the British school proved difficult and I was waiting for the parents' permissions to let their children participate in the round of group discussions. I tried to reach out to the expatriate community by visiting talks and mixers organized by various expatriate organizations. Although it was in no way clear where my work would take me, I had to look for my own place to stay. Torn between the expatriate locations and international schools in either the far eastern suburbs of the city, or the far western suburbs of the city, I finally decided (after having looked at twenty apartments) to take a studio downtown. It was located just a few streets away from my friend, conveniently located at a metro station with two lines, and one hour car ride to either side of Shanghai. This way, I was free to work with schools and youth in Hongqiao (west) and Pudong (east). My PhD scholarship did not allow me to live inside the housing areas the students lived in – although renting a flat in close proximity, but outside the gates, would have been possible. During my second follow-up stay in May/June 2012, with the help of a student's mother, I arranged to stay in the guesthouse of a housing compound. The first months in Shanghai, however, I spent trying to get access to different international schools, sometimes feeling stuck in my downtown high-rise building, gazing onto Shanghai (see Figure 1, page 1).

Wanting to work with minors brought several challenges in regards to access: permissions of headmasters and teachers to visit schools or classes, and parents' consents to record interviews were required and often seemed impossible to get. Writing to school principals or parent associations had proved unsuccessful except for the British school. I visited a counselor and a teacher at two different American schools, who both supported my research undertaking and tried to help me getting access by introducing my project to their principals. However, these schools later rejected my request to talk to students on unknown grounds. These were the same schools that had ignored my letters earlier. Despite frustrating rejections, I kept introducing myself to teachers, psychologists, and parents at publically open events such as fairs or talks. Through these contacts, I was finally able to visit a Singaporean international school for rounds of group interviews with students from the eleventh grade of their IB program. At the same time, November 2011, the British school had finally put together a list of nine students who I was able to meet for group discussions at the school premises. These group interviews at the two schools contribute valuable perspectives to my project on expatriate youth in Shanghai. However, I was reminded

38

of Hannerz's description of "anthropology by appointment" (2006, 34), a term Hannerz traces back to Luhrmann (1996). To Hannerz the term describes

> the reality that often enough in modern life generally, although not least in studying up or sideways, there may be less to participate in and observe fruitfully even if we had total access, but also that access to people, to informants, is in fact often limited, regulated and timed. (Hannerz 2006, 34)

I wanted to move beyond this regulated interaction and mere interviewing at the British and Singaporean schools and was curious to finally explore expatriate youths' everyday practices. This proved difficult because expatriate children spent most of their days in school or at home, and both these spaces were difficult to enter as an outsider. Contemplating my strategy on how to get in touch with teenagers outside the realm of the school and home, nightlife spaces came to mind. Bars and clubs, though openly accessible as physical locations, proved to be no solution either. This unofficial work-around would have meant to work without parents' consent, which made me feel uncomfortable about the whole approach and I never really pursued it. I tried another path and went to charity activities teenagers were involved at. While this was a more official and parent-accepted ground, these were only one-time events and I was not able to establish enough rapport with teenagers to meet up for further activities or interviews. However, these observations and communal activities – such as sorting donated clothing together – helped me to get first insights into expatriate teenagers' lives and helped me to overcome a certain shyness and insecurity in the interaction with teenagers. This initial shyness was maybe normal field anxiety (see Lindner 1981; Warneken and Wittel 1997), rooted particularly in my worries of how to talk to children and teenagers, an age group I had hardly interacted with in the last years.

Finally, at yet another open expatriate event in December 2010, this time on the premises of a German school, things started to change. I was able to introduce myself to the school's headmaster who turned out to be very supportive and allowed me to observe during classes. He introduced me to a head teacher of an eleventh grade class. This teacher then further introduced me to his colleagues who agreed to let me join their Geography, English literature, German literature, History, and Ethics classes. I finally had a chance to conduct fieldwork beyond "anthropology of appointment" (Hannerz 2006) and interact with teenage students on a regular basis rather than at one-time interviews. The students were between fifteen and eighteen when I first met them and were one and a half years away from graduation. My days at school proved valuable in becoming familiar with their everyday routines.

A Day at School – Based on Field Notes from February 17, 2011

It is six in the morning when my alarm goes off, a few minutes to seven when I leave the house and run to the next metro stop. At this time of the day the metro is still rather empty and I am lucky to catch a seat. But when I get off the subway I have problems to catch a taxi at a busy intersection to drive me out to the school. It is already eight when I finally arrive. I am afraid of being late for class, but patiently wait at the entrance gate to put my name on the visitor list and to receive the visitor pass to put around my neck. Meanwhile, the last students arrive and are routinely entering the premises, opening the automatic doors with their student ID cards. I spot Charlie in the crowd, and it calms me to see a familiar face. I am not the only one running late for class. We wave. I point to the desk officer at the front gate and signal that I will be inside soon. She waits for me on the stairs and we hug to say hello. On our way to the classroom she wonders when she has seen me last, reminisces about the Friday night at Mural [night club] and asks me about my Chinese New Year break. She stayed at her Chinese grandma's place (which, according to her, was boring) and then went on to Sri Lanka.

When we arrive at the classroom, just on time, I say hello to the teacher and drop on the chair next to the washbasin, outside the U-shaped rows of tables that the students sit at. The teacher says good morning, without the noise level going down even a bit, and welcomes me to his English class. Students are to work on group projects today, and freely mingle, talk, and laugh. I walk over to Karina and Lara, say hello to Alex and Don. Asking them about the interview, they suggest the fifth period as Ethics lessons are cancelled for today. I ask them if they know someone else who wants to join the group interview and they suggest Bjoern. We arrange to meet after the fourth period in the Piazza – which I now know to be the big entrance hall. I walk back to the girls' side of the room and fall down on the new couch and simply listen to what is going on around me. I learn that the comfortable sofa is borrowed from the senior classroom as they are gone on a school trip for the whole week. I say hello to Antonia who seems to be lost in thought, staring onto a red sheet of cardboard paper in front of her. I ask her about her group's topic – Shakespeare on the Screen – and we start chatting. The two girls Charlie and Olivia join in as they are in the same group. Now everyone seems busy working on posters and presentations covering different topics on Shakespeare. Students are allowed to leave the classroom and there is a lot of movement going on. Meanwhile, someone has organized the "media cart" and every group takes out a computer to work on their handouts or to do some research online.

I go to the little snack point in the Piazza and get a coffee. Slowly walking back to the classroom across the long hallways, I realize how I learned my way around over the past weeks. I somehow started feeling comfortable at school. The endless stairs, corridors, and classrooms now seem familiar, the silence in the building during class somewhat friendlier, the contact with students more at ease.

Back in the classroom I drop onto the couch again. How great that there is a couch today! I look around and take some notes. As the popular International Movie Data Base (IMDB) website is blocked in China and the school computers have no VPN or proxy installed to channel them around the virtual wall, Olivia is searching for another website listing numbers and information on Shakespeare film adaptations. We start to discuss Internet blocking in China, as the blocking of the movie database website does not seem plausible or comprehensible to us. Olivia mentions the typical cases of facebook and YouTube. Antonia states that she can understand the Chinese government hindering access to these. The girls

start discussing the trigger events for the blocking of these sites. Olivia talks about Tibet and attacks. Antonia makes fun of her and corrects her that there were no attacks but calls for protests online. The discussion goes on for a few minutes until they focus again on their poster. It is interesting to observe how the Chinese government practices and decisions become a topic within the German school when it comes to the Internet.

When a boy from the group working next to the girls looks over to their poster, his eyes squinted to examine their heading, Olivia asks with surprise in her voice: "Can you actually see anything? Your eyes are so slender!" Antonia jumps in: "Hey, are you dissing Chinese eyes?" Olivia responds: "No, I just find that fascinating." There is some mumbling going on between the boy and his group. They want Antonia to paint the headline for their poster and Antonia agrees to do so for 10 Kuai. She walks over to their poster and I join, somewhat still lost in thoughts about the comment on the student's eyes and the rigorous bashing of comments that might be conceived as racist. Do students draw boundaries based on the physical difference of "Asian" and "white" students? Olivia and Charlie leave the room, shouting at us that we could find them in the empty senior classroom across the hall. When Antonia skillfully finishes writing the headline on the boys' poster, we join the two girls.

The three teenagers sit on the couch and I sit down on a chair. Charlie has almost finished eating an apple. This apple was the central reason for leaving the classroom, as usually eating during class is prohibited and she felt it inappropriate to eat in front of the teacher. I think about these rules and the ways students' behaviors are strictly regulated and immediately wonder if it is actually okay for me to drink coffee in class. I remember that the English teacher is known for always showing up with a huge Starbucks coffee every morning, and I see no problem for me who strangely sits on the student side but somehow with teachers' rights. I ask the girls about their weekend plans. Nothing so far, except a Star Wars night at Antonia's for the weekend after. She knows all of the movies by heart and can almost talk along. They are planning to start at eight in the evening – after basketball practice – and watch until eight in the morning. A coffee machine and the promise of hitting each other when one falls asleep will help them stay up. Olivia thinks they also need "was lustiges" ["something funny"], meaning alcohol. Antonia replies that this is impossible as here parents are there. Beer would be okay, though. Charlie and Olivia, however, don't like beer. Olivia looks disappointed. Charlie says, that you don't always need alcohol. Other students start coming into the room for the next period. We get up and return to their classroom.

I sit down again and scribble into my notebook. "A lot of anglicisms," I write, and "Does this have to do with Shakespeare and being in English class? Or is it a general phenomenon among German expat kids?" Meanwhile, one student has opened his flickr account and he and Olivia discuss a commentary someone wrote beneath a picture of Olivia's boyfriend. The question mainly seems to be who wrote that commentary, but I can't really follow their discussion being too unfamiliar with flickr. When Olivia returns to her group to work on the presentation, I join discussing their topic. I ask them whether they have considered speaking about general difficulties of adapting theater plays to the screen. They haven't and Olivia immediately starts to google. Trying to restrain myself from the discussion, I turn to writing into my notebook. I often have the urge to participate, to help, whether it's a presentation or homework or even during discussions in class. Writing this down helps me to step back and watch them work on their group presentations.

Class is over. I still haven't gotten used to the absence of a school bell that was so prominent in my own school life. Students are shouting: "Are we eating at the shop?" I walk over to talk to Kressi and Mia. Mia inquires about my dissertation and I tell her that I am working on the overall structure, explaining the different chapters and parts to her. Moreover, we talk about a Karl Lagerfeld Photography exhibition that I went to see with a Chinese friend of mine. I know that Mia and Kressi are interested in photography and fashion. Unfortunately, I don't recall the exact address of the gallery at the Bund. Then I walk over to Karina and Lara again. Lara (who is busy kissing her boyfriend) and Karina agree to meet me for an interview the following week. We exchange email addresses and phone numbers. Karina seems very interested, Lara a bit unmotivated. I exit the classroom to bump into Andrea, who I met two weeks ago on a Friday night at Mural. We discuss my dissertation project and she is curious about the differences I found to students at others schools in Shanghai. Andrea is interested in giving an interview and has time when school is out at three in the afternoon. That day I feel another interview is a bit much to me, but we notice that we both live downtown in the former French Concession area and arrange to meet at a café downtown in the next days. We exchange phone numbers. At this moment, I see the door of "my classroom" shutting and quickly say goodbye to silently sneak inside.

German class. I ask the teacher if it is okay for me to join his class today. He is surprised to see me and comments: "Where have you been hanging around?" "In Hong Kong, to get a new visa, and behind my computer to finish an article," I explain. He sighs, shakes his head and addresses his class: "This is why I have dismissed the idea of a dissertation long time ago." I know from earlier conversation that his girlfriend is working on a dissertation as well. The teacher officially starts class and addresses the upcoming exams. The students routinely lament and then open their books. Communication analysis has been on the lesson plan for a couple of periods already. Today we read a text on kissing. One student reads the whole text out aloud. It addresses the famous study by Margaret Mead that explored the interaction between US-American service men and local residents in wartime Britain, focusing on the issue of kissing and the different meanings attributed to a kiss. The textbook explains that while Americans kiss early, a kiss only comes at a much later stage for British Women in the 1940s. The students seem all very interested in the topic and the teacher encourages them to apply Watzlawick's communication analysis in order to explain. But first he asks: "How do you flirt today?" As the text had explained that kissing was according to Mead only step twenty-five for the British women, the girls sitting close to me count: "eye contact," "smiling," "talking," "drink," "exchange phone numbers," "add on facebook," "first text message," "the first date." Bjoern, who has only been in Shanghai for half a year, jumps in and seemingly agitated shouts: "No! First date? That's only because they make such a deal out of it in movies!" Other boys join in. The girls protest: "If it is important to you, you put an effort into that first date!" Alex comments critically on the romantic ideal of love at first sight and how this draws girls into the cinema. The teacher takes up some of the remarks and asks: "If we watch movies from other cultures, is that similar? How about movies from India or China?" The class discusses and Antonia describes a Chinese movie that typically ends with the first kiss in the last scene. Everybody in class now seems to talk simultaneously and I can hardly follow, let alone take notes of all the comments. Antonia, agitatedly, voices how you cannot just end a relationship after two months in China. "You are immediately considered a slut!" The class reacts by shouting "What?" Some students contradict. "Okay, this is how it is in my family," Antonia adds, indirectly referring to her latest break-up. The teacher draws the attention

back to the text and the responding exercises in the book: "Education, cultural differences, what else is there in that text?" Students comment on the different roles and role relations, the historical developments in the US and Britain and the subconscious in Watzlawick's theory. When the teacher asks them to take into consideration that some cultures might even be more different than the US and England, one student brings the example of sex before marriage – "This can get really serious." The teacher follows up on this comment and starts talking about honor killings, which according to him happen when girls adapt but their families stick to their traditions from home. I sigh upon this cliché example, but stay in my role of the silent observer. A few students remark how this example is particularly extreme. The teacher agrees, but holds to his opinion that "cultural conflict can lead to death." But by now I have learned that teachers use exaggerations and provocations to trigger discussions. We move on to the next textbook exercise. I do not have a book and distance myself from the discussion to take a close look at the students.

There is a new student with long hair and a pullover that sports an anarchy sign. Who is he? [I later get to know that Matthias is from the senior class and that he has to repeat the eleventh grade.] I wonder again about the seating arrangement, which is quite gendered, and Bjoern's rolling R that so clearly points to his south German origin, whereas everyone else speaks standard German that leaves no clues on the geographic regions of their German background. I focus again on the classroom discussion.

The teacher uses his drama skills to underline the idea of roles and role expectations. He gives the example of a manager who seems unable to leave his manager role behind when he gets home. The students analyze that this father obviously doesn't realize how he is trapped in his role and that his family has a different role expectation. The students start thinking about what to do in such a case. Olivia suggests clearly stating: "Listen to me." Another student proposes to "write a letter saying 'Call me when you understand' and then leave." Olivia finds that this drastic measure should only be used when other means have failed before. It seems as if the students can identify perfectly with the scenario given to discuss and I wonder about the manager fathers in their lives. Xia proposes sending the father on a holiday. Kressi suggests to clearly state "Your family isn't your office." The teacher gives her credit for this idea and comments how the meta-level is the key here. The class period is over and Watzlawick and his communication theory are put aside. History is next, but I decide to make use of my ambivalent role and to skip this one in order to prepare for the following group discussion with Alex, Bjoern and Don (see field notes under 4.3).

I met students regularly over the next months at school and this was important for two reasons. Firstly, my experiences and understanding of such everyday practices, I argue, were essential to ground and contextualize the students' verbalized reflections upon their experiences of mobility. The value of experiencing students' daily routines became particularly apparent in later attempts to grasp abstract notions such as "home," "expatriate," or "cultural identity." The daily practices, which the two parts "Arriving" and "Emplacement" focus on, were therefore an important basis for more theoretical approaches and conceptualizations. In chapter fourteen, for example, where I discuss students' self-reflective ways of positioning in terms of cultural identity from a transcultural perspective, those narratives that unfolded in interviews without the daily

context seem much more fleeting. Secondly, in addition to these valuable insights into their school routines – the major aspect of their everyday practices – I established closer relations. Students became curious about my project and eager to show me their world and eventually invited me to come along to their favorite Friday night location. I was excited to join. It proved to be an important moment for my project. I started to understand the different peer groups, these groups' main activities and interests. Common nightlife experiences led to even friendlier terms at school again. And the interaction at school and nightlife activities also led to more comfortable interviews, which I was now able to conduct outside the classroom.

4.3.   Interviewing Groups and Individuals

I conducted fourteen group discussions with thirty-nine different students and seventeen individual interviews. Most of the individual interviews were recorded with students who had already taken part in a group discussion. Four students only took part in individual interviews. Several students were interviewed two or three times, leading to a total of thirty-one group and individual interviews with forty-three students. All of these were audio-recorded. I additionally conducted one expert interview with a school counselor at an American school and discussed my research topic with a few teachers, but decided to use these as background information only. My work is based on a voice-centered approach that focuses on students' own words and perspectives as youths' own accounts of migration experiences have largely been ignored until today (see Dobson (2009) and chapter two of this dissertation).

The questions for the group discussions and for the first round of individual interviews were the same. These accorded to my research interests addressing issues of moving to Shanghai as well as everyday practices. Both the group discussions and the individual interviews were semi-structured. This means that although a specific set of questions was posed to the students, these could vary in order and emphasis as room was given for the teenagers and myself to introduce and respond to other issues freely. This approach therefore acknowledged my own research agenda to understand specific issues from the teenagers' point of view, as well as the students' agency by providing space for them to present new topics.

The second round of semi-structured interviews took up new questions and issues underrepresented or unclear in the first round, for instance reflections upon the students' position/integration in China and the experience and meaning of specific locations in Shanghai. These were conducted at the end of the school year in spring/summer 2011 or after the break on my return visit in September 2011. A third round of interviews with the same students focused on the topic of leaving and plans

for the immediate future and was recorded during the last follow-up stay in May/June 2012. One interview was conducted in Germany on the issues of returning with one student in early 2012.

The first group discussions with students at a British and a Singaporean school were held at the school's premises. I always brought along cookies and good humor to ease up the tension, as the school atmosphere seemed to imply that there is a correct answer to a question. Although these interviews turned out to be interesting discussions about moving and transitions to school and school activities, the environment confined the topics. The city of Shanghai only starred as a theme when I encouraged students at the end of the discussion to draw mental maps of their own personal Shanghai. With these maps, homes, friends' houses, Metro stations, shopping malls, and clubs surfaced (see chapter seven). Narratives of exploring spaces in Shanghai and the related sensories were more present when I interviewed students outside school.

A Group Interview – Based on Field Notes from February 17th, 2011

I meet the three boys in the Piazza. They suggest the small French café next to the school as a good interview location. The café sells all kinds of French bread, pastries, and subs that enjoy great popularity among the students. It is a favored place among French and German teachers, students, and parents. The boys are obviously excited and like the idea of the interview being held in public rather than in a classroom. We walk over to find all tables already taken. The boys, however, steer towards a room behind the counter, which I did not even know existed. It is the smoker room and all windows are open despite Shanghai's February damp cold outside. No waiter shows up here and we don't order anything. Bjoern and Alex light their cigarettes and continue to chain smoke throughout the whole interview. I collect the consent forms their parents signed and explain again the purpose of the group interview. When I put the voice recorder in the middle of the table and the questionnaire next to me, it becomes obvious that the students have a certain image of journalistic interviews in mind. I ask them to introduce themselves and they do so in a very professional manner. Don seems particularly nervous and Alex tries to sound particularly eloquent. After the initial stiffness however, a lively discussion on topics such as the difficulties of moving, gated community living, international schooling and Shanghai's nightlife follows. In the middle of the group interview a batch of French students enters and occupies the only other table in the room, shouting and laughing loudly. The boys are annoyed and I worry about the quality of my recordings. However, afraid of coming across like a teacher I do not tell them off. We try to focus again on the interview. I give the three boys space to freely comment on issues that my questionnaire has not addressed and after ninety minutes of discussion we all get up. The boys leave and I buy a French baguette sub on my way out. Meeting them outside on the street again, we talk about the French students that were disrupting our interview – maybe the boys expected me to interfere in my position as interviewer. Bjoern then walks home, Don returns to school and Alex hops on a cab. I take the next cab and spontaneously decide to ride all they way straight home instead of to the next metro stop.

Like many other group discussions, the interview described above had started like a TV talk show, but eventually turned into an involved and lively conversation. Close to school, but nonetheless off the premises, the French café proved a convenient location to have in-depth conversations. While a few interviews were conducted in the schoolyard in the summer, the teenagers mostly chose similar European or American style cafés in Shanghai. Further interviews, mostly individual, followed later in these cafés. While I had only been allowed to conduct group discussions at the British and Singaporean schools, I was now free to meet the students from the German school and a few of their friends from a French and American school individually. After a first round of group discussions, I met the students for one-hour-long in-depth interviews that centered more on their own biographies and narratives of their moves and stay in Shanghai. Only during the very last stay did I conduct a few follow-up interviews in the students' own rooms; the more private interview location responding to the now closer relations between interviewer and interviewee.

This relation between myself and my discussion partners and its influence on the narratives is of importance, as Way (2004) succinctly points out:

> A relational approach to research assumes that the patterns that are "found" by researchers are products of what occurred between two or more people – the researcher and the researched. The narrative in an interview or responses in a survey […] are jointly constructed. (Way 2004, 171)

Based on fieldwork diary entries, such as the ones displayed above, I continuously tried to reflect upon my role during interviews and throughout my entire fieldwork. The student directory in the appendix of this dissertation therefore not only introduces the students but also comments on my relationship with them.

4.4.   Negotiating my Role

> A relatively youthful appearance is undoubtedly helpful when hanging around street corners with teenagers. (Wulff 1995, 7)

> I was incredibly nervous of the teenagers. I felt 12 years old again. (Skelton 2001, 170)

Like other ethnographers working with youth (Weißköppel 2001, 75), I often found myself thrown back into my own adolescence. The school setting – an environment I had never been back to after my own graduation nine years prior – particularly evoked my teenage memories. The whole routine of getting up early, trying not to be late for class, sitting in the classroom and seeing teachers faces change throughout the day, still felt strangely familiar. Listening to teachers' explanations and student discussions, scribbling into my notebook, I often got lost in the classroom situation, even finding myself thinking "I hope (s)he doesn't ask me!" This was of course never the case. My

own inner transformations back into a high school student came to an abrupt hold when teachers asked me to contribute to teaching a lesson in Ethics class (at a German school), or in Theory of Knowledge class (at a Singaporean school). In order to get access I did not object, and even used the given opportunity to have students produce valuable research material such as mind maps (in Ethics class) or mental maps (in Geography class). Afterwards teachers in the teachers' room – where I would go to take notes while waiting for the next class – would talk about students' behaviors or abilities, drawing me even further to "their side." This in-betweenness of my situation that I perceived was part of my troubles to position myself in the overall field.

Being neither student nor teacher seemed confusing for students as well. In contrast to Weißköppel, who during her research at a middle school in Germany (Realschule) rejected students' offer to use the casual "Du" in order to keep the age difference as a form of managing distance that to her felt necessary (Weißköppel 2001, 75), I had decided that I wanted to meet the students on the same level – as far as this is possible in a research situation. It therefore seemed normal to offer my first name (and in the German context the informal you) as the way of addressing me. However, while some students, like Antonia, related to me on the same eye level from the beginning on, others would fall back to addressing me formally again and again. To me it felt that the way of addressing became a battleground of my status and role. Alex, for instance, told me that he sometimes found it confusing to address me informally: "I will just keep on mixing them [the formal and the informal form of address]."

It was through the interaction outside of school that the formal address disappeared and a mutual "relationship of trust" developed. Joining the teenagers outside the realm of the school, in particular during their nightlife activities, proved tremendously valuable. Teachers actively tried to avoid such situations by making sure not to go out to the same clubs or bars. Here, I could prove that I was someone to be trusted. Students witnessed that I would not judge them for smoking marijuana and that I would not reject to dance or occasionally drink along when they raised a glass – sometimes provocatively to my dissertation and me. It became obvious that I enjoyed just sitting next to them on the couches talking about music, school, or relationships. While the practice of closely listening is most important to an ethnographic project, I experienced that sharing is also vital to overcome hierarchies and distance that hinder the ethnographer to capture youths' own perspectives and voices. Through my engagement with the youth outside school, through sharing my own story, my role over the months became gradually similar to that of friends' older siblings. This constant negotiation of my role and closeness in the beginning and the later finding of a temporary place in the group seem typical for ethnographic work. I was happy and

47

comfortable to occupy the place of someone's older sister who reports from university life in Germany, as this turned out to be my expertise everyone seemed interested in. This was at least true for the two groups I worked with most closely.

Finding my role(s) meant that I did not only need to position myself between teachers and students but also among the students. While I tried not to take sides in their arguments, which was sometimes contradicting my own desires evoked by school memories to be accepted and belong to a certain group, I inevitably established closer relationships and friendships with some of the students. This was due to mutual interest in each other's lives. Moreover, it was also the desire to find my role and my interest in students who were actively exploring Shanghai on their own, which led me to focus on two groups in particular. These two groups that I engaged with most, interestingly, were one all girls group and one all boys group. These friendships were obviously based on gender, something I had already observed when looking at the seating arrangement in the classroom. This was apparently the case in both the eleventh grade classes at the German school I attended. Peter once commented on the classroom division during an interview: "Like in prison, women and men separate." Although this division was altered for the senior year, gender played a crucial role in the expatriate teenagers' friendships and consequently in my interaction with them.

I often wondered about the implications of my own gender on my relationships and my overall research. While I felt that being female was beneficial to the more intimate, sometimes friendship-like relations towards the girls, I often experienced it as an obstacle in the relations towards the boys, at least in the beginning. Niobe Way (2004, 173) and his research group inquiring adolescent boys' experiences and concepts of friendship, however, found out over the course of their project that many boys preferred female interviewers. In order to shed light on my role(s) and relations in the field as well as to give you a first impression of my "key informants," the following section introduces these two groups – "the girls" and "the boys" – in detail.

4.5. Fieldwork with "the Girls": Real Ambitions and Fake Laboutins

"The girls" are Antonia, Mia, Kressi, Charlie, Olivia and Andrea. These girls were between fifteen and seventeen years old when I first met them. Antonia played a vital role in the interaction, as she was the first one to invite me to go out with them. Antonia, child of a Chinese-German marriage, was born in Germany, but grew up in Shanghai going to the same school all her life, something very rare among expatriate children. She is a determined, smart young woman, who has high expectations for herself and generally highly values intelligence and analytical minds. Other students sometimes found her active and passionate participation in discussions in the

classroom annoying. Antonia and I got along great from the beginning on and with her generous, independent and opinionated ways, Antonia became a key figure in my research. It was her invitation to join nightlife activities that led to closer contacts with many others at the German school. Her way to include me and openly state, "Marie is one of us" definitely had its influence beyond her peer group. Mia, an ambitious and eloquent girl, and her artistic friend Kressi were the youngest of the group as they had both skipped a grade. As they were new to the class and first not allowed to go out as often as the others, it was only over the course of the school year that they became permanent members of the group. Mia had a typical expat biography with several moves in her life. Kressi, in contrast, had moved to Shanghai at an early age. She was born in Germany to Vietnamese parents with Cantonese roots and seemed to have family all over the world. Charlie, born in Germany to Chinese parents and very much liked by everyone at school due to her friendly and nice ways, and Olivia from Belgium, admired for her great looks, arranged and participated in group activities on a regular basis. Andrea, the only one of the girls attending another class, was one of the few students who lived downtown. Andrea was a quirky, creative student who liked to make people laugh and had a particular reputation for partying – especially dancing – Shanghai's nights away together with Antonia. I felt at ease with these girls right from the beginning.

An Afternoon with "the Girls" – Based on Field Notes from May 16, 2011

A week ago, the Geography teacher invited me to join his class for an excursion. The students are supposed to do photo walks through different parts of Shanghai to document elements of globalization. Upon the invite, I arranged with "the girls" (without Charlie who takes a different class) to join their group. I meet the teacher and students at three p.m. at school. Andrea, Antonia, and Mia greet me when I arrive just on time and inform me that we will pick up Kressi and Olivia at home on our way downtown. However, one group only consists of two students and the teacher asks me to join them, as there has to be a minimum of three in each group for safety reasons. The girls protest. Luckily, another student shows up and I can stay in "my" group. Antonia's driver is waiting outside to take us. The girls have chosen the area of Tianzifang, a block of old Shanghainese lane houses that have been turned into small shops, cafés and restaurants. I am glad to hang out with the girls who I know best, particularly as I do not feel too well today as I have been vomiting all night due to food poisoning. I am also glad to join in on some expatriate luxury and hop on the big air-conditioned van instead of the crowded metro.

We drive onto two different compounds and pick up Olivia and Kressi. Although I have been to several expatriate family homes for my research on 'trailing spouses' in 2007, it is the first time I specifically see how these students live. Big villas surrounded by suburban greens and big walls. The girls, of course not startled by their friends' houses, discuss Olivia's romantic situation. Somehow, maybe due to my presence, the discussion shifts all of a sudden to foreign languages and language proficiency. Antonia shares a story from the last MUN

(Model United Nations)[13] conference where she met a Korean girl who grew up in Germany and England. This girl had offered Antonia to talk in German, in case English was too difficult for her. Remembering this girl's comment, Antonia becomes furious and all the girls join in. Everybody sees this remark as extremely belligerent. This protest is of course a form of friendly support and also justified, as Antonia's English is indeed quite flawless. However, I silently think sitting among them on the back seat of the van, the Korean girl's comment also indirectly criticizes all of their cosmopolitan manners and thus calls for communal critique. Andrea's quick-witted attitude is demanded and she contemplates on the right response to such an insulting and deprecatory remark. We further discuss the topic of language skills and everyone shares stories on children in their community who grow up bilingually. Olivia, who speaks Flemish at home, tells us that she only learned German in fifth grade. Antonia feels she neither speaks German nor Chinese really well. Andrea shares how she gave up studying Chinese, to be immediately criticized by Antonia for it. One should expect that after so many years in Shanghai, they should be able to speak Chinese, Antonia declares, but that they cannot "because they live in the expat bubble." I note that the bubble metaphor is apparently omnipresent among expatriates in Shanghai. Does my presence trigger such remarks? Andrea talks about the difficulties of learning Chinese. I share that although I have taken numerous evening classes in Chinese and just took lessons up again a few weeks ago, I myself am also far away from going beyond simple everyday topics.

The girls plan a "Lord of the Rings" night and discuss what kind of (German) candies their parents should buy. Antonia says that in no way she could send her mom shopping. She has no time for that, owning three companies and sleeping never more than five hours a night. Even her dad as a general manager has more time. I silently guess that their *ayi*[14] is getting all the grocery shopping done. Asking about a classmate of theirs, I accidently trigger several stories on different students, couples and feel like a whole world of gossip opens up. Who is wearing inappropriate clothes or has inappropriate ways of ending relationships, who is simply using girls, who is surprisingly getting along with whom, and who is "setting back emancipation for at least 200 years." In between all this gossip the subject of conversation turns on me and about my boyfriend whom they met at a concert, and my former relationships and why they ended. Fieldwork means sharing. After all the gossip, Andrea laughs and wonders what I must be writing about them! I sigh and tell them that I honestly do not know and that I sometimes feel they could write it better themselves. They protest and encourage me. While I am often worried tremendously about my research subjects reading my writing, this is one of the rewarding moments of working with students who are truly interested in and supportive of my work.

Meanwhile, the interaction with the driver is limited to navigating him onto the right compounds and to the girls' houses. He then is trusted to know the way to Taikang Road – the street before the Tianzifang complex. When almost an hour later he shouts "Dao le!" [We arrived!], all of the girls cry out that this cannot be true. We note that we ended up in Taicang Road instead of Taikang Road. The driver, without commenting, drives on and brings us to the desired destination. As

---

[13] MUN, Model United Nations is a simulation of the United Nations where students critically engage with global issues. First researching and discussing current topics, students later enunciate different (national) positions on these issues through role-playing. The majority of the international schools in Shanghai held Model UN classes. At the German school in Shanghai, a Model UN class was offered as an extracurricular activity. Some students also took part in conferences in Europe. Such High School and University level conferences take place all over the world.
[14] The Chinese term *ayi* here means nanny or household help. The term *ayi*, however, is also a polite way for children to address women, as well as meaning maternal aunt.

he cannot enter the one-way road, we exit at the crossroad. I get off last and say goodbye to the driver. Antonia apologizes to everyone for her driver bringing us to the wrong location at first. Nobody takes up on this.

When we arrive we gear towards the Kommune, a café known to the girls for its delicious milkshakes. The Kommune offers outdoor seating in the midst of the small alleys and, like all coffee shops in Tianzifang, is meant for an expat income rather than the average Shanghainese – a milkshake is about RMB 38 (€4,18)[15]. Gearing towards the chosen café, Mia, Kressi and Olivia are taking photos. I take photos of them taking photos, but as we all have a research agenda today, it feels okay. Drinking milkshakes, chatting and taking pictures keeps us happy for a while. Mia and Kressi buy some of the well-designed drinking glasses from the Kommune for their own rooms. Then we leave to explore the area further with our cameras. We look at a stall offering earrings and Olivia, who always wears big earrings, buys a pair. We then stop at a piercing and tattoo studio.

Antonia flips through a folder full of tattoo images. She already has a small tattoo on her neck and is now looking for a nice image of a salamander as a second tattoo. She remembers how she discovered the best image so far close to Olivia's place in Belgium. She does not find one she likes in this studio's catalogue, but shares that it is probably wiser to wait until she turns eighteen anyway so that her parents cannot object. The girls discuss their favorite body parts for tattoos. Andrea shares that her aunt in Germany runs a tattoo studio, stressing that she does not do the tattoos anymore but manages the store. It seems important to stress her aunt's higher position in the business, I note. We pass a store with ethnic clothing that I like and in the next store I spot a pair of trousers. Mia then takes a photo of them so I can eventually get a pair made in the same style, as this one is too expensive for me. We stroll along the lanes, window-shopping and taking pictures for the photo documentation project of globalization. In a small shop selling knickknacks, Olivia starts discussing her situation with her ex-boyfriend who is leaving Shanghai. They have just separated and the girls discuss if she should still give him the present she had prepared for him – a ppt photo show with pictures of their time in Shanghai, accompanied by "their" songs. The girls suggest she should simply ask him if he still wants it. I silently think about the difficulties of first romantic relationships that are constantly in danger of being torn by the parents' decisions to move on. The girls, on the contrary, seem quite pragmatic.

We move on, stroll through a shop selling leather bags and another one offering all kinds of hats. Finally we all sit down on the pavement, exhausted from all the impressions surrounding us. I take a few pictures. The girls talk about their prom next year and their ideas of a talent night for the next term. We then hop on a cab to meet the rest of their class and the teacher for dinner, discussion of the excursion and the exchange of photos at an American diner.

As the excerpt of my field notes above illustrates, gossip about acquaintances, first romances, but also school grades, language skills, and career ambitions was common among the girls. The fieldwork vignette also demonstrates a popular leisure activity that was intricately linked to these conversations: the shared practices of "doing fashion" (Liechty 2003); buying, trying on, or talking about clothes. These common topics

---

[15] According to the currency converter www.oanda.com, the average exchange rate between August 1st 2010 and August 1st 2011 was RMB 1 to €0,11.

among the girls were familiar to me and I could easily join their conversations. On the one hand, the moral implications of listening or even participating in gossip demanded constant reflections about my role and obligations as researcher and remained difficult for me throughout my fieldwork. On the other hand, gossip was an important element for me to gain information about the students' lifeworlds (see for instance Marie Gillespie's (1999) work on how gossip about soap operas among South Asian youth in London is linked to negotiating their own social networks), as well as to maintain the on-going process of social access (Carmel 2011, 552).

While the girls were more interested in spending time together at Tianzifang than taking their research project seriously, it was an afternoon that allowed me to feel comfortable with my own research agenda. Generally, with the girls I sometimes felt like being with friends, while at other moments my research agenda became central again and my role shifted. When one night, for example, we were cooking together at Kressi's house and then were getting ready to go to a club downtown, I felt particularly like a part of the group. When the girls, however, were discussing outfits and Olivia mentioned her Laboutins (expensive high heel shoes) my facial expression must have revealed my inner surprise of her having such expensive stilettos at the age of sixteen. Antonia thus asked what I was thinking and whether I found something to write about. I was a bit embarrassed, as I was dismantled again as the researcher, but then admitted what had shocked me. Revealing my thoughts, the girls all started laughing, leaving me confused for a moment, then shouting that these shoes were of course only remakes from Shanghai's fake market. It became a key moment for me to realize that shifting from friend to researcher, though not easy for me, was okay for "the girls." They always met my research project with interest and continuously asked me about my latest writings, findings, and ideas. While certain intimate topics gave me the feeling of having passed a threshold towards trust and acceptance, other topics were obviously triggered by my mere presence and research questions. The discussions about language skills, nationalities, and the "expatriate bubble" on the afternoon in Tianzifang, for instance, were in strong relation to my research themes, as the girls understood them. Nonetheless, these topics did not seem new to the girls, but as if having been discussed many times before. It was thus often the routine displayed in certain conversation themes that often led me to conclude that these issues were of importance to them.

4.6.   Fieldwork with "the Boys": Repulsive Moments and Aesthetic Jellyfish

The all boys group included Bjoern, Alex, Peter, Don, Marco, and Giovanni. Later two students from the grade below and Bjoern's brother joined. When I first interacted with

them at school, I was for some reason a little intimidated, particularly by Alex. During the first interview with him, Bjoern and Don, however, I thought them all quite nice. I recall that they were smoking heavily during the interview and particularly liked to present their nightlife experience. Alex, even until the end sometimes would accidently use the German polite form "Sie" to address me and our relationship remained friendly but rather distanced. Although I have never conducted a follow-up interview with Don, I had several casual conversations with him. Bjoern and I became closer mainly through sharing music as we both favored the same reggae artists. I conducted two individual follow-up interviews with him. The beginning of my relationship with Peter and Marco was different. We first talked outside of school at the club Mural and then a first interview followed. These two were in a different class than the one I was visiting. Besides a long first interview with the two of them, a follow-up interview with Peter alone was conducted in June 2012. Giovanni, although we had interacted before, I first interviewed during my first follow-up stay in September 2011 and again in June 2012. All the boys were self-reflective and interesting to talk to. They classified themselves as the peer group that went out, drank, and consumed cannabis, found school was not the most important issue and highly valued people who were equally cool, relaxed, or how they would put it "chilled."

The relations among the different students and student groups were gendered. The two groups I accompanied, labeled by the other group as "the boys" or "the girls" respectively, would sometimes unite their nightlife activities. However, the group of boys was particularly keen on hanging out *without* "the girls" on a regular base. This meant I also had to explore the boys' nightlife activities without "the girls" with whom I had already built a stronger relationship. I soon enjoyed accompanying "the boys" to the club Mural on Friday nights. Having joined "the boys" at school, having dined and partied and discussed their lives with them, I felt more and more comfortable around them and found their company and outlook on life enjoyable. Just when I had arrived at this point of easier interaction, I went out for a last time before leaving Shanghai after the school year in July 2011.

A Night-Out with "the Boys" – Based on Field Notes from July 5th, 2011

While the boys and girls at first hung out together at Mural, the girls are now to move on to a different club. I decide to stay behind with the boys and step outside to get some air and to see what is going on. There are plans to change the location and to go to another club called Shelter. Standing outside, talking about music, location and the like, it becomes evident that everyone is waiting for something. Listening to the ongoing conversations, I begin to understand that a decision for the next location cannot be made without Alex who has disappeared

---

with a Chinese girl in the back alley. Bjoern's brother who joined the group recently goes back and keeps some of the boys up to date on what is going on. I start feeling uncomfortable and I am unsure how to behave. Are the boys bragging, joking? What is really happening back there? While I am trying to figure out what is going on and to clarify my own position on the matter, an extremely drunk Chinese girl appears on the scene. Staggering on her high heels she finally opts to sit down on the stairs. I watch her as she leans back against Matthias who has come along this night and happens to sit on the stairs. This leads to much amusement among the group. The boys joke and tease Matthias. The funny conversation and the light amusement, however, all of a sudden change when one of the boys suggests to pee on the girl. Thinking this is a joke, I am startled when the others join in the conversation and start to consider different angles of this disgusting and humiliating undertaking. Shocked by this behavior of the boys who I had considered so mature, I intervene and openly state my disgust of the idea and that I will not allow it to happen. I go to get water and coke for everyone, distributing the bottles while telling everyone that they apparently need to sober up. When giving one bottle to the Chinese girl I start talking to her. I try to find out her address to maneuver her into a cab. She vomits. I then put her into a taxi and tell the driver her address. Bjoern tells me off, I would ruin all the fun, I should stop acting like a social worker, and I would not be allowed to cite his interviews any longer. I know I am for the first time stretching my boundaries from participating to interrupting. I try to stay calm and stick to my opinion. He finally asks me to get a sip from my drink, which I offer him jokingly under the condition to let me cite his interviews again. He agrees. Crisis averted. When Alex appears back on the scene everyone applauds, I am too tired [maybe read: coward] to try to figure out what happened precisely and we go on to Shelter. Some of the boys purchase marijuana and we sit outside waiting for the club to stop charging at three a.m. Dancing only for a bit, I soon leave for my apartment, still shocked to have seen such a different side of the boys. What has all this to do with racism? Is this "adolescent" behavior? Is this the infamous "peer pressure"? Or do we have to understand such behavior or fantasies in the light of performances of masculinity?

I packed these ambivalent thoughts and all my belongings and returned to Germany. When I returned to Shanghai for follow-up visits in September 2011 and June 2012, I had great discussions with all of them again. However, the experience of that night remained very present on my mind. In June, in the light of graduation, everyone was reminiscing the good times they had in Shanghai and this night came up among them. Other stories followed, about Marco falling asleep and the other boys forgetting him in front of a club, where he would later wake up phone- and moneyless. Laughter joined these stories. How someone else had fallen asleep and someone else had stuck his penis in his ear. Laughter. I was startled again by the combination of tight friendships and at the same time brutal practices of teasing, mobbing, and physical harassment. Consequently, it were these more brutal sides and hierarchies that I became particularly interested in during this last stay. "The boys" would regularly meet at Alex's place – but as "the girls" were not allowed to come to these gatherings and even

Bjoern's girlfriend Kressi had called these regular gatherings "exclusive," I thought it impossible to join.

After an interview with Peter, however, he offered to contact Alex, Bjoern, and Don to ask when they would have time to conduct another interview, and the boys apparently agreed for me to meet them that evening at Alex's place. I was excited to join them at last one time for their ritual boys evening.

An Evening with "the Boys" – Based on Field Notes from June 4th, 2012

While being downtown for an interview with Andrea, I receive a text from Peter asking me to join the other boys at an Indian restaurant and to conduct the interview there. However, still being downtown in the middle of an interview it is impossible for me to make it on time. Texting back and forth we agree for me to join later after dinner at Alex's parents, together with Peter. At ten p.m. I am waiting for Peter in front of a Lianhua supermarket close to the compound gate. He calls and arranges Bjoern's brother to pick me up on his scooter. He pulls up a few minutes later, I jump on and we ride through the dark, through the shiny new and empty lanes of the compound, passing well-trimmed lawns and big villas. Mid-way I spot Peter, headphones on, cycling on his bike. After several turns, left and right, we arrive. I jump off and open the gate for the boys to ride inside.

I follow Peter and Bjoern's brother inside, via the terrace, through the huge living room, upstairs into Alex's room. Here about ten boys are lying and sitting on the couch and the big bed, smoking, drinking beer and watching a movie. A dog greets me and in my unsecure situation, not knowing what to do, I focus on the dog and start to pet it. The TV screen shows sharks tearing something or someone apart. Cuddling the dog to keep my eyes away from the screen, I panic on the thought that I am stuck watching a horror movie with a bunch of drunken and stoned teenage boys. Trying to calm myself – thanks to the dog! – I soon realize to my surprise that we are only watching *Deep blue*, a documentary on the earth's oceans based on very aesthetic film material that was shot for a BBC series. This is at least one problem less for me, as I can't watch any movie that is judged suitable only for people over sixteen.

Some of the guys step out to the adjacent balcony (to smoke marijuana) and I get a spot on the couch between Antonia's friend – a former student at the school but a temporary guest to the group like me – and Giovanni. Antonia's friend curiously asks me why I am here or, he rephrases, whom I came with. Simply shrugging my shoulders and mumbling something about my interview, I realize that my academic intention does not answer the question. Usually hardly any girls are allowed to join and not all the boys either. When I then respond that Peter invited me, everything seems clear. No further questions asked. [Peter, I found out in a discussion with Bjoern, and also some of the girls, is thought to be one of the heads of the group. He can therefore invite anyone, even me.] I open a beer and try to grasp the overall mood. I realize that the interview is a stupid idea for the night and decide that witnessing what is going on is more important than interrupting their "boys night" rituals. I am startled how relaxed [or stoned] everyone is, and how nice. Instead of the expected roughness and meanness I find the boys lying next to each other on the bed, leaning onto each others' bodies, almost hugging, watching a beautiful movie and making loud remarks on the aesthetics of waterplants and jellyfish. When the movie abruptly stops as only the first part has been downloaded, the boys want to put on music. Bjoern, Don, and Peter are calling for Dvořák's 9th symphony. The symphony is played in high volume and everyone is asked to be quiet. Peter is laying stomach flat on the bed with his head reaching over the end, nodding along the rhythm. Bjoern moves his arms in a conductor's manner. It

is beautiful: Ten rough boys, lying around humming along the tunes of Dvořák. They discussed this piece over months in music class and now seem to love it. Alex expresses how he finds the oboe a beautiful instrument. An indeed extremely moving oboe solo has preceded his remark. After the symphony two boys leave to get food from KFC[16], Peter and Bjoern giving their orders. Hierarchies are somehow still visible. We start to watch *The Naked Gun 2½*[17]. Bjoern is laughing out loudly at every joke. We stop the movie for some reason. The boys with the food return. Some boys leave. A few of them have to go to school the next day. Giovanni also leaves. Peter enjoys his chicken wings. Don only talks about the news of the "Abistreich"[18] cancellation [he received an email on his smart phone]. We watch a little more of *The Naked Gun.* Peter and Don want to leave. I join them and we share a cab. I chip in twenty kuai, and they drop me off in front of the guesthouse.

On the one hand, I very much enjoyed their company and their outlooks on life. I think I was particularly intrigued by their ways, because their behaviors and relationships towards each other were less familiar to me than those of the girls. On the other hand, their behaviors troubled me and I felt more insecure about what was performed for me and what was really going on in their lives. We always treated each other with courtesy and respect, and over time the boys also grew curious in my person and my own stories of growing up and I became more and more familiar and less intimidated with their ways.

4.7.   Interpreting Interviews, Images, Field Notes and Facebook & Co

Interviews and Group Discussions

I transcribed all recorded interviews and group discussions, also capturing fillers, sighs, and laughter. For this task I relied on the computer programs f4 and f5. While most of the transcripts encompass the complete interview, I occasionally summarized passages of my own contributions during the interview.

The qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti proved to be a useful tool to sort, structure, and link all my textual and visual materials.[19] This software also allowed me to code my interview material based on keywords and themes. These codes either accorded to my research interests or emerged from within the transcripts. Coding

---

[16] KFC stands for Kentucky Fried Chicken, an American fast-food chain gaining popularity in China.

[17] The movie, *The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear,* is a comedy from 1991 produced by David Zucker, Jim Abrahams, and Jerry Zucker. It is the second movie of an American crime comedy film series that was originally designed for television. The television series, *Police Squad*, however, was cancelled after six episodes. All three films star a male police officer and a female protagonist who – after she falls for the villain in *The Naked Gun 21/2* – takes his side and eventually marries him. All crimes and evil schemes are solved by accident, causing mayhem and laughter, making the film series a spoof comedy. The information was retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Naked_Gun on February 20th, 2013 ("The Naked Gun - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia" 2013).

[18] The German "Abistreich" is a common ritual for high school students right after their examinations. The ritual usually involves disrupting the school routine with numerous practical jokes, often ridiculing teachers.

[19] For a summary of current debates on the advantages and disadvantages of computer based qualitative data analysis see Séror (2005).

categories were not mutually exclusive and passages could be attributed to several themes at once. Coding required several close readings of the transcripts. The field notes I wrote after each interview and group discussion, attempting to capture the interview setting and personal affect, helped me to remember the overall mood or context of the interviews. Chapters and arguments were consequently developed around prominent themes and codes in the writing process and interpreted further against the backdrop of theories, personal experiences, and the visual materials. Throughout the interpretation I worked with the original quotes and only translated German quotes into English as a very last step in my text production. For the final translations I also omitted some fillers, repetitions and pauses to secure better readability. Due to my focus on youth's own voices (see chapter 3.1) these interviews form the centerpiece of my ethnographic work. In order to contextualize these reflective narratives, diverse visual material, field notes, and impressions from media such as magazines or facebook were included in the discussions.

Visual Materials

The majority of visual material consisted of pictures I took as "photo protocols" to document the atmosphere at certain places. I also resorted to "visual note taking," whenever writing notes seemed awkward, for instance at bars or at the graduation dance. On some of these occasions taking photos even turned out to become "my job": at the graduation party students came up and asked me to take pictures of them with their friends – the choice of motif thus no longer only being mine. I directly incorporated some of my digital photography in my dissertation to provide further insights into the specific places the students and I moved through. As Sarah Pink (2011, 438) explains, images of such places invite us to contemplate on the relevance of the experiences of being "there":

> The photographs were important because the researcher took them when in that environment. They invited me not to know first-hand what it was like to contemplate the route ahead represented in the photo, but to imagine what it might be like. Importantly it led me to consider that the experience of it would be relevant. (2011, 438)

The images I chose to display in my dissertation aim to support my research emphasis on the experience of the local environment and at the same time reflect my own positionality in the overall field.

In addition to my own photography, I gained access and the right to use photos students themselves produced. This was the case with images taken for a Geography school project where students had documented elements of globalization in Shanghai's urban landscape (see field notes "A Day with "the Girls"" under 4.5). Some students also shared their prom pictures with me.

I also had access to student artworks that were displayed on campus or in yearbooks. These images were mostly relevant in triggering conversations with students about the production and meanings behind them. One example that I chose to take up is Andrea's work "My time is now" (Figure 24 and Figure 25) which I discuss in detail in chapter ten.

Two films produced by students at the German school, also found their way into my media assemblage. One film was made by Kressi and a friend to be shown at a reward ceremony in Germany. This film feels like a PR film for the school and is discussed in detail in chapter nine (see Figure 15 to Figure 19). A second film shot by students at the German school was shown during dinner at the graduation ball. In contrast to the first film, this clip does not star the overall school, but shows the group of students that graduated. This film contributed further insights into the meaning students attribute to the moment of high school graduation as well as farewell rituals (see chapter fifteen).

Most informative for my work were the mental maps I collected at the end of several group discussions and during a Geography class. Mental maps, a method common in geographical research, are particularly useful in order to understand everyday spatial practices. The method of mental mapping allows the research partner to set a focus from her or his own perspective – and thus despite its guiding question leaves more space for subjective experiences than interviewing (Ploch 1995, 24). Thirteen students at the German school, three enrolled at a British school, seventeen students from an international Singaporean school, and one student from an American school were asked to record on paper their mental maps of everyday important places in Shanghai. In addition to participant observation and interviews, these maps particularly form the basis of chapter seven, "Making Sense of the City," but also contribute to my understanding of spatial practices throughout the whole ethnography (see Figure 3, Figure 5, Figure 8, and Figure 33). These drawings of their Shanghai are understood as subjective interpretations that are based on the students' active reflections and ways of giving meanings to their spaces (ibid., 25).

A total of eight mind maps on "identity" and "home" present further visual material to my project. Students at a German school were asked to draw mind maps in groups of three or four during ethics class to discuss their ideas of "Heimat" ["home" or place of belonging] and "Identität" ["Identity"]. These discussions of the two terms were conducted in silence, students writing their ideas on two different large sheets of paper, replying to each other's comments. The mind maps on "home" in particular proved insightful and it became apparent that it is a term of many associations and emotions for the international youth. The issue of "home" and the relevant mind maps are discussed in detail in chapter 8.3. The mind maps on "identity" have informed chapter

58

fourteen discussing students' self-reflective ways to think about the move as well as their negotiations of cultural identity.

I also initiated a photo project during the last visit in Shanghai in 2012 for which I asked students to send me photos referring to the theme "home in Shanghai." The intention was to gain another perspective on the subjective experiences of home and belonging through students' own visual approaches. Few students responded, most of them after they had already left Shanghai. Instead of taking a photo specifically for this request, many of them browsed through their pictures to then send me one or two images that for them captured best the idea of feeling home in Shanghai. These images take up various themes and give insights into students' personal worlds, displaying family members, friends, pets, or locations. The fact that some were chosen after Shanghai in the end gave new insights into subjective experiences of moving and longing for a place left behind. Two of the students' images in which the German girl Mia captured her own room in Shanghai before (Figure 11) and then prepared for the next move (Figure 37) are displayed in the ethnography. These were chosen as they brilliantly illustrate the experiences of home and moving by showing us the connected material practices.

While visual materials are included throughout my dissertation, six images – my own and students' photographs, mental and mind maps – were selected to introduce each of the six parts of this ethnography. These six images aim to open a certain space for the ethnographic and theoretical arguments to unfold in each part.

Field Notes

Field notes as reflections of my own engagement with Shanghai and my field, and as protocols documenting interviews, school days, and specific events in the community, helped me to remember the overall stage for the voices of the young actors my work centers on. Most of these notes are hand-written and I therefore abstained from sorting or coding them in Atlas.ti due to time constraints. Close readings of them, however, let me incorporate many of them indirectly via reflections and interpretations of interview quotes. I chose to include a few complete field notes directly (see under 4.2, 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6) to shed light on the subjective practice of fieldwork, my own position in the field, and the production of "data." Simultaneously, these notes also provide insights into students' everyday lives and their attitudes towards my research project.

Facebook & Co

Numerous free English-medium magazines [20] circulating in Shanghai, as well as advertisements, flyers, websites and online forums provided further insights into the lifestyles of the expatriate community. Liechty (2003), inquiring middle class youth culture in Nepal, read magazines targeted at Nepali teenagers as part of a "global, intertextual media assemblage that constructs its own privileged world of reality-in-images." He further writes, "[i]t is onto this transnational public sphere, the media-assembled space of imagination, that local merchants project their dreams of a local 'youth culture'" (ibid., 219). Following Liechty's understanding, I read the media collected in Shanghai in order to understand the creation of an expatriate culture or community. His concept of media assemblage as "an intricate web of linkages that promote and channel consumer desires in never-ending circuits" (ibid., 260) helped me to see how the collected media fueled, as Brosius (2010, 37) phrased it, "a consumer ethic that affirms and 'naturalises' cultural values and habitus of the middle class [in my case: expatriate community]." Interested in the wider context of the production of an expatriate community, the media assemblage as a methodological tool (Liechty 2003 and Brosius 2011) helped me to trace expatriates' current places of consumption, education, work, travel, and pleasure. It further facilitated understanding the community's current discourses during and after fieldwork and thus to contextualize my focus on expatriate teenagers. The magazines and forums proved particularly helpful, as their main purpose is to introduce newcomers to Shanghai and to the expat way of living and consumption. Brosius (2010, 36), examining practices of the new middle class in India, pinpoints this potential of introduction or guidance, writing: "These intertwined forms of media are crucial when it comes to their capacity to educate 'uncultured' newcomers, creating immediacy and intimacy."

Furthermore, the online social network facebook[21] played a crucial role in my project. In the beginning of my research, it had never occurred to me that facebook might become part of my endeavor. It always manifested itself as rather the opposite: a distraction from my work. I cannot deny that a lot of the time spend on the networking site was mere procrastination, but facebook also became important as a methodological tool.

---

[20] *That's Shanghai*, *City Week-end*, *City Week-end Parents and Kids*, *Shanghai Family*, *Enjoy Shanghai*, *Time Out Shanghai*, and several others.

[21] The website Facebook enables its users to create his or her own personal profile in which he or she may include pictures, texts, and videos. It demands of its users to enter abstract personal information such as place of residence, employer, birthday or highschool – and through which you then establish virtual networks by inviting people in the same network to be your "friend." These friendship requests are reciprocal. Within these networks the user has several ways to interact: through status updates, wall posts, the commentary functions, and photo albums, a whole network can discuss their lives and negotiate their relationship and identities. Through private messages, and an instant chat function members can communicate privately. Events, groups, fan pages and online games are further applications on facebook.

After a round of interviews at a Singaporean international school, I surprisingly received a handful of friendship requests from some students. I accepted them without a lot of thought, and few further interaction via facebook followed. However, after I had gotten to know the group of students from the German school closer than the ones I had interviewed earlier, I started to think about sending out friendship requests to a couple of them myself. At first I was reluctant, as this meant sharing my own profile, friends, pictures, comments – maybe even about my research – with them. Further, I was skeptical if I was allowed to "intrude" into their online lives. Then, I figured, this is fieldwork. Negotiating how much one can "intrude," how much one should "share." So, I sent out requests to connect with them. All of them confirmed, and after a while others got in touch with me on their own initiative. I had no intentions to write about facebook, I was merely using it as a tool to easily and informally get in touch with students. Interview meetings or leisure activities, mostly arranged via phone texting, could now be arranged through private messages as well. Facebook became a handy research tool and a way for students to easily and informally contact me.

In addition to providing another way of communication, online social networks offer social scientists a window into the personal visual and representational domains of its users. They make communications between contacts, the networks of individual users visible. These (semi)-public documentations therefore have the potential to articulate, illustrate, and lay open social relations to others (Neumann-Braun and Autenrieth 2011a, 11). While this might seem like an ethnographer's dream at first sight, the entanglements and meanings are rather complex. Online and offline worlds are not separable entities, but offline and online relations often operate hand in hand (Neumann-Braun and Autenrieth 2011a, 18). Daniel Miller (2011), for instance, has shown with his detailed study on facebook in Trinidad how through specific cultural appropriations of these online communities, a heterogeneity has emerged even despite globally successful social network sites such as facebook. His ethnographic account makes clear that there is no facebook, but rather facebooks.

> As facebook has spread, it has also become increasingly diverse. So, from an anthropological perspective, it could be said that there is no longer any such thing as Facebook. There are only particular genres of use that have developed for different peoples and regions. (Miller 2011, x)

Having become online friends with the teenagers therefore helped me to understand their offline worlds better, to remember stories they had told me. Sisters who lived somewhere else appeared in pictures and comments, musical tastes and certain band names we had discussed earlier were mentioned again on their sites.

The expatriate teenagers' facebook usage, however, did not appear particularly frequent compared to some of my own friends or to accounts on facebook usage in

Trinidad by Miller (2011). This might first of all be due to the difficulties imposed by Chinese censorship, which blocked the entire site in China. Interestingly, all the students I interviewed nonetheless had a facebook account. By using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or proxy servers that re-routed the access to a blocked website via the US or Europe, the youths went around what they often jokingly called "the Great Firewall of China." Some of the expatriate families had bought such services, whereas other students were looking for free ways to access facebook and had to constantly find new sites and ways. This was also true with the popular site YoutTube, which is also blocked in China. A fact the schools interestingly appreciated, as there was no longer the need to block YouTube on campus, which had been done earlier to protect children from certain content. Access via such VPNs at home usually slowed down the connection and one had to be patient when pictures on facebook were building up slowly. For the same reason music videos on YouTube remained even with the help of a VPN client mainly unwatchable. Links to videos thus were rare on the boys' and girls' facebook pages.

Consequently, it was particularly during times that I was in Germany that facebook became the key way of communicating with the teenagers. While face-to-face interaction in Shanghai had mainly been accompanied by phone text messages, now facebook's private messages were used exclusively to occasionally keep me up to date on school or personal matters, as well as to inquire about my writing endeavors. Facebook therefore proved a good way to keep in touch and maintain relations until my next field visit. The last field visit in May/June 2012 was even organized entirely via facebook – including the invitations to the graduation ceremonies and ball and my accommodation in on of the compounds' guesthouses. In addition to the exchange of messages, I started to look at the pages and their content more closely. During these days in Germany, I was thus somehow still "in the field" – although only in a particular space. Similar to how I had followed my friends in Europe via facebook from Shanghai, I now frequently browsed the pages of people I had met in China. Longing for some Shanghai memories, I was amazed how much I found. As a result some of the students' representations of Shanghai and their online identity performances and relationships found their ways into my work. However, a detailed analysis of (expatriate) teenagers' facebook usage remains an endeavor for future projects.[22]

---

[22] Anthropologists and other social scientists have begun to study the place of social network sites in social relationships and their impact on space and identity (among others Dalsgaard 2008; Westlake 2008; Neumann-Braun and Autenrieth 2011b; Kneidinger 2010; Adamek 2011; Kirkpatrick 2011; Neumann-Braun and Autenrieth 2011b; Miller 2011; Madianou and Miller 2012).

It is based on the description and interpretation of all these very different materials and methodologies that I write this dissertation. The different voices and gazes could be put into different assemblages to form very different kind of narratives. In the end, however, I can only trace and engage with a few when producing my very own narrative of expat students' lives in Shanghai.

4.8. The Ethnographer as Author: Confidentiality, Subjectivities, and Scientific Practice

> Here what we might have called representation is no longer a process of fixing, but an element in a continuous production; a part of it all, and itself constantly becoming. This is a position which rejects a strict separation between world and text and which understands scientific activity as being just that – an activity, a practice, an embedded engagement in the world of which it is a part. Not representation but experimentation. (Massey 2005, 28)

My ethnographic practice has become part not only of my world, but also of the teenage students' world. While the practice of writing is surely the most solitary part of the research process, it is still embedded in its larger context. Nobody who writes about real people in real life can ignore the fact that words may have consequences for the people they write about – and alter their images of Self, the labeling by others, their relationships, or the politics structuring their everyday practices. What troubled me particularly, was that the teenagers themselves, as well as their parents and teachers, constantly commented on being keen to read my dissertation once finished or published, or even before. What happens when they read what we write? – to them, to me, to our relationship, and to ethnographic writing – is also the question Caroline Brettell and other anthropologists pose in the collected volume *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography* (1993). While this question was unknown to early fieldwork and ethnographers whose language of writing differs from those whom they research (Brettell 1993), to me it certainly caused great concerns and much contemplation. This problem arose in particular as securing anonymity proved difficult in regards to maintaining my own scientific standards of truth describing specific locations and practices. While many students were eager to appear in "the book" (a term that puts pressure on me to actually publish this thesis) with their real names, I objected. Somehow rather disappointed that their names would not appear, I proposed that they themselves should choose their own code names. Several students then suggested their common nicknames to replace their real names. I was reluctant to do so and we finally agreed on a fictitious name, which at least rendered the teenagers anonymous to outsiders. Having solved the name issue, however, did not mean I had secured complete anonymity. My research focus on urban sensories required detailed

descriptions of places that make schools and locations traceable for the informed reader. I addressed this issue many times to students, teachers, and principals, and the community agreed to live with it. I faced a more severe moral dilemma when it came to the fact that students, who knew each other, would always recognize their peers. The students on whom my worked focused over the course of my fieldwork almost all know each other and no anonymizing – at least if it is not completely fictitious – can ensure that they would not recognize each other. I consequently very carefully omitted all hostile or derogatory remarks that teenagers made against their peers. Hostilities exist, but are not relevant in their concrete form to my work. I was able to discuss certain issues with the students themselves and sincerely hope nobody feels offended by my writings – if someone part of the project actually does become a reader.

Another issue of great concern of this work troubled me already during fieldwork: activities such as alcohol and drug consumption and skipping school. How to balance my position? Although not being a designated social worker taking care of these issues, I still worried about certain activities. While I decided to accept the situation at hand and usually did not interfere, in a few occasions I spoke up to the teenagers and took care people got home safely or not involved in behavior harming others. This led to students teasing me as being a social worker. However, as I never involved parents or teachers, the relationship of trust was not disturbed by these interventions. In general, I chose a relationship of mutual trust, which meant I trusted the students and their abilities and intellect to take care of themselves as well as their parents' decisions and rules. I decided to write frankly about these practices, but here wondered much about the influences of my presence during such activities on the topic. Daniel Goldstein (2002) commented on the impacts of the ethnographer's presence as (future) author in the field, describing how his informants in the Andes in Bolivia were continuously concerned about "the book" he would write. Goldstein argues that positively one can see ethnographic writing as a form of indigenous media, an implement of self-representation.

> Even in more ordinary sorts of fieldwork contexts, in which the final product of the ethnographer/informant encounter is not a visual but a textual representation, informants may regard ethnography as a resource that they can use for their own purposes, and so seek to establish control over the ways in which they will be represented by the ethnographer. (Goldstein 2002, 487)

In Goldstein's case the informants strategically emphasized and performed certain aspects they considered important and most likely to secure financial benefits in the future, for instance by attracting NGOs. Consequently, he experienced a lot of mistrust rising from the idea of the ethnographer later writing about the experienced.

64

While the teenagers in Shanghai saw no financial benefits arising from my presence, it still became obvious that they were also highly concerned about my writings and how this could represent their lives. Goldstein (2002, 496) argues that some fieldworkers in response to mistrust, end up focusing "on ritual, or politics, or other public domains of social life […] finding that, in addition to their accessibility, these are in fact the topics that their research consultants would most prefer them to study." Likewise, one can, on the one hand, interpret the relationship between the participating teenagers and me as a trustful one in regards to my presence during nightlife and illegal activities. I am sure that to a certain extent my participation led to acceptance and offered the possibility for students to also casually inquire about my own life and to get to know me better. On the other hand, however, it became soon obvious that this invitation and willingness to trust me had also to do with the fact that the youths liked to see nightlife activities on the center stage of my work. Writing about nightlife for them was the right kind or representation of expatriate youths, of their lifestyle, the one they wanted to be written down. The eagerness to talk about nightlife activities was also present during interviews. Emotional difficulties that the move to Shanghai brought to them, in contrast, were often only mentioned on the side, not elaborated upon, and talked about with more unease and careful wording. The depiction of difficulties was rather unpopular.

In the end, however, I have no choice but to simply write from my point of view[23], carefully weaving the different narratives together. I decided to follow a narrative that understands the students' wish to stress their active ways in exploring Shanghai as means of simultaneously dealing with difficulties the move to Shanghai brings along, linking everyday practices and moving experiences.

---

[23] My point of view, or in Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) words, my "location," however is not a stable point of reference either. The "Location" as the fieldworker's standpoint and position in society, as for instant German, white, female graduate student, is not something "one ascriptively has" but one "works at" (1997, 37). Location is constantly shifting: "Rather than a set of labels that pins down one's identity and perspective, location becomes visible here as an ongoing project" (ibid.).

Part 2

LEAVING

Figure 2: Up in the Air. Photo by M. Sander

Expatriate children often have biographies that involve several moves in their young lives. In order to inquire how the youths perceive and cope with challenges of growing up abroad – or even on the move –, this part two, "Leaving," of the ethnography offers a chapter that explores the youths' narratives of leaving and their recollections of processes leading to the decision to move to Shanghai. In this chapter I, firstly, argue that expatriate children have only limited agency in the family's decision-making about the move. Secondly, I investigate the idea of "best interest" that underlies many of the arguments for the move. While the parents' idea of making the decision in the "best interest" of the child is mostly linked to future benefits, the children in the here-and-now constantly feel like living in a liminal space where the last move is just – or not even yet – fully coped with and the next move already lying in wait.

5. Retrospectives on the (Decision to) Move

> I suggest that more could be done in migration studies to understand 'the best interests of the child' by taking account of his or her own perspective. (Dobson 2009, 355)

When talking about the move to Shanghai with students in group discussions or individual interviews, the expatriate youths described their experiences of the decision-making process that led to the move to Shanghai. Contemplating on these retrospectives on the move, it becomes obvious that the moments of the decision-making are remembered vividly.

5.1. To Move or not to Move: the Decision-making

Examining the children's reflection upon the decision that was taken months, or even years prior to the interviews, it becomes clear that my interview-partners strongly reflected upon their role in the process. Through our conversations three narratives of their involvement in the decision-making process became visible: the children's exclusion, inclusion through a set of choices, and negotiation. As I only conducted research in Shanghai, of course only those voices of children are included whose families actually decided to move to Shanghai. Rejections of moving to Shanghai therefore cannot be discussed.

The majority of my young interview-partners feels excluded from the decision-making and describes the move to Shanghai as a non-negotiable announcement of their parents. The children usually do not want to move but often feel they have no choice, as Emily's story illustrates. Emily, aged twelve, was born in her "home" country Malaysia, but left when she was still too young to keep any memories of growing up there. She arrived in Shanghai one and a half years prior to the interview and attends a

68

British English-medium middle school. When I interviewed her with fellow students in a group discussion she introduced herself talking quickly and animatedly:

> Emily: I am Emily. I am from Malaysia. I am, I have never really lived or had any childhood in Malaysia. I moved when I was three and my brother was only six months old. I moved to Beijing, China, and I lived there for six years, six and a half years, close to seven. And then I moved to Thailand for eighteen months, which felt like a really long time.

She recalls her moving experiences as a set of events that would simply happen to her, leading up to a feeling of unfair exclusion when the recent move to Shanghai was announced.

> Emily: So I kinda started to realize, that is not fair mom, that is not fair that we have to move. And then, but then I had no choice. I had to follow my parents. So, I moved to Shanghai, and after Christmas would be my second year here. Erm, it's nice here, I will be disappointed if I do leave next year, but yeah.

Karina, seventeen years old, has a similar story to share. She is half-Czech, half-German and she came to Shanghai six months before the first interview. When we sit in the schoolyard, the voice recorder between us, Karina introduces herself by narrating her migration story as follows:

> Karina: I am seventeen years old. I come from Prague. I was also born there and have lived there for five years, I think. After that I moved to [Germany] and lived there for three years. Then I moved to [a town in Northern China], lived there for another three years. […] Then I moved back to Prague, and now I am back in China.[24]

Karina recapitulates her immediate strong reaction to the announcement of the move to Shanghai: "I just screamed at my father." I came across many such narratives of anger, yelling at, or not speaking to the parents for a couple of days as reactions to the sudden announcement of the move.

A few interviewees, for instance Britta from Norway, however, felt they had a say in the decision by discussing at least certain options about their participation in the move. When describing her first reactions to her father's announcement, Britta, a seventeen-year-old girl who had just arrived in Shanghai a few months before the interview, recalls how she could not believe it or take the idea to move to China seriously at first.

> Britta: I wasn't that mad; I was more like I didn't think about it. I just said sure, we move to China, NOT.

However, when she started to realize that her parents were seriously considering the move, she found herself and her family on a short trip to China to explore the idea further. Such look-and-see-trips, paid by the employer, are common. Yet, taking the

---

[24] German original: Ich bin siebzehn Jahre alt. Ich komme aus Prag. Ich bin dort auch geboren, habe dort, glaube, fünf Jahre gelebt. Bin danach nach Deutschland gezogen. Habe dort drei Jahre gelebt. Bin dann nach [Stadt im Norden Chinas] gezogen, habe dort wieder drei Jahre gelebt. […] Also wieder nach Prag gezogen und jetzt bin ich wieder in China.

children along is less common. Consequently, Britta considered herself lucky to have been able to get to know Shanghai before the final decision. Furthermore, she explains how her family explored alternative options:

> Britta: I could have stayed at my friend's house, lived with my best friend's family. But I chose to go anyway. So. Would be weird to just move in with her family when my family is just experiencing new stuff, and I am just like stuck in Norway.

The opportunity to see what her life might look like in Shanghai and the option of staying in Europe with a friend made her feel included in the decision-making process and led to a positive curiosity and willingness to explore new things with her family: "They didn't just decide, they let us choose." Britta's case can be seen as what Ackers and Stalford (2004, 111) call the "Hobson's choice' or "children's menu approach." The children are presented with a "limited range of options" (ibid., 113), these options are typically "within parameters tightly defined by parents" (ibid.). Britta, for instance was allowed to opt out of the move to Shanghai, but not allowed to influence her parents' decision.

Only one student described how he successfully managed to negotiate the decision about a move. Seventeen-year-old Paul, born in Brazil, has a Brazilian mother and a German father. He grew up in Brazil and the United States and moved to Shanghai six years prior to the interview and attends a US-American English-medium school. At the time of the interview he had just refused to move on to Thailand. "I wasn't gonna move." His father, nevertheless, went to Bangkok, but Paul and his mother stayed in Shanghai. Paul had not wanted to move to China initially as he hadn't "even googled it before" and thought it would be all "mud houses" and "bamboo forests." Paul remembers his father telling him about the move to China in a very straightforward way:

> Paul: So he doesn't try to butter you up or anything. He. If your dog dies, he won't make up an excuse. <L> He would just tell you he ran over the dog, you know. So he was kinda like: 'Paul, we are moving to China.' OH.

In contrast to the harsh announcement six years earlier, this time Paul managed to state his own opinion about the move to Thailand and make his point. When I ask him about the difference in these two decision-makings, he comments:

> Paul: I am older now. Before I didn't really have a choice. And, erm, my parents also thought it was a good idea to stay here. Cause of my last year of school. You don't wanna move right before you are applying for colleges and stuff. And your grades are really shit. It's not so good.

This time he influenced the decision-making and the family found common ground when reasoning why staying in Shanghai was beneficial for his future. Interestingly, Paul had learned to employ a future-benefit and best-interest narrative to argue for his

desire to stay, and his parents accepted it. The next section further examines the common idea of best-interest that often underlies parents' decision-making and family relations.

5.2.   Family Relations and the Idea of "Best Interest"

As my interview-partners' narratives of the moving process show, individual family members have different attitudes and interests regarding the move to Shanghai. While some children rebel against the decision, others trust their parents to know what is "best" for them. According to my young interview-partners' accounts of the moving decision, the idea of their parents acting in their "best interest" is also common. Teresa Hutchins's (2011) recent analysis of UK families' experiences of moving to Australia, showed that

> (F)amily migration decision-making is based upon a process of negotiating individual influence and power within the family, often at different stages in the process. In the majority of families, children were active in their attempts to influence adults, just as adults attempted to influence children. In some cases the adults overrode the opinions of their children and in others the children were successful in having their voices heard and acted upon. In the majority of instances, parents justified their actions as being in the best interests of their children. (Hutchins 2011, 1233)

The main difference between the experiences of Hutchins's informants moving to Australia, and the narratives explored in this ethnography, however, lie in the experiences of Australia as a place of arrival and Shanghai as a place of transition. Parents' decisions to move are not only past events, but likely future announcements as well. When talking about moving again in the near future and the emotions this prospect causes, Allen, an eleven-year old US-American who had just arrived in Shanghai after his father had been transferred to China three months earlier, comments:

> Allen: Well, it doesn't make me feel scared. Because I know my parents know all of us very well and they will make the best decision for all of us.

Hutchins (2011, 1233), however, has pointed out correctly that this idea of children's best interests is problematic and that "little is known about how 'best interests' are conceptualised, let alone operationalised, within families." Hutchins further argues that these varying conceptualizations of best interest are based on the "particular conception of childhood held by [...] parents" (2011, 1233). In the expatriate community in Shanghai, the underlying conceptions of childhood and adolescence often seem to be linked to the idea of children as "adults in the making," an influential viewpoint also in academic concepts as already criticized in chapter two. My discussions with children as well as my interviews with mothers conducted in 2007 show that expatriate parents in Shanghai justify the difficulties they impose on their children by stressing and

conveying the – mainly future – benefits of transnational mobility. Parents are concerned with their children's adult lives, sometimes even more than with their children's current situation as the family's move to China suggests. These aspired benefits and the future-orientedness of the students' lives are discussed in chapter ten and partly in chapter nine of this ethnography. Ackers and Stalford (2004, 111) came across a similar narrative of the decision-making in their studies of EU-internal migration processes – that of "future oriented consent":

> [P]arents expressed the view that, even though it was inappropriate to attempt to involve the child in the family decision at the point of migration, the child would, in the longer term, see the value of the move and reflect upon it positively. (Ackers and Stalford 2004, 111)

Often disregarded as an active part of the decision to move, it becomes evident that students are caught between the desire to stay with their peers and the wish to be with their parents. Hutchins (2011, 1233) assumes that "it is also possible that the different conceptions of childhood operate in parallel and that particular conceptions may be invoked at different times in order to support the interests of adults." The powerful discourse of "best interest" is linked to ideas of preparing the developing child for the future and is often used to exclude children from the decision-making process. The concept of "best interest" therefore strongly influences expatriate families decisions to move abroad.

However, children also have their own "best interest" considerations for their parents, as the excerpt from an interview with seventeen-year-old Lara shows:

> Lara: On the other hand I felt bad for my dad. […] He wanted us to come along – as a family. And that was an issue that made me think. I mean, you can at least have a look at it. But, then there is not really a coming back option. But also, that a father wants his family to come with him. […] He doesn't want to go alone. And again that was, I don't know, something that made me sad. I could not just abandon him. Because he is my father. He speaks up for me, he pays the school, pays this and that. Difficult.[25]

Lara's narrative illustrates how the moving decision for many of the youths feels like being caught between their parents' will and their own. For the intergenerational relations this means that worries about the other exist on both sides. Often guilt also plays a role in the family relations: My interviewee Karina explained to me that her

---

[25] German Original: Aber auf der anderen Seite, tat mir auch mein Vater wieder Leid. Weil er war immer drei Wochen weg, eine Woche zu Hause. Drei Wochen wieder weg. Eine Woche zu Hause. Also ich hab ihn eigentlich kaum gesehen. Und er wollte, dass wir mitgehen. Als Familie. Und das war wieder so ein Punkt, wo ich dachte hmm. Ich mein man kann das sich ja mal anschauen. Oder so. Aber, ein Zurück gibt es ja dann eigentlich nicht mehr. Aber auch allein, dass ein Vater möchte, dass seine Familie mitgeht. [Interviewer: Das kann man ja auch verstehen.] Ja, er möchte da auch nicht alleine hin. Und das war das wieder. Also, weiß nicht, wo mich dann wieder auch ein bisschen traurig gemacht hat. Wo ich ihn einfach nicht in Stich lassen kann. Weil das ist mein Vater. Der setzt sich für mich ein, der zahlt für die Schule, zahlt mir das und das und das. Ja. Schwer.

mother often felt guilty about taking her away from her friends. Emily describes how the family relations are strained by the emotional turmoil that a moving decision causes:

> Emily: I think that one of the worst things to do is to actually panic, because eventually you realize you have to move. You can't just stay there. Because, you know. Then, when I realized, you know, when my dad said we are moving, I said 'Okay, if we are moving, will there be a chance that we ever move back here?' He said 'Erm, I don't know.' When you hear that 'I don't know' or that tone where you just have no clue, you just know that you have to move. You can't say anything, because your parents would get, like, not upset, but kinda feeling, having second thoughts now. I don't want my parents not to move just because of me. But it's for my dad's job, so like, we just all have to move. As a family. We can't like stay here and my dad working there, and then coming back for Christmas, that doesn't make any sense. So we just have to move.

Emily's narrative demonstrates well how children try to actively negotiate the relations within the family, reflect their own position and consider parents' needs. Her thoughts on moving go beyond her own wish to stay and explore effects on family relations and her parents' emotional well-being. She does not want her parents to worry about her or have "second thoughts" and comes to the conclusion that opposing the move is not an option. Emily's inquiries about the option to move back also show how children wish to have insights into parents' plans and transparency about future moves. This might also be necessary for children to (re-)gain trust into parents' decisions.[26]

5.3. Caught in Limbo: Fearing the Next Move

Uncertainties of what to expect are obviously inherent to a migration experience. The fear of suddenly moving elsewhere (and failing to make it there), however, seems particularly common within highly mobile families. Emily's description of thoughts and past feelings surrounding the move to Shanghai show that moving can be overwhelming. She even speaks of panic. Panic as a loss of control over the decision to move and her emotions. Likewise, all the narratives of the decision-making process show that the teenagers and children often confronted their parents with anger when the move to China was announced. From Emily's point of view, however, to panic is "one of the worst things to do." Her narrative shows that children have to cope with fears and that moving requires them to learn to manage emotions. The fear of having to move again despite one's own will, however, remains present, even when the

---

[26] For insights into adolescent boys' own ideas about what constitutes trust with their parents, see Jeffries's (Jeffries 2004) comparative qualitative study of African American, Latino and Asian American boys from low-income families. Jeffries study describes four themes of trust that young informants expressed in their narratives, namely: obligation, sharing confidences, need fulfillment – both material and emotional –, and reliability – a belief that parents are "always gonna be there." Interestingly, the author encountered differences in the conceptualization of trust between the different youths. Asian American boys, for instance, did not reference the theme of "always gonna be there," hinting at possible cultural differences.

students turn the limbo of moving, the experience of living in a liminal space, into a positive state, as for example seventeen-year-old Giovanni's perspective shows: "You are only here for a temporary period. Like a long vacation."[27] The implications of this state of limbo for negotiations of belonging and ideas of home will be elaborated further in chapter eight.

Honest inclusion of children in the decision-making and the moving process might help to reduce some fears and feelings of powerlessness. Britta, for example, was extremely happy to having been able to explore Shanghai before the move, which made it easier for her to cope with the fear of being unhappy in Shanghai. But it is not only uncertainty, but also unfamiliarity or even the parents' stress that children sense, which makes the experience fearful at first. The following part three on arriving in Shanghai consequently also takes a closer look at the emotional challenges that moving entails and demonstrates how the youths manage these upon their arrival in Shanghai by trying to gain back agency.

---

[27] German original: Hier ist man nur vorrübergehend. Wie lange Ferien.

74

Part 3

ARRIVING

Figure 3: Mental Map of Shanghai. Drawing by a 16-year-old Singaporean School Student

This mental map (Figure 3), depicting high rise buildings, a large elevated highway, and masses of people, was drawn by a girl at an international Singaporean school, and illustrates how impressive and overwhelming arriving and living in Shanghai can be. The sixteen-year-old student annotated her map with the following caption:

> The city, Shanghai is continuously developing. Everyday when I'm on the bus, looking outside the window, I can always find new infrastructures. The buildings are HUGE and the road is crowded. The map is what I see everyday on the bus. It's a busy Shanghai and is changing every day. People walk swiftly just like they are trying to catch up the beat of Shanghai.

To me her drawing and annotation illustrates the unfamiliar urban environment, but also the radical changes, losses, and new encounters that teenagers have to deal with when moving to their new city of residence. It is the students' ways of "catching up with the beat of Shanghai" and their new situation that this third part, "Arriving," aims to examine. Firstly, chapter six identifies the emotional challenges that moving entails. The following chapters seven to nine discuss how the youths manage these difficulties and their new environment by outlining three important processes: exploring the city, practices of home-making, and community building.

On the one hand, the ethnographic material I present supports Fechter's (2007a) observations of the importance of boundaries in expatriates' lives and underpins her argument that expatriates'

> insistence on fortifying spatial and social divides challenges notions of a transnational capitalist class which is claimed to be geographically mobile and cosmopolitan in outlook (Sklair [2001]2003; Hannerz [1996]2001) – such conceptions appear to be insufficiently grounded in ethnographic realities. (ibid. 80 – 81)

Similar to Fechter's findings, the chapters illustrate how in the context of their mobile lifestyles expatriate youths draw boundaries upon their arrival in Shanghai. Chapter seven argues that expatriate youths practices of managing the city are based on dividing the city in expat and non-expat places. Chapter eight demonstrates that the home-making practices are also related to fortified housing complexes that protect the inhabitants from the outside world. Chapter nine shows that the shared space of school is crucial for community building processes and friendships among international students. However, these community spaces also foster the performances of a collective expatriate identity with distinct values and practices in Shanghai that also serves to distinguish oneself from "locals" or those back "home."

On the other hand, focusing on the subjective experiences children and teenagers face when moving, the everyday spatial and social practices presented in this part three are regarded as complex emotional work (Hochschild [1983]2003). This emotional work means coping with the moving experiences through creating meaningful everyday

social spaces – places of pleasure and consumption in the city, a space where a notion of home can unfold, a feeling of belonging to a school and/or expatriate community. Friends and different (connections through) media, but also family, food, material culture, and explorations of the new environment help the students to deal with the move and develop ways to adjust to the new situations.

Before zooming in on the different coping strategies and their inherent processes of boundary drawing, I first like to discuss the emotional challenges of moving from the perspective of expatriate students, also drawing back on concepts of the anthropology of emotions.

6. Making Sense of Feelings: The Emotional Challenges of Moving

> The tyranny of distance and the particularities of place continue to unsettle agents with a putatively global reach. (Ley 2004, 157)

Ley describes how moving abroad can be unsettling. During the interviews the teenagers and I discussed their first reactions to the decision to move (see chapter five) as well as the feelings the experiences of leaving, arriving, and adjusting caused. Examining the reactions to the parents' announcement of the move to Shanghai and the students' experiences of arriving, it becomes clear that their reflections during the interviews revolve around and involve emotions. This is in agreement with Mattley's (2002, 365) argument that feeling and reflecting are not opposed to each other, but emotions provoke and reply to reflection. Combining interactionist theories on emotion and temporality, Mattley points at four dimensions we should consider when thinking about the meaning of past emotions:

> We often endeavor to understand present emotions, through referencing our past emotions and the usual assumption is that past emotions are given — that they are real. However, that is not necessarily the case. Again, drawing on Maines, Sugrue, and Katovich (1983), it is reasonable to suggest that moving backward, individuals may (1) symbolically reconstruct past emotion such that they have meaning for the present emotion, (2) note how past emotion structures and conditions emotions found in the present, (3) recognize the implied objective emotional past, and (4) create a mythical past emotion to explain the present one. (Mattley 2002, 370)

When discussing past emotions with the teenagers, Mattley's link of emotions to temporality helps recognize students' emotional difficulties but also efforts to come to terms with their moving experiences. Interactionist theories prove to be well suited because these have conceptualized emotions as emerging within social acts within groups, in our case within the family, among the new friends in Shanghai, but also within the interview situations. "Emotions originate and develop in social relations" and

are "sustained by group processes" (Mattley 2002, 365). However, Mattley's interactionist approach needs to be expanded to include the bodily experiences of emotions. Feelings have been discussed from different angles in the anthropology of emotion. Leavitt (1996) summarizes the discourse as a long divide between positions that explain emotions as bodily and universal, and voices that argue for emotions as meaning. Consequently, Leavitt puts forward that emotions should be understood as both – as acts of communication and bodily experiences – and calls for conceptualizations and representations of emotions in ethnographic work that overcome this meaning/feeling divide. Treating students' re-interpretations of past emotions during the interview as cognitive and communicative processes, I also understand that the emotional events described are bodily, sometimes even to a physically challenging degree.

The physical, cognitive and communicative aspects of emotions that might arise due to international relocation become evident during all my group discussions and interviews. Eleven-year-old Allen from the USA, reflecting upon his last move to Mexico, uses the narrative of "culture shock" to explain this experience to his fellow students and myself. Sitting in his school's arts room, he summarizes the implications of moving and the overwhelming emotions it brings along, telling me that he "pretty much got sick." Likewise, Britta, a seventeen-year-old girl from Norway who just arrived in Shanghai a few months before the interview, vividly remembers how strange Shanghai felt to her:

> Britta: Yeah, we were sitting, I just had such a sad image: we came, we were really jetlagged. We come to the hotel, it smells weird, we get this weird food, it is supposed to be toast and jam and they can't even make toast and jam. We were just like really depressed. We look out the window it is raining, we can't even see the street, it is a cloud blocking our window. It was just like, I'm gonna live here. [I: <L>] And after some days, it was like, clearing of the weather and it wasn't that bad and depressing. We saw nice apartments and everything, so <L> we are like, okay.

Britta describes her discomfort upon arrival as not being able to see, and instead smelling and tasting the new environment. She relates emotions like "feeling depressed" to the new sensories, the unfamiliarity and seeming unmanageability of the city. Other students, like seventeen-year-old Karina, also comment on how lonely they felt in the beginning or still feel when getting homesick. During an interview, the German-Czech teenager shares:

> Karina: And with the move. I don't know. My mom feels terrible, in the beginning felt terribly guilty for taking me away from all my friends. And I told her that it didn't really bother me that much. That's what I thought at least in the beginning. Because we had moved so many times. And I got used to it. I thought, okay, I will find new friends here, and I will keep in touch with the old ones. But now that I am here I think: crap! I

78

am so far away. And in the first months I couldn't stay in touch. Because facebook didn't work, nothing. I don't know. I was so alone here. […] On the other hand, you get used to it. I got pretty flexible. But still, this void when you are gone. You don't have anyone here. Though you know what to expect. But still. You really can't handle it in the beginning.[28]

Like the introductory quote to this chapter by David Ley (2004, 157) puts forward, Karina's narrative shows that even having moved internationally before, does not protect you from the inherent emotional turmoil. The new place and the distance to friends "unsettle[s] agents with a putatively global reach" (ibid.). Karina also shares how the moving experience strained the relationship with her mother. Moreover, her story addresses how the lack of (connections to her) friends made it difficult to cope with the emotional stress arising from the move.

Karina's classmate Bjoern, likewise, recalls missing Germany and his friends in the beginning. However, one and a half years after his move he remembers his strategy in coping with these difficulties as one of limiting his contact to his old friends.

Bjoern: The first months were difficult with Germany. Even if it sounds pathetic. The only way to get through that is to keep as little contact as possible. The best is to not even use facebook, but instead to write an email every few weeks; they reply again in a week. Then you also have something to talk about again. But you aren't so much involved. Because if you chat, time and again you kind of think that you were part of it and then it reminds you of the old days and that's really bad.

Interviewer: And then you miss your friends even more?

Bjoern: Yes, and with the emails it actually worked well. I mean, they do their thing. I do mine. And when I return everything's gonna be fine again.

Interviewer: Hmm. So would you pass the same advice you received on to others? Stay in touch but…

Bjoern: … as little as possible. [Better to write emails] than to try to skype everyday, because then you are always sad when they don't have any time and you specifically took your time. And then you think, I took my time just for him. And then you remember, I don't have anyone to do anything with anyway. Oh, over there everything was better anyway; people were way cooler.[29]

---

[28] German original: Und mit dem Umzug. Ich weiß nicht. Meine Mutter macht sich, die hat sich anfangs Vorwürfe gemacht, dass sie mich aus Prag rausgerissen hat. Von meinen ganzen Freunden. Und ich hab ihr eigentlich gesagt, dass es mir nicht wirklich viel ausmacht. Zumindest dachte ich mir das anfangs. Weil wir ja schon so oft umgezogen sind. Und ich mich daran gewöhnt hab. Da dacht ich mir, okay, ich find hier bestimmt neue Freunde und ich werde mit den alten in Kontakt bleiben. Aber, jetzt wo ich hier bin, denke ich mir scheiße! Ich bin total weit weg. Und ich hatte in den ersten paar Monaten überhaupt keinen Kontakt mit denen gehabt. Weil facebook nicht funktioniert hat und gar nichts. Ich weiß nicht, ich war hier so alleine. […] Andererseits gewöhnt man sich dran. Ich bin jetzt eigentlich ziemlich flexibel geworden. Daran. Aber trotzdem, diese Leere wenn man weg ist. Man hat hier niemanden. Man weiß zwar schon was einen erwartet. Aber trotzdem. Man kann damit anfangs wirklich nicht umgehen.

[29] German original: Die ersten Monate waren auch schwer mit Deutschland. Auch wenn's scheiße klingt. Die einzige Möglichkeit wie du das überstehst ist so wenig Kontakt wie möglich mit denen zu halten. Am besten gar nicht facebook, sondern einfach alle paar Wochen mal eine Email schreiben, die antworten wieder in 'ner Woche. Dann hat man sich auch immer mal wieder was zu erzählen. Aber ist nicht so drin.

Bjoern's retrospective on his first weeks shows how complex and contradictory missing your friends and loneliness upon arrival can be. He sought help by listening to experiences others in Shanghai shared, as well as to eventually trust that his friendships in Germany could endure the distance.

In summary, "culture shock," an unfamiliar urban environment, new sensories, the lack of friends and family, and problems within the family that may be enforced by the move, all pose emotional challenges to the expatriate youths. Furthermore, I like to recall the students' experiences of powerlessness in the decision-making about the move and the liminality of their stay that I emphasized in the previous chapter. The following chapters explore the students' strategies of managing these experiences and emotions of powerlessness, loneliness, and unfamiliarity.

7. Making Sense of the City

> Bjoern: The most difficult challenge was just this culture shock. To take a taxi somewhere. To use the subway, I'd never done that.[30]

Family trips or activities with friends, consuming the city together, form a common way of gradually discovering Shanghai. This learning to navigate through Shanghai's urban environment, as sixteen-year-old Bjoern's comment suggests, is a crucial way of coming to terms with the stay abroad.

The metropolis Shanghai has evoked and still evokes diverse images and its recent high-speed development startles every visitor. Donald and Gammack (2007) describe Shanghai's growth in *Tourism and the Branded City: Film and Identity on the Pacific Rim,* capturing the amazement it often generates:

> Infrastructure development in connection with Expo is unprecedented, and is positioning Shanghai for world competitiveness in several areas. A second airport, a new satellite city built on mud flats, a dock for cruise liners and Lupu Bridge, the world's longest arch bridge are some significant recent projects. The superfast Maglev train from the airport gives international arrivals an immediate sense of Shanghai's speed, while ongoing urban-rail development will see the six

---

Weil wenn man chattet, denkt man halt immer man war so dabei und so und das erinnert einen dann an die alten Zeiten und das ist ganz schlimm. [Interviewer: Und dann vermisst man seine Freunde noch mehr?] Ja und so mit den Emails hat das eigentlich super geklappt. Ich meine die machen ihr Ding, ich mach mein Ding. Und wenn ich dann zurück komme ist auch wieder alles gut. [Interviewer: Hmm. Also jemand anderem würdest du die gleiche Empfehlung geben die dir gegeben wurde? Schon im Kontakt bleiben aber…] … möglichst wenig. […] [Besser Emails schreiben] als jeden Tag probieren zu skypen, weil dann ist man immer traurig wenn die mal keine Zeit haben und du hast dir frei genommen. Und dann denkst du ja, ich hab mir nur für den frei genommen. Und dann fällt dir ein ich hab hier aber niemanden mit dem ich sonst was gemacht hätte. Oh, drüben war eh alles viel besser, die Freunde waren ja viel cooler drauf.

[30] German original: [D]as Schwerste [war] eigentlich dieser Kulturschock. Mit dem Taxi irgendwo hinzufahren. Mit 'ner U-Bahn zu fahren, hab ich auch noch nie gemacht.

or seven lines that were in place in 2006 more than doubled by 2012 (Chen 2005), and the total length of rail-track laid at present increase almost fourfold. The metro systems of London and Tokyo are two world-city benchmarks which Shanghai is seeking to exceed. (Donald and Gammack 2007, 151)

Donald and Gammack's account of infrastructure projects in Shanghai links the city to the idea of speed – reminding me also of the "beat of Shanghai" that the Singaporean student described when annotating her mental map (see figure 3 in the beginning of this part, "Arriving"). When I started researching foreign youth in Shanghai, the projects described by Donald and Gammack in 2007 had all been completed and the city was in the middle of hosting the 2010 Expo. This mega-event had given

both a deadline and a unifying purpose to the city's debut preparations […] on a far grander scale than the construction of new stadia and exhibition halls typical of what other cities might produce. The entire city [was] being reconstructed - literally and metaphorically. (Donald and Gammack 2007, 154)

Sometimes overwhelmed by the speed and contrasts of this rapidly developing mega-city, so fittingly exemplified by the 2010 Expo, I wondered how the teenagers made sense of Shanghai. This chapter aims to answer this question and investigates the young expatriates' explorations of Shanghai by examining their navigation through the city (7.1) and by highlighting the role (7.3) sensories play in the understanding of the urban environment. The concluding section (7.3) points out how both the navigation through Shanghai and the inherent sensorial impressions help students to manage the city: through their explorations and sensorial experiences students' give spaces a social meaning and consequently divide the city into manageable familiar and unfamiliar spaces.

7.1. Navigating the City

With the move to Shanghai, students have to learn to navigate through the city. While buses hired by the schools provide transport to campus, students have to organize their transport for other destinations on their own. For my part, I depended largely on Shanghai's continuously expanding network of subway lines, referred to locally as the "metro." The subway provides a convenient mode of transportation, but closes at eleven p.m. – early for a city of its size. The teenage students, however, rather rarely use the metro.

This avoidance of the metro system is mainly due to the ready availability of school buses and taxis. With fares starting at RMB 12 (€1,32) (after summer 2011: RMB 14 (€1,54)), taxis are relatively inexpensive to the expatriate family income. Another preferred method of travel is the parents' private car with driver, sometimes provided as a job benefit for senior-level expatriate employees. The following discussion on navigating through the city, recorded between three fourteen-year-old students, Keith,

a boy from Singapore, Freda, a girl from Norway, and a Vijay a boy from India, shows that taking the taxi, however, requires students to find ways to interact with local drivers, who do not speak English.

Keith: It [speaking Chinese] makes life easier. Especially, if you want to take a taxi, and you want to tell the driver where to go, it'll be much more easier.

Freda: I usually send a text to, like. You can send a text in English to, like, a phone number and then they send it back in Chinese. And I just show them. <L> [I: <L>] I can't talk to them.

Interviewer: <L> Do you use that service a lot?

Freda: Yeah. <L>

Interviewer: Well, you have to find ways how to get through. So is that your major way to move through the city?

Freda: I mostly take the cab, but we also take the metro. But we don't know, like, where it stops. We only take it if we are sure that we take the right one.

Interviewer: Okay. Same for you?

Keith: Actually I have a car; my dad's company provides a car. So sometimes I use the car.

Interviewer: So you just use the driver because he is there anyway?

Keith: It's just sometimes, when my dad needs the car businesswise, I just use the cab.

Interviewer: How about you? How do you move through the city?

Vijay: I use the car. I am not much exposed to public transport, like busses, trains. I find it strange.

This discussion illustrates that students can either rely on transportation provided by the school or the parents or find own ways of navigating through the city, for example using text message services to communicate with taxi drivers. Despite language barriers taxis are still experienced as easier to navigate than the metro. Some students own motor scooters. These are, however, mainly used in the direct vicinity of their housing areas. German school student Peter, for instance, owns a motor scooter, but soon gave it up as a means of daily transportation from the downtown apartment to school. Asking him about it, he told me he had driven it three times to school, twice having minor accidents, and one in which only his helmet saved him from serious harm. Own driving is therefore usually experienced as too dangerous.

To further understand the expatriate youths movements through and relations to the city, thirteen students at a local German school, three students a British school, and seventeen students at a Singaporean school and were asked to record on paper their mental maps of everyday important places in Shanghai. Looking at the aspects of the

students' recorded mental maps, one realizes that their visualizations follow a common pattern. The following table lists the places that were referenced the most:

PLACE ON STUDENT MAP	GERMAN SCHOOL (13)	BRITISH SCHOOL (3)	SINGAPOREAN SCHOOL (17)	ALL STUDENTS (33)
Home	13	3	15	31
Own school	13	1	13	27
River or Bund	8	3	5	16
Oriental Pearl Tower	7	3	4	14
Cafés/Restaurants	9	-	5	14
Friends' places	6	1	4	11
Bars or clubs	9	-	-	9
Bottle Opener	6	1	2	9
Nanjing Road	5	-	1	6
Church	-	1	3	4
Huaihai Road	3	-	1	4
People's Square	2	-	1	3
Fake market	1	2	-	3
Other schools	1	-	1	2

Figure 4: List of Places Present on Students' Mental Maps of Shanghai

The mental maps are clustered around important places such as school, home, and friends' homes, and leisure spaces such as cafés, restaurants or bars and clubs. Furthermore, iconic landmarks found their ways onto the maps, probably to set the scene and mark the city on the map as Shanghai. In addition to marking the map as Shanghai, these city icons – such as the Oriental Pearl Tower or the Bottle Opener[31] – might also be included in many of the drawings as they offer a point of entry to explore the city, or to identify with living in Shanghai. Eleven-year-old Allen, for instance, developed a fascination for Shanghai's skyline. Asked about his favorite places in Shanghai, he replies with pride and enthusiasm:

Allen: I have the bottle opener. I have been up on the 91st floor, in it, and I had dinner up there, once.

The visualizations of the city in forms of mental maps give insights into teenagers' preferred spaces, forms of transport, and activities, as the following example, drawn by sixteen-year-old Olivia demonstrates.

---

[31] The bottle opener is the common name for the Shanghai World Financial Center. With 492 meters in height it is currently Shanghai's highest building and located at the Pudong side of the bund.

Figure 5: Mental Map of Shanghai. Drawing by 16-year-old Girl, Olivia

Olivia's map shows urban icons, such as the Oriental Pearl tower, the well-known (tourist?) landmarks such as the Bund, the Yu-Garden and the People's Square. Concerning movement through and out of Shanghai the drawing refers to metro stations marked with a circled M, a car in reference to a friend who lives outside the city and the two city airports. The map understands the city as a space for satisfying the individual needs. It revolves around places of consumption such as the Superbrand Mall, Plaza 66, the Fake Market, the shopping street Qipulu and Pearl City. Furthermore, the student even includes specific brand stores such as Zara and H&M, Mango and Roxy on her map. While shopping here could be a family activity, the teenagers, particularly the girls, enjoyed going shopping with friends. Miller et al. (1998, 101) suggest, that teenagers not only visit such commercial spaces for consumption, but to express their "growing independence from their parents." The school, friends' houses (anonymized by myself) and the own home are also integrated parts of the city. Another huge part form all the restaurants, bars, and clubs. The student even names the clubs Mural, M2 (Muse 2), Paramount, Park 97 in an explanatory cloud. Her visual representation of the city, the fixing of her spatial practices give insights into her everyday life, but also into her image of the city, her aspirations about it, her stage for her own identity performances. Chapter eleven will further elaborate upon these reciprocal relations of age identity and spaces when examining students' nightlife practices.

While the importance of visual impressions when navigating through the city is apparent at first sight when looking at the student maps with the exact shapes of certain buildings such as the school, shopping malls, or urban landmarks that students were able to draw, other sensorial impressions of the city are underrepresented. The next subchapter aims to explore the role other sensories such as sounds and smells and tastes play when exploring the new urban environment and making sense of Shanghai.

7.2. Sensing the City

When I tried to do what I had asked of so many students – to draw a map of all my personal important places in Shanghai – I suddenly came to realize the skill of some students recording visual impressions on paper; I myself was unsure how to draw it on the map. What was the shape of the rooftop? How many sections was the school building divided into? Sensories are personal, not only in the interpretation but also in the use. When I instead started to write down sounds of the city in my fieldwork diary, much more came to my mind: The metro beeping before closing its doors, the squawking sounds of the honking but silent electro scooter rushing by, their squeaking breaks, the elevator rings in my building, the shouting of the used electric appliances dealers ("*kongtiao, diannao*"[32]), the spoken words on the streets that I tried to untangle and sort into Shanghainese (the local dialect, understandable only by those native to the city, it seems) and Mandarin (the official, common language of the country). What are they talking about? The jingle playing when 7-11 doors glide open, the unpleasant noises of Shanghai's innumerable construction sites, my neighbor playing the violin, the *single* CD my fitness center would play for months on end. When waking up in the dark, these sounds would tell whether it was already morning or still in the middle of the night. Scribbling into my diary I found out how I constantly made sense of my environment through sounds. And when I was exhausted from the city's voice, I would put on my headphones to try to achieve some distance to it. With my huge headphones, I reminded myself more and more of the students I had met throughout my fieldwork, who plugged in their headphones as soon as lessons were over. Sometimes we then talked about music, but unless it was about a concert in town (German DJ Paul Kalkbrenner, for example), or about choosing a certain nightlife space, we did not bring music and city sounds (or the blocking out of city sounds) together, the discussion rather served to stage certain subcultural preferences. My own contemplations show me that sounds are a vibrant part of the city experience and that

---

[32] Air-Conditioner, Computer.

future inquiries about the sounds of Shanghai are worth to explore.[33] While sounds, however, seemed more important in my own navigating and understanding of the city, tastes found their ways on all of the students' mental maps of Shanghai.

Hongmei Road, for instance, the vertical street on the left of Olivia's map (figure 2), is a small lane in the western part of Shanghai and popular among expatriates for its variety of foreign restaurants. The importance of restaurants in expatriate life is visible on most of the students' maps. The link of foreign food, restaurants, and leisure spaces in the city, shows that tastes and the navigation of the city are linked. Scholars like David Howes (2007) have pointed out the importance of all senses in making "sense" of our environment and us.

> Sensation is not just a matter of physiological response and personal experience. It is the most fundamental domain of cultural expression, the medium through which all the values and practices of society are enacted. To a greater or lesser extent, every domain of sensory experience, from the sight of a work of art to the scent of perfume to the savor of dinner, is a field of cultural elaboration. Every domain of sensory experience is also an arena for structuring social roles and interactions. We learn social divisions, distinctions of gender, class and race, through our senses. […] sensual relations are also social relations. (Howes 2007, xi)

Howes's anthropological investigations explore that sensory experience may be structured and invested with meaning in many different ways across cultures. While this anthropological endeavor to study and theorize the cultural formation of the senses is fascinating, my own interest is not a comparative angle or the cultural formation of senses, rather it is the interest in how important senses are in exploring and experiencing urban spaces. There is obviously a difference between being in a place that we are able to experience at the same time with all our senses, and the virtual, imaginary places, that are present in our lives. Howes ([2005]2006, 7) calls this "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" "emplacement." Walmsley (2005) applies Howes's concept of emplacement to different situations in Ecuador, for example to the place of a market.

> An Ecuadorian market […] draws attention to the role of intersensoriality in the production of meaning through everyday lived experiences. Smells, sights, tastes, textures and sounds signify each other according to the particular context and the particular sensory knowledge of the individual experiencing them. This points to a central theme in the study of culture and the senses, which is that of 'emplacement'. (Walmsley 2005, 47)

Walmsley uses the concept of emplacement to analyze the associations between place, identity, and sensory experience and to find out how racial categories in Ecuador are produced with all senses. Her ethnographic case in point shows how

---

[33] For an interesting project working with urban sounds in a creative and interactive manner, see Gaye, Mazé and Holmquist's Sonic City (2003) or projects by the Delhi Listening Group.

intersensorial experiences evoke feelings of strangeness and belonging. They play a fundamental part in processes negotiating cultural (and in her case racial) identity. Tastes and smells are mostly talked about when it comes to food. Walmsley (2005, 55) notes: "Sensory knowledge is developed through the sociality of food practices, which are produced through the sharing of tastes, smells and embodied culinary techniques." In today's Shanghai, tastes, as sensory experience and culinary preference, are highly diverse. Shanghainese would constantly point this out to me by simply saying, "*Shanghai dou you*" (Shanghai has everything). With regards to cuisine, this may well be true. Shanghai contains German and French bakeries, Italian restaurants, American diners, numerous teppanyaki places as well as all kinds of Chinese cuisine; offering everything from Sichuan spicy dishes to northern Chinese noodles. Imported food stores cater almost everything the expatriate might miss.

Figure 6: German Bakery at the Outskirts of Shanghai. Photo M. Sander

The students from the German school include favorite Italian or American restaurants on their mental maps, while students from the Singaporean school in particular list Korean or Japanese restaurants. Names of international chains like Starbucks are also written onto these maps. Additionally, students embrace new tastes from non-Chinese sources, as a visit to a Japanese all-you-can-eat-Sushi restaurant with a group of German students showed me. But as Walmsley (2005, 55) already pointed out: "[A]n individual's sensory knowledge is never fixed or limited but always capable of adapting and expanding." Sensories, like these experiences in the foreign restaurants on the aforementioned Hongmei Road, connect the people in Shanghai with distant places. Walmsley noted this for the stalls at the Ecuadorian market: "[T]hey also remind

customers of other places, times, and people" (ibid., 47). Olfactory experiences and memories of places go hand-in-hand. Food and dining practices therefore also play a role in the process of home making, as I will explore further in subchapter 8.2. Some of these dining places turned into spaces for regular gatherings that over the time carried a special meaning to those involved. "The girls," for instance, would frequently meet at an Indian Restaurant on Hongmei Road. "The boys" or others were not allowed to accompany them, as it was a particular ritual for them to come here, to manifest and communicate their friendships.

When in May 2011 I had the opportunity to join students from the German School in a photo-walk project a Geography teacher had set up, I chose to accompany "the girls" on their fieldtrip, an event that I already described to highlight my methodology under subchapter 4.5. The group's chosen research area was Tianzifang, a café-gallery-souvenir-shop-district developed in a few lanes of old Shanghai houses.[34] Their task was to take photos that document globalization in the city. Although the project was designed around visualities, other sensories played a role, in particular taste. Students first of all flocked to a café, which – according to them – sold the best milkshakes in town. When further moving through the labyrinth of lanes at the Tianzifang area, students pointed out restaurants at which they had eaten with their parents. They touched jewelry and clothes; tried on hats, guiding them through the numerous shops. Tactile experiences thus influenced the navigation through the area.

Figure 7: Student at Tianzifang: Documenting Elements of Globalization. Photo by M. Sander

---

[34] Other areas chosen by the student groups included, the Bund, Xintiandi, Nanjing Lu, and Lujiazui. All these places are particularly popular among tourists, and represent the city in travel guidebooks.

Although the visual engagement with the city in the case of the Geography class's photo-walk is particularly intense due to its requested visual, analytical approach, it becomes clear that our experiences of urban spaces are always intersensorial.

The method of mental maps, however, might be prone to overemphasize visual forms of understanding and conceptualizing the city and might miss other sensorial experiences of Shanghai. Occasionally, students try to fit these non-visual perceptions on their maps, as the following example demonstrates:
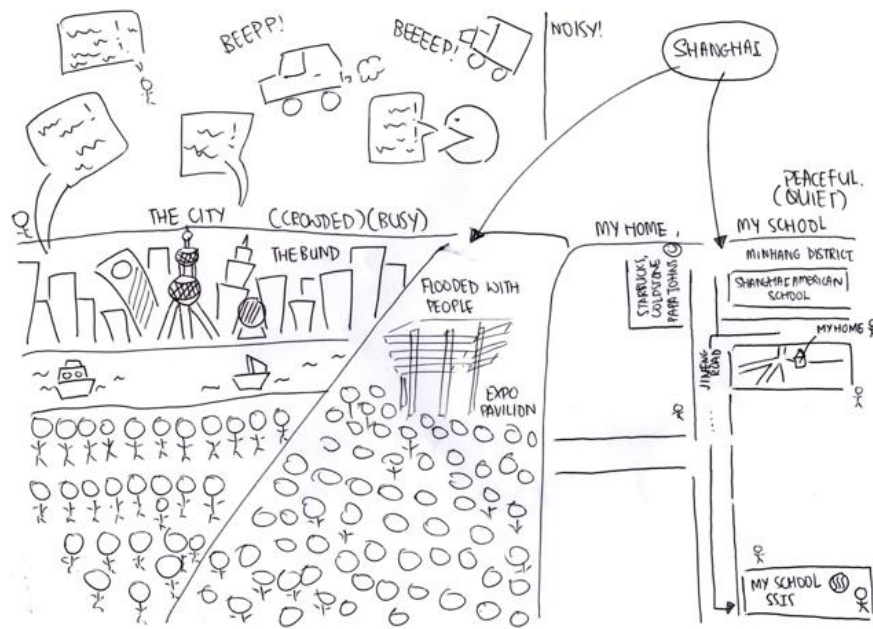

Figure 8: Mental Map of Shanghai. Drawing by a 16-year-old Female Singaporean School Student

This student of a Singaporean school also includes iconic landmarks, but puts a strong emphasis on how she seems to sense the city. The map is filled with people demonstrating the crowdedness of the city, the traffic and the noises. The fume behind the drawing of a car even evokes the smell of polluted air. Interestingly, the girl clearly juxtaposes the city and the area her home and school is located in, as the two arrows and the dividing line show. She annotates her sketches with "peaceful" and "quiet" on the private side, and with "noisy," "crowded," and "busy" on the other side. This second side is also labeled as "the city," indicating that the school and home are not perceived as integrated parts of it. These maps produced by the expatriate youths support findings by scholars who have recently turned explicitly to the role of sensorial experiences of cities. Melissa Butcher (2012), for example, studied the intersensorial experiences of young people of different backgrounds in Delhi. Her qualitative study on the relation between the city of Delhi and its inhabitants demonstrates that sensory

involvement with public spaces is used to affectively dissect Delhi into spaces of inclusion and exclusion, pleasure and discomfort, similar to the division on the Singaporean student's map (Figure 8). Butcher's findings suggest that inhabitants individually and culturally link sensory experience of the city to judgments of civil and uncivil behavior. The two maps shown (Figure 5 and Figure 8) thus not only highlight the students' everyday places, but also their perspectives on the city and their own role and positions. With their maps the two girls deliver a message to themselves, their peers and me as a researcher. Olivia's map (Figure 5) foregrounds the image of an active consummation of the city through nightlife and shopping. Her image is opposed by the Singaporean student's image of Shanghai, of retreating and being different to the noisy – maybe even perceived as uncivilized – rest. Contextualizing the drawings in the ethnic backgrounds of the students, being from Singapore and from Belgium, one can see that the maps also point at differing positionings and understandings of youth. However, their positioning towards myself, a German researcher, also plays a role. The Belgium student demonstrating urban coolness, the Singaporean student maybe feeling the necessity to point that, although she is Asian, she feels estranged by China and the "noisy," "crowded" city.

7.3. Concluding Thoughts on Managing the City

The different students' urban geographies produced in the mental maps and explained in the interviews transport the continuous process of making sense of the city, in terms of navigations, sensorial experiences, but also in terms of positioning oneself within – as consumers, inhabitants, or someone overwhelmed with the urban, sensorial landscape of Shanghai. Managing the city means managing everyday life and the migration experience, for instance, by learning how to navigate between spaces of everyday practices and consumption, by giving spaces a social meaning, or by dividing Shanghai into a manageable, familiar area and the "city." "'Making sense' does not, [however], equate making clear rationality but rather working our way through things, spaces, relations" (Crouch 2005, 31).

The following chapter eight on housing spaces will further exemplify the divide already introduced – here the city and the gated communities are juxtaposed in a similar way. It discusses practices of home making, including settling in the new house and various material practices, as well as reconnecting and linking former places of living to Shanghai and creating a new network of homes through travels or media usage.

8. Making Home(s): Houses, Belongings, and Belonging

> Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached. (Ahmed et al. 2003, 1)

This chapter is concerned with the two meanings of the word home as it commonly describes both the domestic space we live in and "a space of imagined belonging" (Walsh 2006a, 125). Popular or common ideas of home often see these two spaces to coincide. Home is frequently linked to one certain place, usually encompassing experiences of growing up or family living. It is therefore not surprising that the question of what home means for children growing up abroad has been a common topic in the literature that deals with expatriate youth from the angle of the concept of "Third Culture Kids"[35] (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009; Richter 2011; Franke 2008). Parents[36] and researchers alike seem extremely concerned with the implications of growing up without such *one* place. The original definition of a "TCK" thus is even tied to a specific notion of belonging.

> The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background. (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 19)

An article by Amelie Franke (2008), investigates notions of home and belonging among "Third Culture Kids" on the basis of a qualitative study including a survey, in-depth interviews, and group discussions.[37] The author understands home as an interplay of three major connections: Firstly, the connection to a place, which Franke links to Tuan's (1974) concept of "topophilia"[38], secondly, social connections, and thirdly, material connections. Franke finds that there are further variables that play a role in establishing notions of home for children growing up abroad. She therefore complexifies the interplay of place, social connections, and material connections by the following aspects: a) "Emotive imaginations and time" – how long one stays in a place in connection with "emotive imaginations" such as feeling safe –, b) the family and its ties to c) the parental country and d) the significance of language and culture (Franke 2008, 139–142). Franke reaches the conclusion:

---

[35] For a discussion of the concept of "Third Culture Kids" (TCKs) see point 2.3 and 3.3 in the introduction.

[36] The Shanghai center for instance offered talks on "Third Culture Kids" for parents. I attended one such event that was only visited by mothers. Many used the opportunity to voice their concerns about adjustment difficulties they observed, for instance youths only being in front of the computer.

[37] Franke leaves the age group she sums up under "young transnational migrants" (Franke 2008, 128) unclear. From the one ethnographic vignette about a sixteen-year-old girl given in the end, however, it can be assumed that the age group is similar to the actors of this study.

[38] Tuan understands "topophilia," the love of place, broadly as "to include all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment (1974, 93).

> This melting-pot of cultures results in a confusion over feelings of home [...] Many TCKs have reported in the interviews that they find it hard to tell where home is. At the one hand, they feel belonging to their parental country, but on the other, they feel just as at home in their host country. [...] Hence, it can be assumed that TCKs' notions of home are spatially distributed over different countries. They feel belonging to their parental country and, at the same time, feel at home in their current host country and identify with former host countries. Thus, TCKs have 'multiple homes'. (ibid.,143)

While here Franke promotes the idea of "multiple homes," she later stresses the imaginative idea of home:

> TCKs live in a permanent confusion about where they belong and where they should locate their home. One could say, they live in a compromise: They cannot adapt to every aspect of a certain place they momentarily live in, because they have experienced it differently somewhere else and thus have a greater ability to compare and weigh up the different aspects of home. The more mobile TCKs are, the more abstract their idea of home becomes. They generally concentrate their notions of home on the more continuous factors in their lives, such as the family, relatives or the parental country. Thus, a TCK's home is rather an imaginative idea than an actual location. (ibid.,148)

Franke's findings and her conceptualization of home as a rather "imaginative idea than an actual location" for children growing up on the move reinforces the original TCK definition. However, instead of taking this definition and Franke's related findings as a priori given for the international children and teenagers in Shanghai, I like to take a close look at their own ideas of home.

In order to understand the expatriate students' perspectives and what home means for the privileged migrant youths that are so often on the move, this chapter tightly links the teenagers' and their family's housing and material practices concerned with home-making, to broader concepts and imaginations of belonging.

The first part of the chapter discusses gated community living, a reality for most expatriate youths in Shanghai, based on interviews, visits and my own two-week-long stay in such a community. The second part addresses material practices within the site of the home and pays attention to objects, food, and the surrounding practices, based on interviews, a student's photo and own visits to the youths' houses. After the focus on these housing and material practices in Shanghai, I then examine the teenagers' (trans)local networks and their ties to places *beyond* the city, the "imaginative ways in which places are drawn together or kept apart" (Robinson 2010, 16), based on in-depth interviews. This third part of the chapter is concerned with places the teenagers have lived before, regularly visit or find emotionally attached to – their network of homes. This last section of the chapter further discusses and juxtaposes academic and youths' conceptions of home and belonging.

8.1. Gated Community Living

> Old and new, quaint and spacious, traditional and Mediterranean, Shanghai's villas come in all sizes and price ranges. The virtue of a villa is that most are located in safe compounds with spacious swaths of grass and even playgrounds for kids. They give families space to stretch out and are comparable to houses in the West. Additionally, compounds offer an instant community and make the transition to Shanghai easier. (Sparling 2010, 14)

This passage from the August 2010 issue of the English-medium magazine *Shanghai Family* is part of a cover story entitled "Where to live in Shanghai: Neighborhoods and housing options" that showcases different families who chose one of the three promoted housing options in Shanghai: lane house, apartment, villa/house. As the majority of the youths I worked with lived in such a villa, located in a gated community, this housing practice and its meanings forms a substantial part of teenagers' experiences of Shanghai.

This phenomenon of gated housing has caught scholarly attention in the last years, for example Glasze, Webster and Frantz's edited volume *Private Cities* (2006), which sets its foci mainly on the emersion of gated communities and the associated effects on society in different countries. Sharon Zukin has even commented on the spread and rise of gated communities in metropolitan areas around the globe as a source of contemporary urban culture:

> At the same time, strangers mingling in public space and fears of violent crime have inspired the growth of private police forces, gated and barred communities, and a movement to design public spaces of maximum surveillance. These, too, are a source of contemporary urban culture. If one way of dealing with the material inequalities of city life has been to aestheticize diversity, another way has been to aestheticize fear. (Zukin 2005, 283)

Due to their economic resources, expatriates are in the position to retreat to such enclaves and construct concrete spatial, social, and cultural boundaries, as contributions by Fechter (2007b) and Glasze (2006) have shown. These practices and perceptions of demarcation among expatriates differ in regards to different (age) groups as a comparison between my interviews with expatriate adult women in 2007 and the discussion with teenagers allow saying. Although the choice for the refuge from the city is often linked to the safety and wellbeing of children – my interviews with mothers revealed –, no research to my knowledge exists on young people's perspectives and experiences. Here, I want to specifically address teenagers' housing experiences in the context of their overall engagement of making a home within the city of Shanghai.

The spacious gated communities in which most of the international teenagers live fall into the general definition of "privately governed and secured neighbourhoods" given in

the introduction to *Private Cities* (Glasze, Webster, and Frantz 2006, 1). Walls and fences secure these green compounds at the outskirts of Shanghai. Inside, one finds not only spacious houses with gardens, but playgrounds, clubhouses, swimming pools, convenience stores, or other service providers. Even kindergartens and some of the international schools are located on these compounds. Private guards, a common sight in today's Shanghai, watch the entrance gate; their practices varying from a friendly nod to stopping visitors at the entrance to calling the inhabitant to be visited.

Figure 9: Compounds in Shanghai. Photos by M. Sander.

In order to embed my own and the teenagers' descriptions of such gated communities, I would like to give an understanding of the specific situation in China. I do not aim to draw the whole (transcultural) history of gated communities, but to briefly shed light on their emersion and immersion, as well as denotations and connotations in Shanghai. The rise of luxurious compounds in China has been contextualized within the process of socio-spatial differentiation that started after the 1978 reforms (Giroir 2006). Geographer Giroir examined an upscale community in Beijing as an example of the market-led urban development. His study considers the economic and political forces leading to the creation of gated communities in China, and concludes that a rupture in housing concepts has taken place due to western influence. Giroir (2006,143) sees clear similarities to the gated communities in the United States and stresses "the discontinuity between this kind of development and what existed before." Webster, Wu and Zhao (2006), in contrast, place emphasis on the continuity by pointing out historical progression of walls in Chinese urban space, drawing on examples such as the old courtyard houses or the emperor's forbidden city in Beijing. In the beginning of the communist era, the tradition of gated housing complexes had been taken up further and gated complexes for work units (*danwei*) had been built. These housing complexes still exist and gated residential areas are very common in today's China (Webster, Wu,

94

and Zhao 2006). About the recent developments Wu writes that "from 1991 to 2000, about 83% of Shanghai's residential areas have been gated" (Wu 2006, 1). Due to these specific culturally entangled developments, denotations and connotations of gated communities in China differ from those in the USA (Huang and Low 2008), in particular because closed housing areas are self-evident and unquestioned in the Chinese context (Hassenpflug 2009, 63). However, compounds and their attributed meanings also differ greatly within urban China. Expatriates mostly live in the upper-scale neighborhoods with green lawns, villas, and luxurious facilities. Giroir (2006, 147;149) found that such luxurious residential compounds are not only more spacious, expensive or better secured, but often refer to exotic ("western") images through distinctly European architecture, rare flora, and even fauna. The different flows of urban concepts and images meet here. Chinese traditions of living in an enclosed neighborhood incorporate European architecture and answers to the desires for security known from US-American gated communities.

Figure 10: References to European Architecture in a Shanghai Gated Community. Photo by M. Sander

Comparing my own investigations on expatriates' reasons to move into a gated community in Shanghai with a study conducted by Frantz (2006) on the motivations for citizens in the United States, I find answers similar to his categories[39]. For the specific situation of the transnational elite in Shanghai I can name: the desire for security, the

---

[39] A study conducted by Frantz in the Unites States reveals six reasons for moving into a gated community: 1. "Desire for Security and Fear of Crime," 2. "Protection of the Private Sphere," 3. "Predictability and Property Values," 4. "Retreat from Failing Government," 5. "Exclusivity," and 6. "Identity, Packaging and Social Homogeneity" (Frantz 2006, 72–74).

protection of the private sphere and from the "other," the retreat from traffic, noise and air pollution, and the desire for a familiar standard of living. Very important to expat parents proved to be ideas of identity and social homogeneity offered by gated community living. Only Frantz's findings that the predictability of property values is a reason to move into a gated community for U.S. citizens (ibid., 73), proves to be irrelevant in the case for expat families in Shanghai as the home is rented and temporary. Although global motives to move into a gated community become embedded in the local context, I can argue that many core ideas stay the same.

For Shanghai expatriates the impact of the employer on the choice of housing is also substantial. For most families the company provides a certain housing allowance. Some companies speak out suggestions based on experiences of former expatriates or colleagues. Others even prescribe the gated community by offering financial support for specific housing areas only.

From the aspects listed above, the social homogeneity is a major motive for the expatriate interviewees to move into a gated housing complex, and "community" and "neighborhood" are meanings some of the foreign elite in Shanghai attributes to their housing areas. However, the points of view on this aspect differ, especially when looking at different age groups. This is not only due to varying interests, but also to the opportunity to position oneself and to stress one's (age-) identities when reflecting upon one's housing spaces. As I will discuss in more detail in the part four, "Emplacement," particularly in chapter ten, age identities and images of spaces are mutually dependent.

Mothers I interviewed during former fieldwork in 2007, for example, reported that on the compounds the neighbors were easier to meet, because they are all in the same situation and have common interests. For the interviewed stay-at-home-mothers, the gated communities were particularly important, because in contrast to their children they do not have the school as a zone for establishing connections and making friendships. Willis and Yeoh (2002, 558) who looked at expatriates in Hong Kong even understand the compound as the "key to the development of social networks," although pointing out that it is a highly gendered space that brings mainly expatriate full-time housewives together.

My recent fieldwork brings to the fore that children usually benefit from the space to roam around. The compound for the younger children is a zone where they can move freely, a space where they are not directly under the eyes of authorities. For the older, however, this positive aspect of "fenced freedom" becomes obsolete as they are gradually allowed to move through the city on their own. For them the meaning

changes, turns from freedom to isolation and boredom, as a German teenager of the age of sixteen, Bjoern, says:

Bjoern: And such a compound, that is something else than in a village. There you are still a little, <L> village is not the best example, but <L\> [I: <L\>.], you are a little connected to the outside world. [I: Yes.] And a compound is a compound. It is quiet, some children are playing. [I: Yes.] But normally one lives completely isolated, I'd say, from the Chinese world. You live in your European compound. [I: Yes.] You really notice it. Some of them really withdraw. Actually you can't say, that we really; like when, if someone from Germany asks, like, what do you do in Shanghai? I say, I sit in my isolated compound the whole time and watch movies. And that's about it.[40]

The desire for transgressing childhood boundaries – spatial and others – also becomes clear in the relation to the aspect of "community" in a gated community. In contradiction to the mothers I interviewed, teenaged Mia explains:

Mia: But it's not a community. Well, back then it was. [I: Back then it was?] Well, there is one compound close by, called jiushi. It is really big, extremely huge. And a lot of Germans live there. And earlier it used to really be like that; you knew a lot of people there, who lived close by. But now the compound is a little old and not really nice anymore. And meanwhile it's not like that anymore. Back then it was really like that. You had several people who you knew and always did things together and so on. I used to live there. But now I don't feel that way anymore.[41]

Besides possible actual changes in the described compound's population, it becomes evident that growing up changes the perspective on the gated community. Her social interactions have moved outside the realm of the compound as she is interested in and allowed to enter new spaces.

Mia continues with a description of her current housing area:

Mia: Relatively many foreigners still live here, where I live, and also some from the school, but I don't really do a lot there.[42]

---

[40] German original: Und so ein Compound, das ist was anderes als in so 'nem Dorf. Da bist du noch so ein bisschen. <L> Dorf ist auch nicht das beste Beispiel aber </L> [I: <L>.], du bist ein bisschen an der Außenwelt. [I: Ja.] Und ein Compound ist ein Compound. Es ist leise, ein paar Kinder spielen. [I: Ja.] Aber in der Regel wohnt man ja komplett abgeschattet, sag ich jetzt mal, von der Chinesischen Welt. Du lebst ja in deinem europäischen Compound. [I: Ja.] Das merkt man schon krass. Da ziehen sich manche auch richtig hart zurück. Eigentlich kann man nicht sagen, dass wir richtig; so wenn, bei mir wenn die aus Deutschland fragen, so ja, was macht man so in Shanghai? Ich so, ja ich sitz die ganze Zeit auf meinen abgeschotteten Compound und schau mir Filme an. Und dann war's das schon.

[41] German original: Aber 'ne Community ist es jetzt nicht. Also früher war das mal so. [I: Früher war es so?] Also es gibt einen so 'nen Compound hier in der Nähe, Jiushi heißt der. Der ist so richtig riesig, also wirklich richtig groß. Und da wohnen halt richtig viele Deutsche. Und früher war das auch wirklich so, da kannte man dann auch richtig viele Leute da, die bei einem in der Nähe gewohnt haben. Aber der Compound ist jetzt auch schon etwas älter und nicht mehr so schön. Und inzwischen ist das jetzt auch nicht mehr. Also damals war das wirklich so. Da hatte man wirklich einige Leute die man kannte und hat mit denen immer was gemacht und so. Also ich hab da früher halt gewohnt. Aber jetzt finde ich, ist das nicht mehr so.

[42] German original: Hier wohnen, also bei mir wohnen jetzt auch noch relativ viele Ausländer, so, aber, und auch einige von der Schule. Aber ich mach da jetzt nicht wirklich viel.

She mentions the social homogeneity as a basis for community life, but says that even this does not make the compound the center of her social life anymore. Interesting is her usage of "noch" [still], pointing at the perception that this social homogeneity of foreigners might be under threat with upper class Chinese moving in.

When looking at the aspect of isolation, addressed by the German boy Bjoern above, it is apparent that his reflection upon his situation and the practices of other inhabitants ("some of them really withdraw") point at the role the compound plays in drawing boundaries to expat life. His descriptions support anthropologist Fechter who argues that expatriates want to control their spaces, exclude the city, and erect boundaries. In *Transnational Lives* she writes that expatriates "are fundamentally concerned with the production and negotiation of boundaries" (Fechter 2007a, 61). The teenagers are aware of these practices. For her case in Jakarta, Indonesia, Fechter does not simply link this erection of boundaries to a fear of the "other" but to the loss of (bodily) control and "expatriates' discomfort with their bodily visibility as 'Whites' in a predominantly Asian society" (2007a, 62).[43] Living in a suburban enclave sometimes means keeping the "other" outside. The experience of the sixteen-year-old German student of Chinese descent, Don, gives insight into how real the boundaries of the compounds can be:

> Don: As a Chinese, if you look Chinese, you generally get less respect from the Chinese[44]. They respect foreigners to the max. For example, quite often they don't let me into the compounds. [Two other students: Fact. Yes. Right. True.] [I: Really?] That's why I don't like the guards. Because they don't let me in when I tell them I want to go to this number. Then they say, 'yes, but that's a foreigner who lives there.' 'Yes, I want to meet this foreigner.' [I + other student: <L>]. 'Yes, but what do you want there?' 'Visit. Meet up.' And then they just let me wait. Then they call and often nobody answers the phone. And then I think, crap, do I have to go back home now, or what? That was frustrating. [I: Yes.] Frustrating at its worst. That's why I have this hatred against guards.[45]

---

[43] I see a valid point in this argument and agree that bodily discomforts play a role. Chapter thirteen of this dissertation elaborates on the role of bodily difference.

[44] It is interesting to see how Don's perception of the compounds differs from his white friends and how bodily differences that evoke differences in nationality lead to contrasting experiences of the city. I will expand on this issue in chapter thirteen. It is also noteworthy that Don started the phrase with "as a Chinese," to then correct himself "if you look Chinese." This shows that in everyday life the international students constantly have to negotiate their cultural identities; processes that I will discuss further in the part six, "Dwelling on the Move."

[45] German Original: Als Chinese, wenn du aussiehst wie ein Chinese, hast du hier generell weniger Respekt von Chinesen. Die respektieren Ausländer ja aufs Übelste. Zum Beispiel lassen die mich öfter nicht in Compounds rein. [Two other students: Fact. Ja. Stimmt. Echt so.] [I: Echt?] Deswegen mag ich diese Guards nicht. Weil die lassen mich nicht rein, wenn ich sag, ja ich will zu dieser [Haus]Nummer. Dann sagen die, ja, dass ist doch ein Ausländer der da wohnt. Ja, ich will zu diesem Ausländer. [I + other student: <L>]. "Ja was willst du denn da?" "Besuchen." "Treffen. So." Und dann lassen die mich einfach warten. Dann rufen die an und meistens geht dann keiner ans Telefon. Und dann denk ich so, Mist, kann ich wieder nach Hause fahren oder wie? Das ist auch frustrierend gewesen. [I: Ja.] Frustrierend aufs Übelste. Ehm, deswegen hab ich einen Hass gegen Guards.

The thick walls around the communities are symbolic of the barrier towards Chinese society that expatriates practices build. Gated communities reflect the fear of the "other" and serve to stress difference and are vital in the processes of drawing boundaries. Although some of the privileged migrants – mainly mothers – of different national and cultural backgrounds might create a common community, a transnational social space behind the compound walls, I deeply agree with Fechter when she writes:

> The case of Euro American expatriates in Jakarta suggests that spaces created by transnational migrants are not always "transnational" – as in fluid, malleable and progressive – but that they can be bounded, rigid, and conservative. (Fechter 2007b, 51)

Although these transnational social spaces are not always hermetically sealed off, and gated communities are nodal points for the transnational elite's networks, the locale – the city of Shanghai and Chinese society and culture – plays a limited role. This role is mostly in staging difference – as the city outside, or the Chinese guard or housemaid – and not as an integrated part. In the August 2010 issue of *Shanghai Family* a mother is quoted commenting on life in a house on a compound: "Although the French Concession[46] gives you a better flavor of Shanghai, being here is like being at home" (Sparling 2010, 11). A comfortable home is juxtaposed to the perceived discomfort of the French concession representing the city of Shanghai. Male student Bjoern also comments on this division into the spaces of gated communities and the city itself.

> Bjoern: Actually you only experience the Shanghai-world on the weekend. [I: Yes.] During the week you are only in your western world, you drive from one compound to the next. And then you're back again in this world, with western people.[47]

The gated communities in Shanghai may be perceived as the norm in Chinese urban concepts and relate to feelings of community (Huang and Low 2008), but for the inhabiting teenagers they rather relate to the image of US American enclaves and symbolize socio-spatial segregation.

Nevertheless, students also contemplate on the positive aspects of the segregations and point out that these are their homes and places they enjoy, as the following two quotes from a conversation with three male students (Don, Bjoern, Alex) from the German School and from a German girl, Kressi, show:

---

[46] The French Concession was a foreign concession within Shanghai from 1849 to 1946. Today it has still a distinct character and is part of Shanghai's most central districts. The part of the city has become popular among young foreigners and I also stayed here during my ten-month research in 2010/2011. It is interesting that this part of the city with its colonial traces is representing the flavor of Shanghai, something that points again at the nostalgia described by Amada Lagerkvist (2007) whose study is summarized in chapter 11.1.

[47] German original: Man kriegt die Shanghaiwelt eigentlich nur wochenends mit. [I: Ja.] In der Woche ist man nur in seiner westlichen Welt so, da fährt man von einem Compound zum nächsten. Und ist dann wieder in dieser Welt, mit westlichen Menschen.

Interviewer: As we are just talking about housing and Shanghai, what are your favorite places in the city?

Don: Alex's house.

Interviewer: <L> Alex's?

Bjoern: There are Alex's and Peter's.

Alex: There are two, well, for example my place, and Peter's, that is where we are quite often, if we don't go downtown, and then we chill out, relaxed.

Don: At Peter's it's not as great as at yours.

Bjoern: I think its relaxed at Peter's.

Don: It's relaxed, too.[48]

In a different interview Kressi comments:

Kressi: I feel safer if there is a fence around it and if there are guards standing and running around, in the night. But in Germany nothing happens either. Then I believe that at our [not guarded or gated] house [in Germany] nothing has happened so far, in the house.[49]

Their interpretations of the space and its meaning in their everyday life differ from a safe place, "a place to chill out"[50] to a place of isolation and boredom. They are always based on the juxtaposition of compounds and the city of Shanghai; the gated communities do not form part of the city. However, for most teenagers, the outside city does not only embody noise and dirt (see Figure 8, the mental map by a Singaporean school student in chapter seven), but rather excitement and coolness, as the part on nightlife activities (chapter eleven) will explore further. The city with its global nightscapes gives the opportunity to transgress borders like the compounds' walls and those set by age.

In summary these housing areas for the globally mobile elites thus are suburban enclaves with strong impermeable boundaries that give the opportunity to retreat from

---

[48] German original:
Interviewer: Wo wir gerade über wohnen reden und über Shanghai, was sind denn dann so Eure Lieblingsorte in der Stadt?
Don: Alex Haus.
Interviewer: <L> Alexs?
Bjoern: Es gibt Alex und Peter.
Alex: Es gibt so zwei, also, ich zum Beispiel, und Peter, da ist man halt auch oft wenn man jetzt, man nicht mal in die Innenstadt geht und dann chillt man, gemütlich.
Don: Bei Peter ist's nicht so toll wie bei dir.
Bjoern: Bei Peter finde ich es entspannt.
Don: Ist auch sehr entspannt.

[49] German original: Ich fühl mich da sicherer wenn da so ein Zaun drum ist und wenn da überall Guards stehen und da rumlaufen, in der Nacht. Aber in Deutschland passiert ja auch nichts. Also bei uns ist glaube ich noch nichts passiert, in dem Haus.

[50] The english word "chilling," or here adopted to German grammar as "chillen," is a term to refer to specific practices of "hanging out" and seems to have spread among various youths; see for instance Vanderstede's (2011, 175) investigations into the spatial practice of "chilling" among Belgian youth, and for further associations of places to chill for German expatriate youth in Shanghai, see also chapter twelve on "The Shop."

the city. They give space to connect among each other. They provide the space and stage for the performance of (age)identities, practices of demarcation and belonging to a cosmopolitan elite. The gated communities of expatriates in Shanghai form a space where one is cosmopolitan and the "other" is essentialized and kept outside.

It became evident that familiar images on living are taken along on the international moves and that parents consider their children's needs when choosing a certain housing option, for example, the availability of green spaces and safe journeys to school. The website of a German school, for instance, provides a map and list of the compounds most students live in to facilitate the house search for newcomers. Many families choose to settle in the vicinity of the school at the outskirts of Shanghai. Sometimes, the students seem to have outgrown the considered needs and wish a different housing option for themselves in the center. However, they admit that the way to school might be too long when moving to the center. House and school, which have been on all of the students' mental maps, are evidently the most central places in their lives. The next section thus investigates the domestic space of the house and its role in the process of feeling at home in Shanghai.

8.2. Material Practices: Belongings, Food and Family

"Home is a process and, as such, involves continual practices of home-making to be felt and experienced," argues Katie Walsh (2011, 516) based on her ethnographic research on homing practices of male British migrants in Dubai as well as former work on homes by Blunt and Dowling (2006) and Miller (2001). The importance of home-making practices is particularly true for the expatriate teenagers in Shanghai, for many of whom home as a site of everyday life may differ from feelings and spaces of belonging. This process of making home in Shanghai is often based on belongings, food, and the connected family practices.

Personal Objects

> It is only years later that that [sic!] I now understand the power personal objects play in our lives, but at the time when I lost my shipment, I was appalled at how much stock I put in material objects. I was embarrassed, ashamed to admit how much they meant to me. It wasn't so much the individual objects that I grieved for, rather it was what they represented as a whole; for me their value resided in where they were from. Together, collectively, these objects told the story of who I was, and this, as I gradually began to understand, was contingent on where I had lived. (Burns 2011, 367)

In a very personal piece, Maureen Burns (2011) discusses her own expatriate childhood experience and links these to a few theoretical reflections from the angle of visual and material culture studies. Her article shows how any sort of documentation as

a means of representing and articulating identity is a common strategy for migrants to deal with moving, remembering her own loss of a container shipment that included all her belongings when she moved to college in the US. Feeling "stripped bear," Burns recalls that she had almost nothing left "to communicate a whole sense of self" (ibid., 366) after the shipment went missing. Having only left the things she wore and the clothes her suitcase carried, she remembers how her rings as objects she had collected in her many stays during childhood "became great conversation pieces that simultaneously piqued other's interest and communicated [her] experiences." She sees these objects as "containers" of her life that protect her personal history, "ensuring against the losses of the past," when symbolically displaced (ibid.).

Heather Hindman (Hindman 2009a, 676) describes how expatriate women she studied in Kathmandu, strategically shop for specific art objects to use these "as means of transferring knowledge and status between locations." The items displayed in the homes, similar to the rings Burns (2011) chose to wear, invite the opportunity to communicate experiences and share stories. As Hindman theorizes, "the objects expatriates collect are actants in the social drama of Expatria, lurking in freeze-dried form, ready to spring to life in a new location to impart status to their possessors" (Hindman 2009a, 676–677).

Such meaning-laden objects, even furniture, from former stays were present in many of the students' homes as well, as most expatriate families take advantage of their employer's financial support and ship their belongings around the world. A certain amount of container shipments are usually included in the so-called packages that the employing organizations provide for their expatriates as part of their contracts.

Mia, whose case I here like to use to exemplify the role material culture plays in homing processes, explains:

> Mia: My home is simply where I live at that moment. No matter how long and no matter how comfortable I feel. […] Because we always move with [furniture]. Because some people only move with a few suitcases. But we are really, well, our furniture is always coming with us.[51]

When, during my last stay in June 2012, I visit Mia at home, I move through a big airy house located on a green compound. Upon entering the villa my attention is immediately drawn to the walls of the hallway and living room. These are decorated with Chinese calligraphy and a large framed painting displaying the harbor of their German hometown. The painting, like those of English landscapes that Katie Walsh found in British expatriate homes in Dubai, seems to make "a public *claim* to belonging

---

[51] German original: Mein Zuhause ist einfach da wo ich wohne in dem Moment. Egal wie lange schon und egal wie wohl ich mich fühle. […]. Weil wir ziehen immer mit [Möbeln um]. Weil es gibt ganz viele Leute die ziehen immer nur mit ein paar Koffern um. Aber wir sind halt wirklich, also unsere Möbel sind immer dabei.

elsewhere" (2006a, 132, emphasis in the original). The living room hosts several custom-made furniture in modern Chinese style, which I have come across in several expatriate homes, as well as in advertisements in the local expatriate press. These pieces seem to be favored objects to capture Shanghai memories. Mia's own room upstairs sports a similar collection of objects and images, however, more intimate than those downstairs. It is therefore not surprising, that when I ask the teenagers from the German school to send me an image documenting what "home in Shanghai" means to them, Mia sends me the following photo of her room.

Figure 11: Home in Shanghai: Mia's Room. Photograph by Mia

Stuffed with magazines, books, clothes, photos and souvenirs, her own room seems to bring together all of Mia's personal history.

> Mia: Many people move with a suitcase. You know, in my case the furniture, [...], my book, everything that lies in there [is here]. If you only move with a suitcase, or with two, three boxes, then you don't take everything along, but also leave a few things behind. I have things, my goodness, which I really don't need anymore. If I moved right now and opened a second room, I would leave a lot of things behind, but would not throw them away. [...] But I could not live in an empty room. Absolutely not. I think if I moved without my stuff, nevertheless, after a month the latest, my room would be full. I don't know, I just need that. It has always been like that.[52]

---

[52] German original: Viele Leute, die ziehen mit dem Koffer um. Weißt du, bei mir die Möbel, [...] meine Bücher, was da alles drinne liegt [sind dabei]. Wenn du nur mit dem Koffer umziehst, oder mit zwei, drei Kisten, dann nimmst du ja nicht alles mit, sondern lässt eben auch einiges stehen. Weil ich hab ja Sachen, meine Güte, die brauch ich ja echt nicht mehr. Aber man kann sich dann eben auch nicht trennen. Wenn ich jetzt umziehen würde und ein zweites Zimmer eröffnen würde sozusagen, würd ich halt viele Sachen auch stehenlassen, aber die ja trotzdem nicht wegschmeißen. […] Aber ich könnte nicht in so einem leeren Zimmer leben. Echt nicht. Ich glaube wenn ich umziehen würde ohne meine Sachen, trotzdem,

Objects and the associations they evoke make her feel home. The miniature Eiffel tower, the hat from Vietnam, the pillow on the bed displaying Shanghai's iconic buildings, for instance, relate to places she has been to. An issue of the German women magazine *Brigitte* hints at connections to German or global female consumer culture. Photographs display friends, friendships, and memorable moments.

> Mia: I think photos are really important. Photos are what I cling on to most. Oh, one time, I lost all my photos. Well, I deleted all of them accidentally. I was so desperate. <L> I was sooo desperate.[53]

Her narrative of loss of all her photos, which she could only partly regain through friends and parents, reminds of Burns (2011) account of loosing her belongings and thus reminders and markers of who one is. Mia's room shows that some items, for instance the Shanghai pillow, might already be purchased for the future, like the objects of Hindman's actors in Nepal, "ready to spring to life in a new location to impart status to their possessors" (Hindman 2009a, 676–677).

Food

Petridou (2001, 89), who in her article, "The Taste of Home," studies Greek students culinary practices in London, shows how food can create "the experience of home as a sensory totality." Exploring food culture Petridou sees home "away from its physical structures of the house" but still linked to the material world, understanding "the home as a practice and a combination of processes through which its inhabitants acquire a sense of history and identity" (ibid., 88). I can relate to the importance of food in feeling at home. While I enjoyed exploring my Chinese food surroundings by dining out in restaurants, local eateries, noodle shops, and street food stalls, I occasionally prepared "home" food[54] at home. However, I was startled to find out that for many students these clear place-taste relations were dissolving, or even the other way around. While I had learned from the students' maps and participant observation that the teenagers enjoyed eating out in western style restaurants, I first underestimated the role of the *ayi*[55], the maid or nanny, until a discussion with Paul drew my attention to the issue.

---

spätestens nach einem Monat wär mein Zimmer voll. Ich weiß nicht, ich brauch das. Und das war auch immer so.

[53] German original: Ich finde Fotos sind soo wichtig. Also, Fotos sind immer das, wo ich mich am meisten so dran klammere. Oh einmal, da hab ich meine ganzen Fotos verloren. Also ich hab die alle gelöscht, ausversehen. Ich war so am Ende. <L> Ich war sooo am Ende.

[54] I call it home food as I would not consider these meals specifically German or "authentic" of other regions, but rather food that includes imported groceries which I or my research participants used before and that are specialties in Shanghai, such as cheese, olives, Italian style pasta, bread, cream, wine or others, or for Asian students ingredients imported from Korea, Japan, Singapore, Thailand or India, such as different curry pastes.

[55] Among expatriate families and middle class Chinese it is common to have a maid that helps with cleaning, cooking or child raising. The maid is commonly called "ayi" which literally translates into "aunt" and may be used to address any woman of the age of the speaker's mother. Teenagers, like everyone

104

Interviewer: Do you mainly go to western restaurants? Or do you go to eat Chinese?

Paul: Well, my *ayi* can make Chinese food.

The students experience Chinese food at home, prepared by the family's maid and the city of Shanghai therefore often provides the international food they crave for. Of course some of the students enjoy their native cuisine at home, as an *ayi* working for several foreign families told me. Although she would cook Chinese food two or three times per week, she was particularly proud of her skills preparing pizza, making spinach pies and baking whole wheat bread. Not in all households, however, is the preparation of meals left to the *ayi*. After one interview with three German boys, Bjoern made everyone jealous by saying that his mom was awaiting him at home with a homemade Bolognese sauce and pasta. Apparently this was noteworthy as many expatriate families rely on their maid in the preparations of food. Generally, one can note that "home" food is missed. Paul, who grew up in the States, for instance, would crave for slurpees [Iced flavored drinks]. Most of the German boys commented on missing Kebabs, or food they related to their grandmothers' cookings such as potato salad or roast beef. The category of home food, however, becomes questionable when Chinese dishes become an integrated part of the diet at home and the "home food" part of dining out in the city. Food for the expatriate students therefore rather relates to broader ideas of home, as Mia's account on the relation between certain food smells and feelings of being at home illustrates:

Mia: Well, Germany is my home, but Germany as a country. This is already the case when I step out of the airport and smell the bakery-aroma.[56] That simply is home. That is not a specific place, but this feeling that I only have in Germany.[57]

Certain practices surrounding food, however, can encourage the process of home-making, as Bjoern's joy and pride about his mother's Bolognese show. However, the fact that his mother prepared the dish was crucial to its value.

---

else in the expatriate community, have kept the Chinese term. For contemplations on the role of household staff in students' lives and its impact on understandings of class and class-consciousness, see Heather Hindman (2009b) and chapter nine of this study. For the role of the maid in Chinese households see Wanning Sun (2008).

[56] For an understanding of the meaning of bread for German communities abroad, see chapter nine "Vermissen, Organisieren, Neuentdecken" of Brigitte Bönisch-Brednich's (2002) ethnographic study of Germans in New Zealand Auswandern Destination Neuseeland.

[57] German original: Also, Deutschland so ist meine Heimat, aber Deutschland so als Land. Das ist schon so wenn ich aus dem Flughafen geh und den Bäckereigeruch rieche, das ist dann einfach Heimat. Das ist jetzt nicht wirklich unbedingt ein spezieller Ort, sondern so einfach dieses Gefühl, was ich in Deutschland nur hab.

Practices of Homemaking and Family Life

Mia's, Bjoern's, and their peers' experiences show that material culture plays a significant role in making home a meaningful place for teenagers in their everyday lives. In order to understand the reciprocal relationships of materialities and human practices in the process of turning a place into home, I like to continue with Mia's case. Mia, who has moved several times in her life, always draws a lot of strength from her family. She and her two siblings have very close relationships and it seems to me that communal family activities are an important coping mechanism for her. This impression is confirmed when she tells me about her struggles when her father and older sister both had to leave Shanghai due to job obligations and college. Mia, her mother and brother stayed on in Shanghai, however, for Mia to finish her last year of school. A year later she recalls during our interview:

> Mia: There was a difficult moment when we got to know that my father had to move. That really wasn't great. Especially in the beginning, because my father and sister both stayed on in Germany. And the three of us came back to move into this house [in Shanghai]. We had lived in a different house before. That was no easy time. I was really… The first month, every evening, I was always sad, I cried a lot. It was okay during the day when I was at school, but [difficult] in the evenings at home. Our family life changed a lot. We all used to sit around the dinner table, and now we are only three, and someone is usually not there. Well, it really did change a lot. Sometimes we have to make plans: Okay, lets all go out for dinner together, so we all can talk for hours again. Otherwise you talk, sure, but only two of us, rarely all three.[58]

Mia misses her father and sister, but she also misses the communal dinner as family routine that is crucial in rendering the place of living into home. When I inquired about her strategy to deal with the new situation at home she explains:

> Mia: Well, since we have become such a small family, I plan a lot of activities. So I am really out a lot, simply because... Well, I used to be happy to be home alone once in a while, because it so rarely happened. If you are five people, it rarely happens. And now I don't enjoy being home alone, then I am like, 'Okay, what do I do now?' So when I am home alone I usually go downtown or just do something with friends. […] My calendar is actually always full. That's sort of my strategy. Well, sure, I also think a lot. But sitting at home all the time and everything

---

[58] German original: Da war bei mir noch ein schwieriger Moment als es hieß, dass mein Vater wegziehen muss. Das war halt, das war wirklich nicht schön. Vor allem die erste Zeit, weil mein Vater und meine Schwester sind dann ja gleichzeitig in Deutschland geblieben. Und wir sind zu dritt wiedergekommen und sind in dieses Haus gezogen. Davor haben wir in einem anderen Haus gelebt. Das war keine einfache Zeit. Weil da war ich wirklich. Den ersten Monat war ich jeden Abend so, oh nee, war immer traurig, hab viel geweint. […] Also wenn ich tagsüber in der Schule war, war kein Problem […] Aber abends halt zu Hause, hmm. [...] Das Familienleben hat sich schon verändert. Davor saßen wir immer alle gemeinsam am Abendbrottisch. Und jetzt sind wir halt, dadurch dass wir zu dritt sind, ist eigentlich fast immer einer nicht da. Also es hat sich schon sehr verändert. Wir müssen uns teilweise verabreden: okay, wir gehen jetzt mal wieder zusammen essen, damit wir mal wieder stundenlang alle miteinander reden können. Weil sonst, klar, man redet zu zweit, aber zu dritt halt seltener.

is kinda crashing down around you for the whole time, but you can't do anything about it, and you're just sitting around stupidly.[59]

Since these dinners are not conveying the sense of home anymore, Mia rather likes to spend time outside with her friends, establishing new practices of home-making for herself in Shanghai.[60] Likewise, many of the expatriate students learn to live with fathers often being absent. Eleven-year-old Allen, for instance, only sees his father on the weekend when he returns from his work site in a minor Chinese city.

It is evident that the expatriate teenagers' material practices of making home are continuous negotiations, not only of home as a site, but also of processes of emplacement in the city and of larger understandings of belonging, as Walsh succinctly phrased it: "Domestic materialities can play a highly significant role in migrants' negotiation of geographies of belonging, residence, landscape and place" (2011, 516). Basu and Coleman (2008, 324) argue that material culture shows how migrants not only change their place, but also "their place within the 'world' they have entered." Having laid open the connections between belongings and belonging(s), the next section explores the latter and links theoretical positions to the students' own perspectives on their position in the world.

8.3. (Trans)local Ties: Theorizing Students' Negotiations of Home and Belonging

> Diasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identification encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities. (Brah 1996, 196)

The questions of belonging and home are a central topic in migration studies and have lead to various conceptualizations. Researchers across different disciplines have analyzed and conceptualized transnational migrants' practices and understood migrant forms of belonging, often "through abstracted spatial tropes" (Walsh 2006, 124), putting emphasis on the state of "in-betweenness" and the multiple ties migrants maintain. Vertovec, for instance, in regards to these multiple ties, writes:

> [M]any migrants today intensively conduct activities and maintain substantial commitments that link them with significant others […] who dwell in nation-states other than those in which the migrants themselves reside. Migrants now maintain such connections through uses of technology, travel and financial mechanisms more intensely than ever before possible. (Vertovec 2004, 970–971)

---

[59] German original: Also seitdem wir so eine kleine Familie sind, nehme ich mir halt extrem viel vor. Das heißt ich bin wirklich viel unterwegs, weil ich halt… Also früher war ich manchmal echt froh alleine zu Hause zu sein, weil es kam echt nicht oft vor. Wenn du zu fünft bist, kommt es nicht oft vor. Und jetzt bin ich nicht so gerne alleine zu Hause, dass heißt ich bin irgendwie so: "Okay, was mach ich jetzt?" Deswegen, wenn ich alleine zu Hause bin fahr ich meistens in die Stadt oder mach halt was mit Freunden. […] Mein Kalender ist eigentlich immer voll. Das ist so meine Strategie. Also, klar, denk ich auch viel nach. Aber so die ganze Zeit zu Hause sitzen und die ganze Zeit stürzt so alles auf dich ein, aber du kannst eigentlich nicht wirklich was tun, sondern sitzt da nur so blöd rum.

[60] The chapters under the part three, "Arriving," further discuss practices of emplacement in the city outside the site of home.

With the rise of multiple connections, Turner (2008, 1050) argues that

> transnational migration and diasporic communities contain an inherent spatial tension, as populations no longer 'fit' their territory - belonging to several places at once.

Other concepts using "abstracted spatial tropes" to understand the complex processes of linking places and people across borders and the migrant's "position" in these networks include "transnational social spaces" (Pries 2001), "ethnoscape" (Appadurai 1996) or "Third Space" (Bhabha [1994]2009).

Katie Walsh (2006a, 124) succinctly outlines the discourse on migration and home, recalling that at the end of the twentieth century, theorists described "contemporary social life and individual experience that privileged global movement." Referring, among others, to Castells ([1996]2000), Hannerz ([1996]2001), Chambers (1994) and Robertson et al. (1994), Walsh summarizes that it was proposed "we live in a world of 'flows' and societies in which identities are destabilized and detached from place." These ideas that "privilege movement over attachment," however, Walsh (2006a, 124) points out, have since been contested and criticized for "their insensitivity towards the continued importance of place, dwelling, and home." According to her, Geraldine Pratt's (1992)[61] reflections on the "problematic nature of the hierarchical dualism of mobility/dwelling established by these literatures," inspired theorists to understand home and migration in its interdependent relation, for instance, Brah (1996), Rapport and Dawson (1998), and Ahmed et al. (2003) (ibid.). Increasingly, scholars – Walsh (2006a, 124) refers for instance to Lamb (2002), and the geographers Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer (2004), and I would call to mind again ethnographer Englund's (2002) postglobalist approach that I discussed earlier – now call for research on processes of migration that is "'grounded' through attention to the ways such processes are locally lived and produced" (Walsh 2006a, 124). Katie Walsh's critique of earlier conceptualizations on the impact of migration on belonging as insensitive to place also echoes Avtar Brah's (1996, 180) warning: "[T]he very strong association of notions of diaspora with displacement and dislocation means that the experience of *location* can easily dissolve out of focus."

The two preceding parts of this chapter have therefore stressed the experiences and practices revolving around the concrete site of the home and its embeddedness in the larger context of gated community living in Shanghai and the inherent practices of

---

[61] Geraldine Pratt warns of an understanding of dwelling that only focuses on the dangers, as for example in some forms of nationalism, and calls for understanding dwelling also as "the legitimacy and value of peoples' struggles to create their own places and memories" (Pratt 1992, 243). Pratt emphazises that this focus needs to accompany "the rhetoric of movement that privileges detachment from place" in order to "break down a new hierarchy of difference created through the seemingly fashionable mobility – dwelling duality" (ibid.).

demarcation towards local society. But how are these practices of homing and demarcation related to the movement of the expatriate youths and the global, flowing, and shifting connections and identifications? Consequently, this last section investigates students' own perspectives on belonging, by investigating their relations to places and people beyond Shanghai, to abstract or imagined ideas or emotions, as emerging through their experiences of mobility as well as home-making.

Talking about Home and Belonging

Following the importance given to "belonging" in previous research, I discussed the question of home during all interviews. Talking about home with students I sometimes feared that the term refers to a quite hegemonic idea and that students would feel obliged to position themselves clearly or felt forced to state alliances to nationality or places of "origin." However, I considered home as an everyday vocabulary still the best choice. I then tried to open up the discussion by asking not only "Where is home for you?" but by further asking: "What do you usually reply when someone asks you 'where are you from?'?" I also initiated discussion of these questions themselves and asked how they felt about them, whether these were easy or difficult to answer. It became apparent that for many students these answers heavily depended on *who* would ask them. This points out how performative and relational the politics of home are. The following section presents these interviews and a discussion in form of mind maps, which were produced at the German school. The students were asked to discuss their ideas of "Heimat" [belonging/home] in written form in class. These mind maps show that home is a term of many associations and emotions.
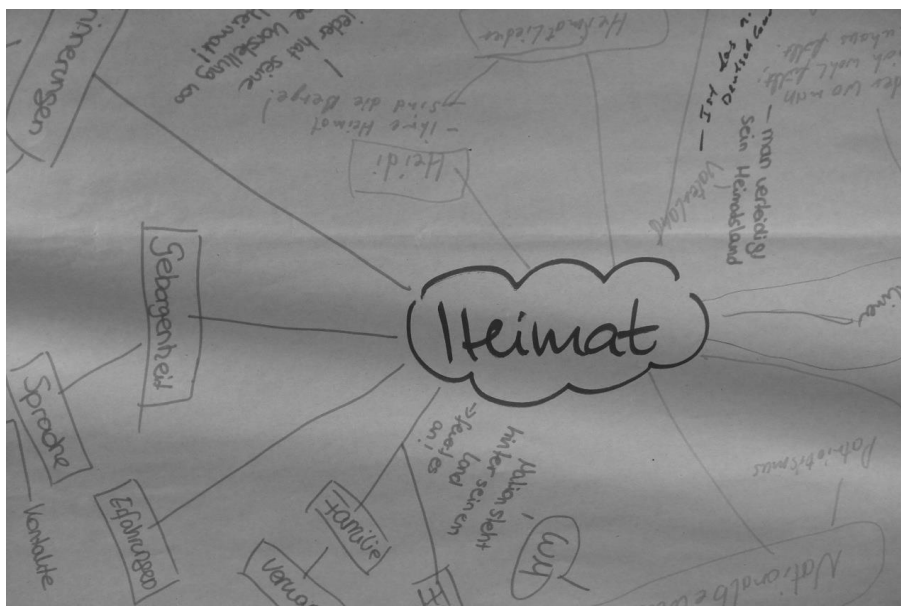

Figure 12: Section of Mind Map 1 on "Heimat." Drawing by Four Students

Covering a variety of issues, the students refer to places of growing up and "childhood" as well as "memories" and "experiences" in general. Among others they list "family," and the presence of relatives and pets. Likewise, the presence of friends is prominent on all four sketches, linked to comments on community and trust. "School" also finds its way onto one of the posters.

The teenagers also discuss sensorial experiences, such as climate and food, and familiar cultural practices, such as festivals and language. Houses and apartments as well as objects such as photos, videos, and music appear on the maps, too.

"Heimat" also evokes comments on patriotism, birthplace, nationality, nation states ("Germany, China") and mega-events like the World Cup ("Nation stands behind its country → roots for it").

Moreover all the sketches display discussions on media, listing social networks and services such as Facebook, Gowalla, Twitter, Myspace and forms of communications such as VoIP (Voice over IP) and instant messengers. Next to these ways to stay in touch with friends and families, German online media as a way to relate to many of the students' passport country are mentioned.
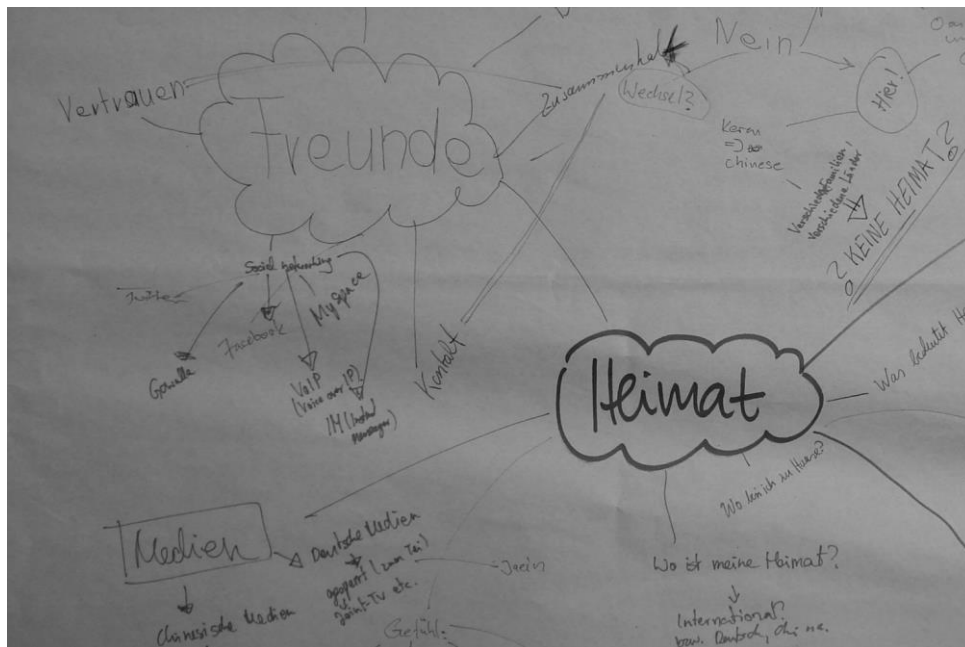

Figure 13: Section of Mind Map 2 on "Heimat." Drawing by Four Students

Emotions from feeling accepted to feeling safe play another prominent role in their written discussions: "where I can be myself," "People who really know you" or "home is where the heart is." Some remarks refer to the individual aspects and imagination of belonging, such as "everyone imagines home differently."

110

"Moving" is mentioned linked to the question "Belonging changes?". Other comments simply inquire "no home?" or "homeless?". On one poster students ask, "what is homeless?" to then answer: "When you feel you are wanted nowhere and have no relations to any specific places," and "neither place nor people."

"Heimat" evokes various associations and questions and students make clear how it is something they continuously negotiate in relations to "childhood," "family," "friends," "nationality," through "media," "everyday practices," "experiences" "memories" and "feelings." It seems that through moving contemplating on the notion of home becomes even more relevant. The next sections therefore look at several individual students' thoughts and negotiations of their subjective ideas of home.

Students' Positions on Home and Belonging

Home is often associated with stability and continuity, as the following quote of a sixteen-year-old student from the French school demonstrates:

> Arnaud: You think it's gonna be the same all your life. And you want it to stay that way and not change. I was nine years old and I had my friends and my. Cause I was in France, in Paris, in a small city called, not even a city, it's just between a city and a village.
>
> Interviewer: Yeah. A suburb?
>
> Arnaud: Exactly. And so I knew lots of people around. It's really, you feel like home a bit. At nine years old. And then you come to China and it's a huge city, and you say 'oh'. The style of life, there is a big change in the style of life.

However, as the association of "everything staying a certain way," of continuity is not a given for children moving transnational, many of my interviewees have difficulties in pointing out what home is to them. Japanese student Kazuo explains:

> Kazuo: Home is like. When you ask that question in Shanghai, like, in Shanghai. I have no home in Japan. So, I cannot answer my home is in Japan. In Japan, I always, like, <x> grew up in other places. So I cannot say where are you from? Japan. I am not sure.

Like Kazuo, the international students with their transnational ties and relations to multiple locations have to negotiate the term to find a way to go beyond prioritizing one place over the other. In the eyes of expatriate youths home is nothing fixed or easy to define.

Some students deal with the problem of defining home by claiming home as "back home." Nine-year-old Allen, who has already lived in several places, for instance, sees his home tied to the current house his parents own in the US:

> Allen: I'd say South Carolina, cause that's the house there right now. But I am originally from Chicago, Illinois, but I never actually, I don't have any memories in my brain about it.

This definition of home is related to the way his whole family conceptualizes their stay abroad. His parents' influence and how home is communally defined as the house in the US can be seen in his account of traveling back to the US in the summer and his consistent use of "we" in this narrative:

> Allen: One other disadvantage for me is, living in China is very far away from my home country. And where we have a house in the USA is the farthest it could be away from us, in the US. Because it is east, of the US, so we have to ride a fifteen-hours flight home, and we have to ride another two-hour flight back to our house. And then plus driving-hours.
>
> Interviewer: And plus the waiting hours in the airport. It feels like a whole day of traveling.
>
> Allen: That is a long thing that we don't enjoy. All the flying.
>
> Interviewer: But that is still your home?
>
> Allen: Yeah. I call it home.

For seventeen-year-old Karina, Shanghai is her fourth city of residence. However, she prefers her relationship to Prague to other places, which she links to her friends' and family's presence:

> Interviewer: But you feel comfortable in both places, somehow?
>
> Karina: I feel more comfortable in Prague. Because I have my friends and my family there. And I was simply born there. I spent the biggest part of my life there. And, yes, I have a much closer relation to Prague than to Shanghai. Shanghai, I think, okay, I moved here because of my father and I get my diploma and goodbye. And then I maybe come back some time for my studies. But I always try to spend as little time here as possible. I don't know.[62]

Karina and Allen both actively maintain their ties to their home, Prague and the house in the US. Shanghai is only a transitory space to them. Karina not only defines Prague as her home, but also Shanghai as a place where she tries to spend "as few time as possible." She points this out during a follow-up interview that we conducted one year after her initial move to Shanghai. Karina has difficulties in the homing process in Shanghai and even after one year limits her relationship to Shanghai to her father's job. However, she had returned just before the interview from a summer in Prague and was particularly missing her family and friends. We note that home is for some students connected to elsewhere, to necessary travel, and missing.

---

[62] German original: [Interviewer: Aber du fühlst dich in beidem wohl, irgendwie?] In Prag fühl ich mich wohler. Weil ich da eben meine Freunde und meine Familie hab. Und ich wurde da einfach geboren. Ich hab da den größten Teil meines Lebens einfach verbracht. Und, ja zu Prag hab ich eine viel engere Beziehung als zu Shanghai. Shanghai, denk ich mir, okay, ich bin jetzt wegen meinem Vater hierhin gezogen und ich mach jetzt mein Abi und tschüss. Und dann komm ich hier vielleicht mal wegen meinem Studium her zurück. Aber ich versuch hier immer so wenig Zeit wie möglich zu verbringen. Ich weiß nicht.

Keeping the migratory experiences of the young actors in this study in mind, we are not surprised to find that the transient relationship with Shanghai might make it difficult to relate to Shanghai as home for some of the students.

> Tamara: For me, I think I should call China home, because I feel more comfortable here than <x>. Erm, but erm, I don't really know if China should be my home, because I think I will be moving somewhere else after three or more years.

For Tamara the fear of leaving, of moving on, makes it difficult to relate to Shanghai as home, although she "feels comfortable." Shanghai can only be a temporary home, a transit space. Giovanni has a similar understanding. He describes himself as "feeling safe" and "a little bit like at home"[63] in Shanghai. But when he further reflects on the question of home, he argues that although he has not been living in Switzerland – the country of his parents and nationality – for three years now he would, nevertheless, call it home rather than Shanghai. His major argument is that he is only "temporarily" in Shanghai, "like a long holiday"[64]. Again his quote shows how Shanghai is perceived as a transit space, a temporary home.

Giovanni's contemplations, however, also point to the idea of two simultaneous homes, Switzerland and Shanghai, an idea many students present. Likewise, Avtar Brah (1996) answers the questions of home in her writings about diaspora with conceptualizations based on a distinction of "homing desire" and a "desire for homeland" as two different simultaneous processes and discourses (1996, 16).

> On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the day… all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (Brah 1996, 192)

Akin to Avtar Brah's two notions of home, eighteen-year-old Matthias explains: "I think, like, both is kind of home. Maybe right now I'd say rather here [Shanghai] than Germany." Only to contradict himself later: "For me. Germany." This seeming contradiction, two homes, is not surprising as students have the feeling they have to choose, to decide. However, they maintain emotional relations to both places.

Sixteen-year-old Mia's contemplations that are already discussed above are a further fitting example for Brah's conceptualizations of home: While Mia's (reflections on the)

---

[63] German original: Aber eigentlich fühl ich mich hier ganz sicher. Und eigentlich auch wie zu Hause. Ein bisschen. Ich mag es eigentlich hier.

[64] German original: Zuhause? Ist schwer. Weil ich war jetzt drei Jahre lang nicht mehr richtig in der Schweiz. Dafür hier um so mehr. Aber ich würde trotzdem noch sagen, dass es in der Schweiz ist. Hier ist man nur vorrübergehend. Wie lange Ferien.

material practices and home-making in Shanghai have shown that she clearly considers the domestic space of living as home ["Zuhause"], her idea of space of belonging or a "desire for the homeland" ["Heimat"] is tied to Germany as a country, symbolized by the bakery smell. She comments on this dualistic concept:

> Mia: Because you don't have a place where you can say, this is where I've spent all my life or big parts of my life. That's where I belong. Because I have lived here [Shanghai] the longest. But still I would, no idea... It is my home, but it's not my home [Heimat].[65]

Her German distinction and definition of "Zuhause" and of "Heimat" agree with Brah's (1996) two formulations of home. However, discussing the matter further, Mia stresses that this being at home due to lived experiences, is not only tied to a single place in her life, but multi-local.

> Mia: It's really like that! Also, if you go somewhere you have lived before. For instance, when I go with my family to Singapore. Even years later. You don't even have to remember it that well. Just at that moment when you are riding in a taxi and you look out the window and see these palm trees. That is simply home. It's as if you were coming home! [66]

Mia's descriptions remind us that Brah's definition, although tempting us to see a dualistic form of home for migrants at first sight, mentions the "double, triple, or multi-placedness of 'home'" (Brah 1996, 194). Brah's definitions of home have to be understood as possible for multiple locations. The dualistic view on home, however, is widely spread in migration studies. When Steven Vertovec writes about the transformation through transnationalism of "the everyday social worlds of individuals and families in both migrant sending and receiving contexts" (Vertovec 2004, 974), the author summarizes various concepts describing "practices of exchange, communication and frequent travel" (ibid., 974) among transmigrants under the umbrella term of "bifocality" (ibid.). This "migrants' orientational bifocality" draws from

---

[65] German original: Mein Zuhause ist einfach da wo ich wohne in dem Moment. Egal wie lange schon und egal wie wohl ich mich fühle. […]. Weil wir ziehen immer mit. Weil es gibt ganz viele Leute die ziehen immer nur mit ein paar Koffern um. Aber wir sind halt wirklich, also unsere Möbel sind immer dabei. [Interviewer: Hmm.] Und meine Heimat ist Deutschland, klar. Aber es ist auch irgendwie kompliziert. […] Also wir haben ein Haus in Deutschland aber da wohnt jemand anders drinnen. Das heißt wir haben jetzt nicht wo wir immer in den Ferien hinfahren oder so. Und das Einzige wo ich eigentlich immer bin, ist bei meinen Verwandten. Zum Beispiel bei meiner Oma. Die wohnt ganz im Norden Deutschlands. Ich hab da noch nie gewohnt, aber das ist trotzdem einfach Heimat, wenn ich da hin fahre, Keine Ahnung. Also, Deutschland so ist meine Heimat, aber Deutschland so als Land. Das ist schon so wenn ich aus dem Flughafen geh und den Bäckereigeruch rieche, das ist dann einfach Heimat. Das ist jetzt nicht wirklich unbedingt ein spezieller Ort, sondern so einfach dieses Gefühl, was ich halt in Deutschland nur hab. […] Das ist total komisch. Aber das ist wirklich nur Gefühl. Man ist wirklich in der Welt zu Hause sozusagen. Weil man halt einfach nicht einen Ort wo man sagt, da hab ich mein ganzes Leben verbracht oder Großteile meines Lebens. Da gehör ich hin. Weil ich hab jetzt am Längsten hier gelebt. Aber trotzdem würd ich das, keine Ahnung. Das ist jetzt mein zu Hause, aber das ist nicht meine Heimat.

[66] German original: Das ist aber wirklich so! Auch wenn man irgendwo hinfährt wo man vorher schon mal gewohnt hat. Also zum Beispiel wenn ich mit meiner Familie nach Singapur fahre. Noch Jahre später. Man muss mich noch nicht mal so sehr daran erinnern. Einfach in dem Moment wo du da fährst im Taxi, rausguckst, diese Palmen. Das ist einfach zu Hause. Das ist einfach als würde man nach Hause kommen!

114

concepts such as "bifocalism" (Rouse 1992), "life world" (Smith 2001) and Guarnizo's concept of a transnational habitus which is linked to a "dual frame of reference" (Guarnizo 1997, 311 cited in Vertovec 2004, 974). While Vertovec's concept of "bifocality" may hold for many cases of migration, it cannot hold entirely for all expat youth due to their high mobility and bicultural families. While we note that for expatriate youths "Zuhause" and "Heimat," "home" and "belonging" do not coincide, the following accounts will demonstrate the need for concepts beyond the "bifocality" (Vertovec 2004, 974) acknowledging this multiplicity.

Jennifer Robinson (2010, 16) stresses the importance of the imaginary in connections between cities, the "imaginative ways in which places are drawn together or kept apart." She therefore includes people who physically stay in one region in the process of connecting places when she argues that

> the livelihood strategies and imaginative worlds of city residents in places such as Doula and Kinshasa are entwined with other places elsewhere (such as New York and Brussels) both practically and imaginatively, in the sense that residents are always in the process of preparing to leave for an imagined elsewhere, that they already know much about other cities, or live an imaginary world that is both here and there. Within a topological imagination, making one's way in a city commonly entrains a wide diversity of other places. (Robinson 2010, 16)

Robinson's argument shows that ties to other places are vivid in our everyday lives. Moving through and living in Shanghai is thus constantly tied to elsewhere. However, for expatriate youth, these ties are not only based on imaginations (such as future places of travel or living), but on memories and sensorial experiences of elsewhere. Due to their many moves the actors of my study are able to constantly draw from embodied memories of many places. Marco, for instance, stresses his positive relationships to a multiplicity of places. However, he also emphasizes the difficulties to conceptualize these:

> Marco: I have lived in Leverkusen all my life. But we were also often at my grandparents, on the one hand in the black forest, on the other hand in Brazil. Yes, there I have a lot, I feel very connected to, to both places, because we really spent a lot of time there. Usually we'd go there once a month, at my grandpa's, in the black forest. And the whole summer vacation we'd spend in Brazil.

> Interviewer: In Brazil.

> Marco: Yes, and there, erm, now, I don't know. It's really complicated.

> Interviewer: <L>

> Marco: I have been living here for one and a half years now. And, erm, I don't know. I don't know where I feel more connected to. Or what I, now.

My home [Heimat] is actually in Leverkusen. Yes, but I am living in Shanghai. I don't know. Somehow I can't express that.[67]

In this interview Marco openly voices his difficulties to explain his attachment to several places at once. It reads like the question raised about home pressures him to make a choice. At first restraining from using the word "home," he makes clear that he feels connected to former places of living as well as to the different places of his family's origin. He reluctantly uses the German term "Heimat" to refer to the city he grew up in. However, only to immediately state his uncertainty about this choice and to make clear he cannot state preferences or put his relations to places into words. His life is simultaneously embedded in a network of places in which family relations play a key role.

Paul, also child of a nationally mixed marriage, has been similarly growing up in several places, although he has moved more often with his parents. In contrast to Marco, Paul describes his multi-local experiences by stating his non-attachment to places. He defines home as to "wherever I am staying."

> Interviewer: So when people ask you where home is, what do you usually give as an answer?
>
> Paul: I don't. <L> I don't say anything.
>
> Interviewer: You don't say anything? (silence)
>
> Paul: Or I say wherever I am staying. If I live here, I say here is home. […] Yeah I guess here'd be home, because I wouldn't wanna live anywhere else. […]
>
> Interviewer: So are you sad about leaving?
>
> Paul: Yeah I am a bit sad. But it is another experience. […]
>
> Interviewer: But where do you imagine your future to be at?
>
> Paul: Here.
>
> Interviewer: Here?
>
> Paul: Yeah.
>
> Interviewer: So you are thinking about probably coming back.
>
> Paul: I don't wanna live in Brazil ever again. I don't want to live in the US. I have never lived in Europe so.
>
> Interviewer: You can't judge that.
>
> Paul: Yeah. I like it here.

---

[67] German Original: Ich hab halt mein Leben lang in Leverkusen gelebt. Wir waren aber auch oft bei meinen Großeltern, einerseits im Schwarzwald und andererseits halt in Brasilien. Ja da hab ich halt auch so viel, fühl ich mich sehr zu verbunden. Zu den beiden Orten, weil wir da echt viel Zeit verbracht haben. Wir waren da normalerweise einmal im Monat, bei meinem Opa, also im Schwarzwald. Und in den Sommerferien eigentlich die ganze Zeit immer in Brasilien. [Interviewer: In Brasilien] Ja, und da, ehm, ja jetzt, ich weiß nicht. Das ist echt kompliziert. [Interviewer: <L>] Ja, ich wohn hier jetzt ja auch seit eineinhalb Jahren. Und ehm, ich weiß nicht. Ich weiß nicht genau wo ich mich jetzt mehr verbunden fühle. Oder was ich jetzt. Meine Heimat ist eigentlich in Leverkusen. Ja, aber ich wohn halt in Shanghai. Ich weiß nicht, ich kann das irgendwie nicht so ausdrücken.

Home seems a vague idea when talking to Paul, and he attributes his attachment to Shanghai mostly to the fact that it is his current place of living. His world is greatly in flux, with himself moving on to Germany a couple months after the interview, and his parents settling in another part in Asia. This decision is mainly based on his wish to experience Europe as well as being a German national without speaking the language or ever having lived in Germany.

Other students see a status gain in their relations to multiple places and like to state these to others:

> Alex: Because that is also bragging a little. And simply interesting, I guess. I would be interested in someone who has lived in Shanghai for three years.[68]

Alex is proud of his many places of living and ties his experience rather to cosmopolitan performances than to issues of negotiating home. As cosmopolitan one could also describe Alex's classmate Kressi's outlook on the world as her home. Kressi, who moved from Germany to Shanghai as a toddler, verbalizes her idea of home by tracing her relations to relatives and friends in other places and by fixing home as an emotion.

> Kressi: It is this feeling. That's why I say the world is my home. The whole world. The world is my home, because there is something. America, that is where my uncle is and where I like to go shopping. I love it there. And in Germany are all my friends, who have now moved on.[69]

Her simultaneous attachment to many places is based on people, practices, and emotions. These emplaced experiences of places lead to a whole network of homes. This network of places that she considers home emerges from her family's multiple migrations over generations. We note that for the expatriate youths home is always multiple, a connection of several places, people, and practices. These connections can be understood as "rhizomatic."

Hindman (2009a, 676) has already compared the way "the expatriate family can spring from the soil again" – thanks to a collection of objects as these help to articulate and recreate personal histories and positions in the new posting – to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) formulation of the rhizome. This rhizome, the students' comments illustrate, is not only a connection of objects, but also of places, people, and practices. The image and idea of a rhizome "as subterranean stem" has been put forward by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987)in their book, *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism*

---

[68] German original: Weil das ist so ein bisschen angeben und so. Und halt auch, das ist einfach, interessant, denk ich mal. Also mich würde jemand interessieren, der irgendwie drei Jahre in Shanghai gelebt hat.

[69] German original: Das Gefühl ist es. Deswegen sag ich auch die Heimat ist meine Welt. Also das ist die ganze Welt. Also meine Heimat ist die Welt, weil da ist was. In Amerika ist mein Onkel und da geh ich gerne shoppen und ich liebe es da. Und in Deutschland sind meine Freunde, die jetzt weggezogen sind.

and Schizophrenia, as a way of thinking. They choose the image of the rhizome in contrast to that of "roots and radicles" which they see as having dominated our analytical ways (ibid., 6). Unlike to a tree or its root, "which plots a point, fixes an order" (ibid.,7) the rhizome "connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states" (ibid., 21). It is in the same manner that the rhizomatic home includes all the different regimes of people, practices, places, belongings and belonging. The rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari argue, underlies the "principles of connection and heterogeneity" (ibid., 7) and may be broken but not stopped as ruptures are part of it.

> Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another (ibid., 9).

The ceaseless connection despite ruptures is also visible in the students' perceptions of home – moves as ruptures do not interrupt feelings of belongings to places or people that at first sight seem cut off. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that with no beginning or end, a rhizome cannot be traced but only mapped (ibid., 12), because it is "always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo"* (ibid., 25.). This in-betweeness of the rhizome, of the notion of home, is for student Kressi simultaneously linked to challenges in cultural identity:

> Kressi: The thing is, some people can simply say: 'I am from Germany, but I live in Shanghai.' In a sense I am, yes, I am actually German. Because my Chinese isn't that good. I also have a German passport and I grew up as a German. But the problem is that I don't look German. And I look like a Chinese or something, but I just live here. But then Shanghai, nonetheless, somehow became my home [Heimat], just because everything I really know is here.[70]

Feeling at home is also tied to questions of identity and rights to claim a place home. "Not looking German," as Kressi puts it, thus makes the claim to Germany as her "Heimat," or home – in Brah's first definition as place of "origin" – difficult. Home is tied to politics of identity and belonging, even for the affluent privileged migrants. In Brah's words:

> The question of home, therefore, is intrinsically linked with the way in which processes of inclusion or exclusion operate and are subjectively experienced

---

[70] German original: Das Ding ist, manche Leute können ganz einfach sagen, "Ich bin aus Deutschland, aber ich wohn in Shanghai." Bei mir ist es eigentlich so, ja, ich bin eigentlich Deutsche. Weil ich kann chinesisch nicht so gut. Ich hab auch einen deutschen Pass und bin deutsch aufgewachsen. Aber das Problem ist, ich seh nicht deutsch aus. Und ich seh aus wie eine Chinesin oder so, aber ich wohn hier halt nur. Aber Shanghai ist dann doch irgendwie meine Heimat geworden, weil hier einfach alles ist was ich so wirklich kenne.

118

under given circumstances. It is centrally about our political and personal struggles over the social regulation of 'belonging'. (Brah 1996, 192)

Kressi's quote supports Brah's argument that the question of home is tied to the "social regulation of 'belonging'." She explains the difficulties her non-German looks, and the fact that she does not speak Chinese or own a Chinese passport, causes her in terms of defining home for others. Nonetheless, Kressi also explains how processes of emplacement, "because simply everything I really know is here," make Shanghai one of her homes.

It bears repeating that the double, triple, or multi-placedness of 'home' in the imaginary of people in the diaspora does not mean that such groups do not feel anchored in the place of settlement. (Brah 1996, 194)

Kressi's case as child of second generation migrants from Hong Kong and Vietnam in Germany, born in Germany and growing up in Shanghai with transnational family ties to several places also shows that the idea of a "back home" can become difficult.

For some of the students, especially those who move particularly often and/or have parents of different nationality, Brah's first understanding of home as "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (Brah 1996, 192) seems to become less important and a source of conflict within the family. Nine-year-old Jacob, child of Malay parents, for instant describes how he has difficulties to see Malaysia as a place he could call home:

Interviewer: So what do you consider home?

Jacob: Everywhere.

Interviewer: <L>Everywhere</L>. Yeah.

Jacob: Cause there is not a lot of places, except for Beijing, that I stayed long enough to actually get really, really used to it. And also, maybe I shouldn't count Beijing, because when I was in Beijing, for the first few years, I was just a tiny thing and I wouldn't remember anything. And when we moved to a different place, besides China, like Bangkok, I totally forgot all my mandarin. […]

Interviewer: So home is? (silence) Everywhere?

Jacob: Yeah [exhales loudly].

Interviewer: Does that make it hard sometimes that home is everywhere?

Jacob: I don't know. Maybe I should say that home is Malaysia. Because, eh, I actually have a house there. And once in a while we go back to our house, and well, just do some cleaning.

Interviewer: So does it feel home when you are there?

Jacob: No. Cause I have never slept there. And I have never used anything. Except I have seen all my old toys, when I was much younger.

Although Jacob was shown his birthplace and his old toys, he still could not relate to it. For him home seems to be tied to the idea of feeling emplaced, of "having slept there." His sister Emily, has similar difficulties to consider Malaysia home. During an interview

she describes how she was looking forward to return to Shanghai during the summer in Malaysia:

> Emily: Pretty much. Like, when I go back for holidays, like my my. I see my grandparents, my family. And then like. Sometimes you don't actually know where to go. Because you don't feel part of that place. Some people go back and they are like: 'Oh I am at home!' And stuff like that. But, then, you eventually miss where you actually live every day. Like, I would miss coming. I would miss being here. So whenever I go back, like for summer. I went back for, like, a month. After three weeks I told my mom: 'What's the date we are leaving?'
>
> Interviewer: <L>
>
> Emily: Mom tells me that day and I start counting the weeks. And my mom asks: 'Why? Do you miss home?' 'Erm, yeah.' And then my brother goes: 'What do you mean home? We are home.' My brother just has a different concept.

She further discusses her relation to Malaysia during the interview:

> Emily: So I basically never. Okay, I could say about myself I have never lived in Malaysia. And I can't speak a word of Malay. And English is my first language.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. So what do you usually answer when people ask you where you are from? […]
>
> Emily: I am from Malaysia. But, then. And then the next question that will come every day would be like: 'Can you speak Malay? Can you teach me some Malay?' Like: 'Eeeeh, no.'
>
> Interviewer: No. <L> So what would you yourself say? What is like home to you?
>
> Emily: I always say home is wherever I have a roof, in whichever country.
>
> Interviewer: <L>
>
> Emily: So like, since now I live here, this is my home. I do have a house in Malaysia, but.
>
> Interviewer: It is not home?
>
> Emily: It's not home. […] It is such a hard question to answer that. Where are you from? Where do you live? Where is your home country? What is your town? And, you can't.

Emily is not feeling "part of that place" that is supposed to be home. Based on Brah's concept Malaysia can be seen as constructed in the first category of home by the parents, as a "mythic place of desire" (Brah 1996, 192). However, when Emily arrives, she cannot call it home, because home for her and her brother alike, is linked to Brah's second conceptualization of home as "the lived experience of a locality." When she discusses this on the meta-level by stressing that her brother "has a different concept," she only refers to her brother still considering calling Malaysia home. That the siblings' difficulties to accept Malaysia as home can lead to intergenerational difficulties, can be seen in the following narration by Emily:

120

Emily: The worst thing is the international week here. And they ask you to write a poem about your country. Or a story about your country. Sometimes I have to go up to my teacher and ask: 'I don't know which country to pick.'

Interviewer and two other students: <L>

Emily: <L> And then my teacher will ask me: 'Well, where have you lived the most?' And then I say, 'Beijing'. Then she said, 'fine, then do it about Beijing.' And then I say, 'but honestly I have, I don't really know what I did when I was young. I was only three.' And she says, 'okay, where do you remember the most?' And I would say Bangkok. So, then I would write about that. And then my mom would ask me, 'why did you choose that? You could have just come to me and ask about Malaysia.' I said, 'yeah, but, it is not gonna be like my words, it's gonna be your words.' And so my mom says, 'yeah you are right.'

Interviewer: Maybe your mom was sad that you didn't pick Malaysia?

Emily: Yeah, cause I think. As a parent they have all lived in one country until they grow up. And then they move. So, I think they don't really know how it is like for the rest to move. And move and move.

The siblings' discussion of their relationships to multiple places focuses on the intergenerational conflict arising from the supposed home and their refusal of their idea of a fixed home in their world of flux. We note that for expatriate youths their ideas of home and belonging can be in conflict with family or nationality because of their differing experiences, emplacement processes or because of constant rejections of their claims of belonging, for instance due to their bodily appearance, as Kressi discussed.

Some students clearly see Shanghai as home. The two students from the German School, Andrea and Antonia, for instance both refer to Shanghai as their home. Andrea links this claim to having an everyday routine, to living here. She explains how she feels returning from the summer break in Germany:

Andrea: I like coming back here. […] Now I can relax again. Now it is routine again. Now I don't have to live out of my suitcase anymore and so on. In a way you come back home.[71]

Antonia's point of view is similar to Andrea's, even further emphasizing the "normality" of coming home.

Antonia: How is it to come back from a vacation? Like for everyone else, I believe. <L> I don't think there is a big difference between us and other people. Just home again. I go to my house and say hello to my dog, my ayi, my house, my bed. [Interviewer: <L>] There is no

---

[71] German original: [I]ch find das dann immer ganz schön hierher zurückzukehren. […] Jetzt kann ich mich wieder entspannen. Jetzt ist wieder Routine. Jetzt muss ich nicht mehr aus dem Koffer leben und so. Man kommt dann auch nach Hause zurück eigentlich.

difference. Well, I don't know how it is supposed to be different from other people.[72]

Andrea and Antonia both outline Shanghai as their home due to their current residence and practices of routine in the city. Antonia's statement "There is no difference. Well, I don't know how it is supposed to be different from other people" demonstrates how she sees no difficulties in defining the city as her home. Her answer also points to her underlying annoyance provoked by the question. This might firstly be because she senses that my position as a researcher is based on a latent assumption of difficulties brought by the mobile lifestyle of expatriates, which she refuses. Secondly, this is probably related to the fact that despite growing up in Shanghai, being fluent in Chinese, and referring to herself as "Shanghainese," as a child of mixed-marriage and German nationality she might often not be accepted as such. She attributes diverse notions of feeling at home to the city, although claiming belonging to Shanghai often remains difficult as reciprocal processes of boundary drawing between "foreigners" and "locals" remain prominent. But as Avtar Brah (1996, 193) has argued: "It is quite possible to feel at home in a place and, yet, the experience of social exclusions may inhibit public proclamations of the place as home." Antonia thus emphasizes the idea of Shanghai as her home, possibly also again feeling the need to convince me during the interview as my questions were often considering the high mobility of students. Antonia, however, mostly stayed put in Shanghai. This becomes obvious when she distinguishes herself from other expatriate kids and repeatedly states that she grew up in the metropolis.

Antonia: I think for me it is, I simply

Interviewer: You grew up here, didn't you?

Antonia: grew up here.

Interviewer: Sure.

Antonia: Others are only here for one year. And, erm, I don't think they are happy about having a traffic jam again.

Interviewer: <L>

Antonia: For me it is simply, well, I totally grew up here.[73]

Talking about experiencing the city, I shared that I sometimes find Shanghai stressful, but she emphasizes again:

---

[72] Wie ist es aus dem Urlaub wieder zurückzukommen? So wie bei jedem glaube ich, also. <L> Ich glaub nicht, dass da ein großer Unterschied ist von uns wie bei anderen Leuten. Ist halt wieder nach Hause. Ich geh zu meinem Haus und sag meinen Hund hallo, meiner Ayi, meinem Haus, meinem Bett. [Interviewer: <L>] Da ist kein Unterschied. Also ich weiß nicht was da anders sein soll als bei anderen Leuten.

[73] German original: Ich glaube bei mir ist es auch so, ich bin halt hier [Interviewer: Du bist ja hier aufgewachsenen, ne?] aufgewachsen. [Interviewer: Na klar.] Andere sind ja nur ein Jahr hier. Und ehm, ich glaub nicht, dass die sich darüber freuen wenn es wieder Stau gibt. [Interviewer: <L>] Also bei mir ist es einfach nur. Ja, ich bin hier total aufgewachsen.

Antonia: But, I don't know. I don't find it stressful. Because I am… I think that is because I grew up here.[74]

As Andrea's and Antonia's positions show, everyday practices, the desire for routine as well as (long-term) processes of emplacement contribute to students' claiming Shanghai as home, prioritizing the city to other places in their spatial networks. However, we note that while many expatriate youth may feel at home in Shanghai, public proclamations of the place as home remain difficult.

8.4. Concluding Thoughts on Home

> A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9)

Students' narratives and practices have shown, home is not only anchored to a place, but also tied to people (like relatives, friends and class mates), emotions (such as "feeling safe"), objects (such as furniture, photographs, books), sensories (i.e. bakery smells) and practices (like a family dinner). As Walsh succinctly put it, "The home is experienced simultaneously as both a material and immaterial, lived and imagined, localized and (trans)national space of belonging" (Walsh 2006a, 123). Home is therefore not only a bifocal outlook on "homeland" and "current home" as former conceptualizations suggest (see summary by Vertovec 2004), but a multi-focal one, a network of homes. I have put forward that these diverse connections, can be best understood as rhizomatic in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1987) understanding. Unlike to a tree or its root, "which plots a point, fixes an order" (ibid.,7) the rhizome "connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states" (ibid., 21). It is in the same manner that the rhizomatic home connects all the different regimes of people, practices, places, belongings, and belonging. My analysis of the students' rhizomatic home mapped the following aspects:

Firstly, concerning the localized and material space, the expatriate students themselves are actively involved in the creation of home. They decorate their bedrooms and sometimes other domestic spaces or they turn the house into home through initiating and taking part in family activities. They transform the new site of living into a meaningful space. These home-making practices help not only claiming the current place of residence, but also serve to identify former places of living as home. These different places are often still closely knit. For instance, I often witnessed

---

[74] Aber, ich weiß nicht. Ich finde es nicht anstrengend. Weil ich bin. Ich glaube das liegt auch daran, dass ich hier aufgewachsen bin.

that my informants' friends who used to live in Shanghai still come to visit, tying their new expat location to their old.

Secondly, the rhizomatic home is not a mere network of multiple postings, but the former and current places of living usually coincide with the presence of the nuclear family. It can therefore be said that regardless of how multiple and "uprooted" the teenagers' networks of homes seem, the underlying hegemonic idea of home as the nuclear family staying together is prevailing in the majority of cases. Sometimes, as in Kressi's or Marco's case, larger family can be important in the creation of the youth's networks of home as well. Melissa Butcher highlights the importance of transnational relationships for migrants as tools to demarcate identity and claim belonging:

> The shared meaning embedded in relationships reaffirmed the practices of identity associated with that place. […] There is still an impulse to belong to a place that is marked by characteristics of familiarity and comfort, including elements of the national imagination. This is supported by the maintenance of particular relationships to confirm that his identity and its associated practices and values are shared and therefore of value. (Butcher 2009, 1369)

Besides the actual places of (former) living, home is understood as a feeling of connectivity and belonging.

Thirdly, regarding these imagined and immaterial aspects of the rhizomatic home, my discussions have shown that teenagers are continuously negotiating belonging in relations to family members, peers, society, and many others – even objects. While for some students imaginations of home coincide with their parents' ideas or their passport nationality, for others issues of belonging can also be a matter of conflict. These conflictual feelings include negotiations such as claiming Shanghai home, but remaining "an exotic animal" to Shanghai's citizens, as Antonia described, or conflicts with parents, as the siblings Emily and Jacob discussed. The problems of defining an emotional space of belonging can also lay in experiences of exclusion due to bodily differences, as Kressi has put forward in her difficulty of being German due to her Asian phenotype. The idea of home for expatriate students is thus also rhizomatic as it "always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25) and the concomitant feelings of belonging and positions of cultural identity often are as well. I will explore these positions of cultural identity further in chapter fourteen.

Fourthly, home can also be related to missing. Homelessness, as mentioned on all the students' posters, and homesickness, as described by Karina missing Prague and her network there, or by Mia missing practices like the family dinner, were thus also seen as part of the overall homing process.

Based on the idea of the rhizome, this chapter found that for many expatriate youths home is always multiple and constantly in progress as well as negotiated in relations to others; findings that can relate to the concept of "TCKs" (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009) and Franke's (2008) study mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. However, the rhizomatic home it is also tied to concrete sites, belongings, and practices. The privileged migrants might be used to a home in flux, nonetheless, place takes an important role in their lives. One concept investigating the mediating processes of belonging for migrants and the relations between their various spaces that fits the experiences of expatriate youth better than the "Third Culture Kid" concept, is Conradson's and McKay's (2007) theory of "translocal subjectivities." Conradson and McKay argue that mobility in particular "provides opportunities for new forms of subjectivity and emotion to emerge" (2007, 168). In order to understand these emerging emotions and understandings of self, the authors suggest the concept of translocal subjectivities, based on Appadurai's (1996) notion of translocality. The concept aims "to describe the multiply-located senses of self amongst those who inhabit transnational social fields" (Conradson and Mckay 2007, 168). The authors understand translocal subjectivities firstly, as "emerging through both geographical mobility and multiple forms of ongoing emplacement" (ibid.). Secondly, these translocal subjectivities are often based on migrants relating to specific localities, rather than nation states, their positioning, relations and experiences thus being more translocal than transnational (ibid., 169). Thirdly, translocal subjectivities are shaped by "the emotional and affective states accompanying mobility" (ibid.). All aspects describe the expatriate youths' subjective experiences.

Relating to the last aspect, the impact of emotions on the youths' relations to the concrete site of living, can also be traced in their home-making practices that can be seen as coping mechanisms. Making and (re)imagining homes, collecting belongings to produce belonging help to deal with feelings of loneliness, as ways to let the rhizomatic home "start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9).

When it comes to coping with feeling uprooted, children and youths also draw on the resources of their new school. It is in these schools that they receive support, especially by peers, to deal with the challenges. The following chapter nine therefore explores the spaces of international schools and their role in processes of creating a community for students and their families.

9. Making Community: The Role of International Schools

> The school is actually the most important thing here. During the week we spend our entire time here.[75] (Giovanni, seventeen years old)
>
> Here, friendships only form through school.[76] (Bjoern, sixteen years old)
>
> You only have this one environment, the school.[77] (Peter, eighteen years old)

With remarks similar to these of the three teenage boys, all students confirm the importance of the school in making friends, fighting loneliness, and offering a sense of continuity. It provides the space to make new friends and re-establish a new social circle outside the family. Eleven-year-old Allen explains the role of the school in the following way:

> Allen: Depending upon what your everyday life is, like, for instance, if you live near lots of Chinese people and you go to a private Chinese school, it makes a big impact. And then if you go to an international school, it makes the moving a lot easier. Because everyone there, they're in the same, same space as everyone else around them, from moving from their home country to somewhere other than their home country. And also because of the communication, because it is easier to communicate than with a lot of Chinese people.

What is this experience that Allen describes as everyone being in "the same space"? What constitutes this liminal space that schools provide, where, according to Allen, communication is easier and everyone feels unified through a common experience? This chapter tries to answer these questions by examining the sites, values, practices, and students' experiences of international schools in Shanghai.

The chapter begins with a description of the international schools in Shanghai and their common characteristics. Secondly, by using a short movie clip that was produced by two students at a German school, it exemplifies the efforts schools make to create a sense of community revolving around school. Thirdly, I argue that the different (school) communities all see themselves as part of a larger unifying expatriate collective, where everyone is in the "same space." I show how this "expatriateness" is learned, maintained, and performed along three aspects that were particularly prominent during fieldwork: the common comfort lying in the norm of having a maid and a driver, the social concern cultivated through practices of charity, and the distinctions maintained through cosmopolitan cultural capital. Finally, I investigate the youths' own experiences of attending an international school in Shanghai by taking up their main narrative of privilege and pressure.

---

[75] German original: Giovanni: Die Schule ist ja eigentlich das Wichtigste hier. Wir sind auch unter der Woche die ganze Zeit eigentlich hier.

[76] German original: Bjoern: Freundschaft geht hier nur über die Schule.

[77] German original: Peter: Man hat hier nur dieses eine Umfeld, die Schule.

9.1. Shanghai's Landscape of International Schools

The private international schools in Shanghai are central places for expatriate youth. Analyzing these schools, not in terms of academic curricula or achievements but as particular places, they can be characterized by the five following attributions: Their exclusion of Chinese students, the exclusion of foreign students without the financial means to meet high tuition fees, their geographical locations in the suburbs, their strict regulations and well-guarded gates, and their roles as expatriate community centers. I will expand on these, in particular the last two aspects, to illustrate the role of the school in (teenage) expatria:

The first main characteristic of the international schools in Shanghai is that students with Chinese passports are excluded. International schools are a distinct sub-sector. Within this sector, schools can be divided into foreign-run schools and divisions of local schools. Both are targeted solely at foreign passport-holders. Shanghai's numerous international schools differ in curricula, teaching language, diplomas, the nationalities of the student body of each, and their forms of organization. Yamato and Bray (2006, 79) found that "the English-medium schools were more international because they used a language that has wide portability." This agrees with my findings as the French-medium and German-medium school had considerably less nationalities enrolled. However, Chinese government regulations prohibit local children with Chinese nationality from enrolling at any of these international schools (Yamato and Bray 2006, 64). In certain cases the Shanghai municipal authorities can grant exceptions to Chinese individuals. During my research, however, I only met one student[78] who had been granted this permission. The resulting strong absence of locals therefore seems to be a major difference to international schools elsewhere (see i.e. Dobeneck's descriptions of German-medium schools in Sao Paulo (2010, 115–118)).

The international schools in Shanghai are all charging fees. This is also the case for schools that are run by non-profit agencies. Their tuition fees in 2010/2011 range from approximately RMB 88,500 to 240,000 (9,735 € to 26,400 €) per year at the high school level. In many cases, tuition costs are covered by the expatriate packages provided by the parents' employer. Some schools offer different fees for families paying through private means. However, the second main characteristic of the international schools in Shanghai is that they exclude students whose parents cannot afford the tuition fees.

Yamato and Bray found that the schools find themselves in competition with each other, in particular the English-medium schools (2006, 59;79). In consequence they try

---

[78] Xia was the only Chinese passport-holder I met that was enrolled at the German school; his experience is discussed further in chapter 14.5.

to find their own niches, sometimes also through location: "Schools can increase their market shares by securing premises in the suburbs in which their potential clients are concentrated" (ibid. 2006, 59). The choice of school and the choice of housing area are connected. Thus a third main characteristic of the international schools is their location on the outskirts of the city, in the vicinity of spacious gated communities as described in the previous chapter.

Fourthly, international schools are highly regulated and sealed-off spaces. It is not surprising that geographers of youth stress that the space of the school is under-researched (Valentine 2003, 42). Research involving minors and closed institutions is complicated by difficulties of access. Many of my own email inquiries remained unanswered, even though including letters of references, research outlines, my own résumé and other information. Whenever I had opportunities to meet principals in person, they were usually in favor of my research project, although the disruption of school activities and regular classes was a concern. Some schools, like a British international school located in Pudong, supported the project by contacting students and parents and letting me conduct interviews in the schools premises. A German school was even so kind to let me sit in on certain classes. A Singaporean school principal and teacher were also supportive and found a solution that included me teaching a Theory of Knowledge class and allowed me to conduct interviews. Being in touch with an American school middle school counselor allowed me to see the school facilities and meet teachers at a career development day for the staff. Interviews with students, however, were denied as the school objected because of too much organizational effort. The only other personal contact was with the principals of another American international school. Here, although one language teacher and six of her students were eager to participate, the school management objected. We had to cancel the interviews despite students', parents', and teachers' agreements. However, I learned much about the school by visiting one elementary class in another capacity. Although another British school never replied to my inquiries, I had the opportunities to see their campus at a volunteer activity. For the students from a French school and from a Christian American school, the path was different, as their friends whom I had interviewed earlier introduced me to them. I took these interviews outside of school and thus without any discussions with school management. As the German and French campus are one, I had the opportunity to acquaint myself with the French school setting. I did not have the opportunity to see the campus of the Christian American school though. There are numerous other schools, from which I never received any answers or which I simply could not include in my considerations due to constraints in time and resources.

128

All of the schools are located at the outskirts of the city and are fenced off units that regulate the access to their spaces. At every school I visited I had to get a visitor's pass before being allowed to enter, which I then had to wear around my neck for the day. Policies vary from entering name, phone number, and the name of the person to be visited, to identity checks and body temperature controls for health reasons. Some of the schools even have a second wall around them because they are located within gated communities, for example an American school I visited in Pudong. The following image depicts this gated community. The photo is included to give an understanding of international schools' surroundings. However, as security guards in front of the school interfered to prevent me from taking photos of the school and in order to keep institutions anonymous, I cannot show the specific buildings.

Figure 14: A Gated Community Hosting an American School. Photo by M. Sander

These experiences of efforts to regulate access are of course less prominent for students than for the researcher/outsider. However, schools with their dress codes (some schools require school uniforms), schedules, and scheduled breaks are well-regulated spaces for students as well. Students from the German and French campus have to enter and exit the school premises through doors equipped with card readers. Only the upper grade students can exit these during the school day. However, sometimes students sneak around these, risking working in the cafeteria as punishment.

> Karina: Some for instance don't pass through these check points, but through this door instead. It is usually open. They just walk through it. The Chinese that stand there, they don't pay attention. That's why, because it's open, you don't need this card. They keep on introducing

129

new things, like blocking the cards, but the students always come up with a new way to break out of school <L>.[79]

The fifth aspect of international schools in Shanghai is their role as community hubs. Students' lives obviously revolve around schools, the places of education, friendships, and after-school activities such as sports or artistic hobbies. However, in many cases the international schools in Shanghai seem to be not only the center point for children but for the adult expatriate community as well. It is not surprising that a popular parental guidebook for expatriates advises parents to become active at the school:

> Finally, I want to stress again the importance of getting involved with your child's new school in an overseas setting. Not only will your child find this a positive sign of your interest in them, but your involvement in the school community is a wonderful way to help create a new "extended family" for celebrating holidays far from home, traveling within the country, or just getting together with other parents to compare notes on the weekend. If you stayed away from parents organizations before you moved abroad (and let other parents handle all the volunteer work that enhanced your child's life), now's your chance to repay that debt *(Pascoe 2006, 142).*

Many schools offer social activities for parents to meet or cultural activities for everyone or at least everyone associated with the school to join. Some schools are more ethnically focused in their activities and networks than others, but all have parents' organizations and provide cultural activities, such as theater plays, dances, bazaars, sport events or orientations. Schools also sell branded items such as yearbooks, T-shirts or school bags. Fiona Moore (2008) who examines the German school in London (Deutsche Schule London) from an adults-only perspective found that it serves as a center to the German community. "One of the DSL's explicit functions is a site for the adjustment and development of networks of the spouses of expatriates, with a particular focus on female spouses" (Moore 2008, 94). She furthermore argues that this important connection in the network for German expatriates in London "not only educates the children, but also provides a forum for the expression of Germanness" (Moore 2008, 91).[80] The international schools in Shanghai obviously form a similar major knot in the expatriate networks, and their role can be described as what Simon Turner described as a "safe haven":

> However, mobility does hold the potential for creating liminality: a space of indeterminacy where established structures are put out of function. It is in these situations of indeterminate meaning that some institutions – such as the family – are put under pressure and forced to change […], while others – like some religious and political movements – seem to flourish, lending themselves to the

---

[79] German original: Aber manche die gehen zum Beispiel auch nicht durch diese Schalter durch, sondern durch die Tür da. Die ist meistens immer offen. Die gehen einfach durch. Die Chinesen die da stehen, die achten da ja nicht drauf. Deswegen, weil die einfach offen ist, da braucht man diese Karte nicht. Man führt immer irgendwas ein, die Karten zu blockieren, aber den Schülern fällt immer irgendwie ein Weg ein um aus dieser Schule auszubrechen <L>.

[80] It is also my own German ethnicity that facilitated my access to the German School.

creation of new identities while guaranteeing some stability. Appealing to the anxieties of mobility, such institutions may provide safe havens while being immensely transnational themselves *(S. Turner 2008, 1052).*

The schools as "safe havens" and major knots in the expatriate networks have a strong influence on expatriate ways of living. The British school I visited for example provides a "Shanghai resident map" that in addition to the school campuses includes compounds, foreign-run medical centers, churches, shopping locations, spas, cinemas and favorite expat restaurants. The German school provides lists of popular residential compounds online. While some school communities are strongly tied to national communities – for instance the German school –, they all, however, see themselves as part of the larger expatriate community. The expatriate experience is a unifying framework based on the building up of an expatriate identity across national, cultural or ethnic difference between the different communities in Shanghai. In the following I will try to exemplify the schools' pivotal and well-guarded roles as community centers within the larger expatriate network in Shanghai, by zooming in on the German school that I mainly worked with.

9.2. Image and Community

The international schools through various means actively support processes of national as well as international expatriate community building and see themselves as major centers in Shanghai's expatria. One project that exemplifies the efforts schools make to put forward the idea of a community revolving around school, is a short movie clip produced by two students (Kressi and a friend) to be shown at an award[81] ceremony in Berlin. This five (4:49) minute movie clip opens with the school's logo and claim followed by a black screen and letters announcing: "präsentiert" [presents]. The next shots are images filmed out of a car in motion that we recognize to be a typical Shanghai taxi as the color of the vehicle and the driver's taxi license reveal. Thereupon a title is fading in to announce what the clip presents: "'My Time Is Now' Das Zeitprojekt" [The time project] referring to a school art project for which the school won a price, which is then announced in the next caption: "Kinder-zum-Olymp! – Sonderpreis – Gewinner – 2011." These images and texts are accompanied by melodic whistling, the beginning of the song "Home" by Edward Sharpe & The Magnetic Zeros. When the lyrics start "Alabama, Arkansas, I do love my ma and pa," the taxi ride changes to blurry images zooming in on Shanghai's Bund and a Chinese flag, a caption in white letters introduces "Shanghai, China, 上海." Despite being

---

[81] The competition "Kinder zum Olymp!" is organized by the cultural foundation of the German federal states in coorperation with the Deutsche Bank Foundation. It awards individual art projects as well as schools with strong arts-oriented profiles that manage to include the arts in everyday school life.

targeted at a German audience the Chinese characters are included in the caption, presumably to emphasize the school's special or even "exotic" location. The words make room for the images. The flag and buildings become increasingly clearer. We now definitely recognize the camera zooming in on the Bund with its iconic buildings. While the Bund is still a blurred image we read: "21 Millionen Einwohner" [21 million inhabitants], which then fades and reveals the full, and now focused image of the new Pudong side of the Bund. A photo image of highroads and traffic signs with high rise buildings in the background follows, the inserted text appearing and fading out simply reads: "modern."
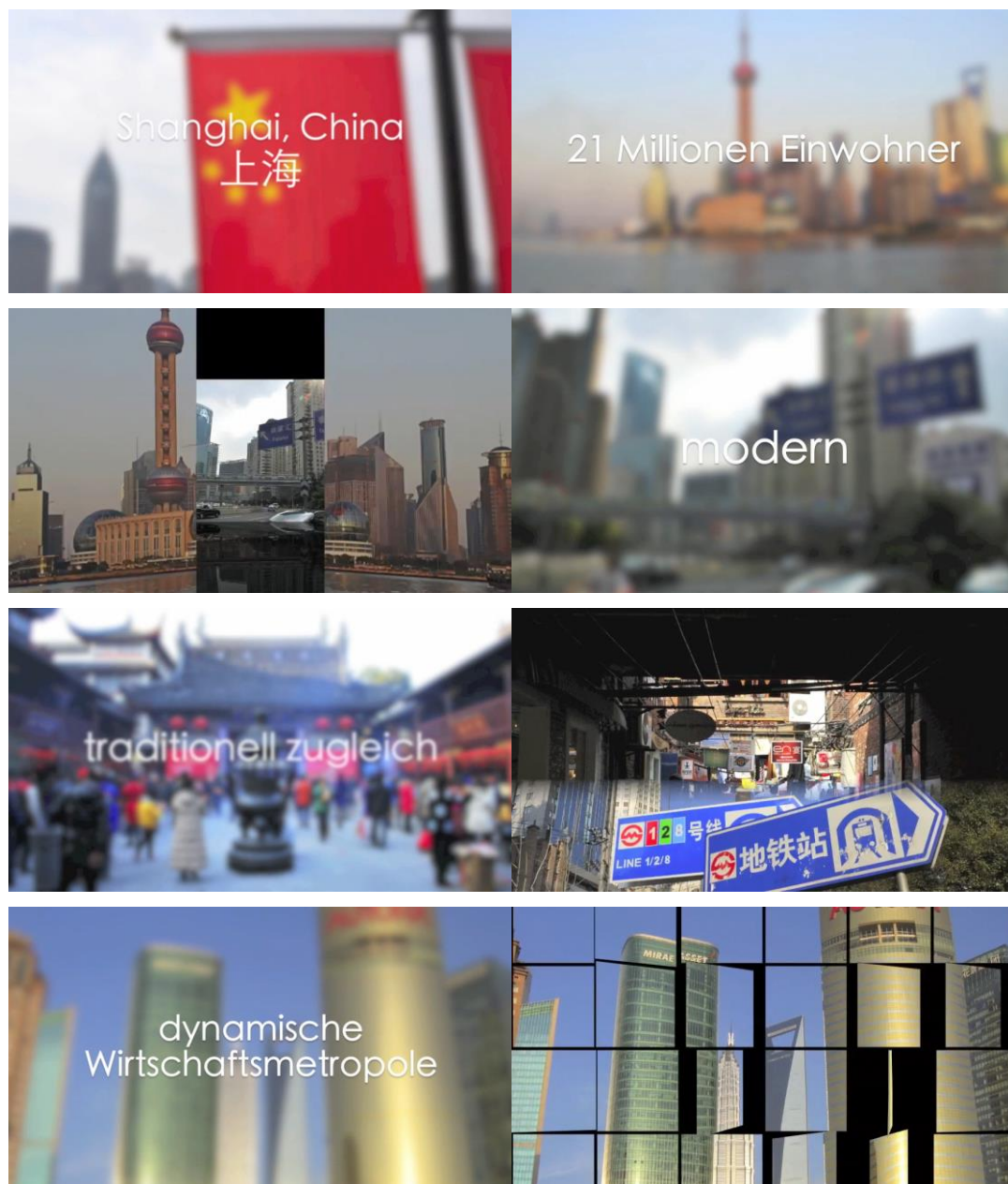

Figure 15: Screenshots of a Student Video, Images of Shanghai, Minutes 0:19, 0:23, 0:25, 0:26, 0:29, 0:37, 0:42, and 0:45

132

The subsequent shot shows a temple yard with people burning incense, the capture now reads: "traditionell zugleich" [traditional at the same time]. Images of the old lane houses in Taikang Road follow, blending into a picture of metro signs and then again of high rise buildings with the capture: "dynamische Wirtschaftsmetropole" [dynamic commercial capital]. The white letters fade, the skyscrapers become sharp and then quickly dissolve into numerous squares that turn around to lay open an image of the school building. While the school building appears, blurs and is then again well-focused, letters boldly announce: "Zuhause" [Home].

Figure 16: Screenshot of a Student Video, "Zuhause," Minute 0:48

This image is followed by recordings of students entering and leaving school, played fast forward with a new text line appearing, continuing the message of the last image: "Für 1230 Schüler an zwei Schulstandorten" [For 1230 students on two campuses]. We then, still in fast mode, enter the school premises. The music meanwhile makes us almost sing along: "Home, HoOome, home, is wherever I'm with you."
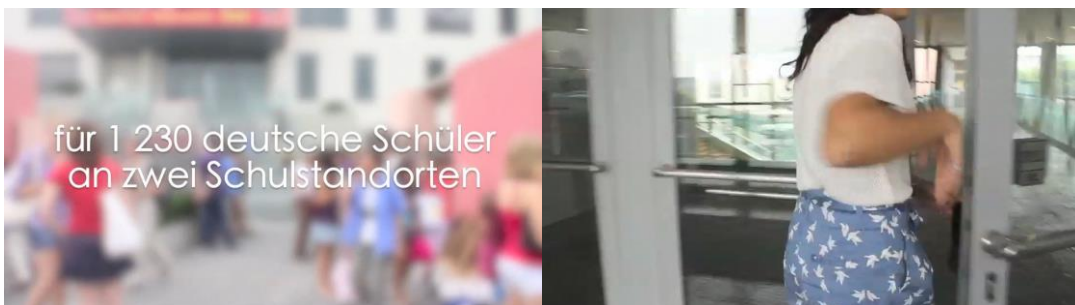

Figure 17: Screenshots of a Student Video, Entering the School, Minutes 0:53 and 1:00

133

Inside the school, we can observe for a few quick moments in fast-forward mode the daily business of students running around and parents picking up their children. Then a series of photographs follows introducing the viewer to numerous school projects and events, such as music workshops, concerts, art projects (I will further explore one project by student Andrea in chapter ten), yearbook awards, theater, and a graduation ceremony.

Figure 18: Screenshots of a Student Video, Events and Audiences, Minutes 1:02, 1:17, 1:41, and 3:54

Four of the almost five minutes of the video clip present numerous activities, but no daily routines or regular class room interactions that mainly shape everyday life at school. Here, the school is presented as an active, arts-oriented, lively community, not only depicting numerous projects and students, but also different audiences at these events. In the very end, the video clip takes us back to the Bund, this time at night. The city of Shanghai, depicted in the beginning and in the end, thus frames the images of the school, staging the campus – that could be anywhere – as international. These last shots are then headed with captions that wish us "Goodbye!" in Chinese and "Greetings from Shanghai" in German, to then finally return to the school's logo and claim from the very beginning.

Figure 19: Screenshots from Student Movie, "Greetings from Shanghai," Minutes 04:23 and 04:28.

In this short video clip the institution is staged as a lively community, framed by recognizable images of Shanghai. When talking with student Kressi about the production of the video, it becomes clear that it was filmed with the intention to represent the school's art life on the one hand, but the school as a whole on the other hand.

> Kressi: Everything had to be in it. The Fine Arts Center, all the events that took place and some information about our school. So that we simply show what our school actually does in terms of cultural life. What it is generally like, how many students are here.[82]

Kressi and her friend were happy to shoot the movie on behalf of the school as she enjoys being creative, but also because she and her friend this way earned the opportunity to spend a weekend in Berlin. The movie therefore is not only a creative product of two teenage girls, but is also a PR movie requested and somewhat paid for (a trip to Europe) by the school. However, while the school ordered the depiction of events and art and music projects, it was the two girls who chose to accompany the images with the song. When I asked her about the choice of music she explains:

> Kressi: Well, we looked through [our music] and then we just somehow liked the song. The home, in fact. And. It was somehow, I don't know, erm, it is also somehow like... Shanghai is only like it is, because of the people, or because of the people we know. And that's why the song just fitted really well. Well, we also liked the beat and we could nicely cut the images along it.[83]

For Kressi school is tied to her friends and these friendships and connections mean a feeling of home in the words of the song, or community. People, everyday practices and imaginations, like these presented in the video, in a reciprocal process produce a certain school image and/of community.

---

[82] German original: Da musste halt alles drin sein. So Fine Arts Center, und diese ganzen Events, was da halt war und auch so ein bisschen Informationen über unsere Schule. Einfach das wir mal zeigen was unsere Schule eigentlich so an Kulturleben macht. Wie sie generell ist, wieviele Schüler hier sind.

[83] German original: Also wir haben so durchgeschaut und dann hat uns das irgendwie sehr gefallen das Lied. Das Zuhause eben. Und. Es war irgendwie, ich weiß gar nicht, ehm, es ist auch irgendwie so... Shanghai ist nur so wegen der Leute, oder wegen der Leute die wir kennen. Und deswegen hat das einfach mit dem Lied richtig gut gepasst. Also es hat uns auch gefallen vom Beat und da konnten wir gut die Bilder zu schneiden.

In this process the school's material culture also plays a role. Gerd Baumann and Thijl Sunier (2002, 34–36) in their detailed description and comparison of four different comprehensive schools in Paris, London, Berlin and Rotterdam already see in the ways the school premises are decorated and managed, different national ideas of citizenship reflected; the school gate in particular being symbolic for attitudes and practices of the particular nation state's ideas of managing ethnic diversity and political engagement. David MacDougall's (2006) concept of social aesthetics emphasizes how this specific material culture, a school's premises, the equipment, and the regulations revolving around these, affects the students engaging with this environment on a daily basis. With "social aesthetics" he describes "the creation of an aesthetic space or sensory structure" (2006, 105). Aesthetics here do not mean notions of beauty or art, but a "wider range of culturally patterned sensory experience" (ibid.,98). MacDougall understands the social aesthetic field as a coalescence of different elements such as "objects and actions." Analyzing the social aesthetic field means focusing on a specific community and its landscape – its material environment as well as the humdrum practices taking place in this environment. MacDougall suggests, based on his work on the prestigious Doon School in India, that societies "may find in the sharing of a strong aesthetic experience a unifying principle" (ibid., 99). The social aesthetics in the spaces of the German international schools therefore can also be seen as serving to create students' senses of belonging. MacDougall suggests paying attention to specific objects in relation to daily practices.

> The social aesthetic field is never mutual or random: its patterning creates forces and polarities with strong emotional effects. Ordinary objects with which one comes in daily contact take on a particular aura, and this aura is augmented by repetition and multiplication. (MacDougall 2006, 111)

While this aura of repetition is not presented in the video clip that instead stresses community events, it is omnipresent in the everyday school life for expat youths. This aura of repetition is for instance evoked by the routine passing of the school gates with the student IDs as keys in the morning, the seeking out of one's place in the rarely changing seating arrangement in the classrooms, or the habitual waiting for the teachers. Specific structures further shape the social aesthetics, whether it is the precisely measured units of lessons and breaks, the rules of where and when to eat, the order of who is allowed to take the elevator or who must use the stairs – a big issue at the Singaporean school I visited –, or the regulations about leaving the premises. These routines provide a sense of community to the students. It is therefore not surprising that only after comprehending all these rules that were somehow self-evident for the students, I started feeling comfortable at school (see field notes of a day at school under chapter 4.2).

136

The school events – such as those presented in the student PR film –, however, help the school capture and present itself as a community and include parents and other (German) adults. I myself, for instance, also gained access to the German school through such an event. Fiona Moore, in her article on the German school in London, shows that the networking revolving around the school actively aims at the creation of a new generation of young German transnational actors, for example through providing students with internships at prestigious institutions (Moore 2008, 97). Taking a more sensitive look at the role of Shanghai's international schools reveals that these not only play a key role in creating a home or community for students, but also promote identifications with an international expatriate community. Schools are powerful institutions educating and shaping forms of belonging to a national or school community, but also to a unifying expatria.

9.3. Learning and Living "Expatriateness"

The sense of an expatriate community is produced through various means under the strong influence of international schools. The creation of and belonging to expatria can be seen as diasporic forms of community creation and simultaneously understood as a class or habitus [84] consciousness, rendered visible through everyday (material) practices, identity performances, and the accumulation of cultural capital. Before drawing on three cases in point from my fieldwork to support these arguments, I like to briefly discuss the role of education in forming a community, class, or habitus and explain my choice of the term "expatriateness."

> As Butler (2003) noted, education is inextricably linked to the existence and recreation of a middle-class habitus that includes a closely guarded sub-culture of 'community'. (Waters 2007, 480)

In her article "'Roundabout routes and sanctuary schools': the role of situated educational practices and habitus in the creation of transnational professionals" Johanna Waters (2007) examines the formation of transnational professionals in Hong Kong. As children's education has been a major reason for leaving Hong Kong, her study focuses particularly on the role of (international) education and the complex familial strategies centered on it. Her case studies in Hong Kong and Vancouver suggest "the active creation of group boundaries and the cultivation and inculcation of an exclusive identity through segregation and similar education and migration

---

[84] Habitus, as defined by Bourdieu in "The Forms of Capital," can be understood as a person's unconscious embodiment of cultural capital over time (1986, 244–245). Habitus, however, simultaneously describes the formative relations between individuals and their socio-cultural surroundings, as Bourdieu argues in his work *Distinction - a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (1984, 170)*: "The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes."

experiences" (Waters 2007, 492). Waters's description of the creation of group boundaries provides a very different reading of the same phenomenon that the "Third Culture Kids" Theory (Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009) so positively presents as a healing experience of belonging for mobile children. Education and habitus among transnational professionals in Hong Kong therefore create a group that is both spatially and socially distinct. While international schools and overseas schooling "is clearly the preserve of the wealthy and privileged," Waters also argues "it is often used as a means of avoiding failure in the local (and far more 'challenging' and competitive) system." Waters concludes that education "plays a pivotal role in the creation of an exclusive and elite group identity" and that this distinctive group identity is "rewarded in the labour market" (Waters 2007, 494). Michael Hartman' research on social origin and educational trajectories in the business elite in Germany and France (Hartmann 2000) similarly found that a class-specific habitus is decisive in a direct sense in Germany and indirectly through the attendance of elite universities in France for an individual's career. He argues that "it is a class-specific habitus that ensures the high stability of social recruitment" and that it "can forge a sufficient internal bond even without such an institutionalization of 'cultural capital' in education" (Hartmann 2000, 258).

The significance of a distinctive habitus in the creation of an exclusive class or community of transnational professionals is evident in my research in Shanghai as well. As for the group of transnational professionals in Hong Kong studied by Waters (2007), the international education of expatriate offspring, I argue, plays a major role in forging bonds and creating an exclusive group identity. The opportunity to attend an international school is an argument for the move, as well as pride and status gain for many families. A German mother of three children (age seven to fourteen), I interviewed during former fieldwork in 2007, for instance, explains how the option for international schooling has influenced her choice to move to Malaysia and later Shanghai:

> German Mother: One reason to move abroad is always that the children have the opportunity to learn English. Our children don't go to the German school, but attend an English school, an international school with an English curriculum. And we always find this quite good. That there they have the chance to broaden their horizon, to learn another language.[85]

---

[85] German original: Ein Beweggrund in's Ausland zu gehen ist dann immer, dass die Kinder halt auch die Möglichkeit haben Englisch zu lernen. Unsere Kinder gehen nicht in die deutsche Schule, sondern die gehen auf eine englische Schule, eine internationale Schule mit englischem Curriculum. Und das finden wir immer ganz gut. Dass sie da die Möglichkeit haben ihren Horizont zu erweitern, eine andere Sprache zu lernen.

The young actors of my study, all in the process of formal education, are all acquiring this distinctive habitus, best labeled as expatriate, drawing from their education and different networks and contribute to the family's belonging to the community.

I here keep using expatriate to refer to the network of mobile professionals and their families. Most expatriates might simply be and see themselves as "middle class." At first sight Conradson and Latham's term of "'middling' forms of transnationalism"[86] (2005, 229) seems fitting.

> What is striking about many of the people involved in these kinds of transnational travels is their middling status position in their countries of origin. They are often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class. In terms of the societies they come from and those they are travelling to, they are very much of the middle. (Conradson and Latham 2005, 228)

I can easily identify with and categorize my own movement in Conradson and Latham's term of "'middling' forms of transnationalism," however, there seems to be a difference to the expatriate families. While most of these families might be middle class "in terms of the societies they come from," they are certainly not in China where "they are travelling to." Their lifestyle includes the services of maids and drivers, private schooling, regular international travel and vacations and their financial status is not comparable to Chinese middle class.

The term "elite," nevertheless, proves difficult as well. Firstly, I am hesitant to apply it to my research group as it is "a term of reference, rather than self-reference," as George Marcus (1983a, 9) pointed out. Secondly, I find the term "elite" unsuited for my research perspective due to its research tradition.[87] My focus on expatriate youths'

---

[86] Conradson and Latham argue that research in transnationalism has overseen these people, while often focusing on migrants moving between Central America, the Caribbean, and North America. The authors therefore propose a few examples of other forms of transnational mobility that they term "middling" and that "similarly involve repeated movement and the maintenance of enduring ties across international borders," such as studying or taking gap years or career sabbaticals abroad (Conradson and Latham 2005, 229).

[87] In the 1980s George Marcus summarized the research on elites, whether taking a "'pluralist view'" or the "'power elite' view" (1983a, 13), as having "failed to pay systematic attention to the cultures and forms of life of those indentified as elites" (ibid. 25). While, on the one hand, Marcus considered the anthropology of elites suitable to fill this lacuna in research, he, on the other hand, regarded the earlier research frameworks of contrasting elites to the masses as "the least adequate for empirical investigation" (ibid. 13).

> For the ethnographer, relating elites to corporate systems, rather than to specific people, requires the ability to define closely observed subjects as elites, not in relavistic terms which would be appropriate for small-scale societies, but in reference to the total larger system in which they are elites. Thus, selection of elites as enthographic subjects presupposes considerable prior knowledge or guesswork about the nature of the larger system in which it is meaningful to label them as elites (Marcus 1983a, 13).

Marcus also saw the term "elite" "in its manifestation as an Anglo-Amercian research tradition" (1983a, 25) as an "uncertain guide" to how it can be applied to research on elites in a range of different societies. Almost two decades later, Shore and Nugent (2002) edited another collective volume on the study of elites in anthropology, which is still connecting to similar issues and questions as in the anthology edited by Marcus (1983b). It further stresses the anthropology of elites as "an exercise in political reflexivity" since it

voices, which allows for the in-depth analysis of age-specific and subjective experiences of transnational migration, cannot simultaneously center on the "nature of the larger system in which it is meaningful to label them as elites" (Marcus 1983a, 13). Therefore, I find the term "elite" misleading for my analysis of the processes of building community, status, habitus, and class in the realm of the students' schools and their environment. These entangled negotiations of a community/habitus/class shall therefore rather be described as practicing "expatriateness."

The expatriate community in Shanghai is diverse in many ways and holds its inner divisions of belonging to different classes, ethnicities, and nationalities. It consists of its many specific groups revolving around certain clubs[88] – often tied to nationality –, institutions, companies, neighborhoods, or other organizations. Here, the international schools play a lead role. People connected to the German School for instance, despite all differences constitute themselves as a group, one small community in expatria. Most youths and their families would at the same time see a larger expatriate network existing in Shanghai and, for example by labeling various places they frequent as "expatriate," consider themselves as part of Shanghai's overall expatriate community.

The making of this expatriate community, can be looked at in the same way anthropologist Cris Shore (2002) discusses the making of elites, drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) notion of "distinction":

> [I]n order to constitute itself as an elite in the first place an elite group must develop its own particularistic set of interests, norms and practices to differentiate itself from the masses. It must achieve 'distinction' […]. (Shore 2002, 2–3)

Regarding the distinction of elite groups, Shore sees the question of "how they do this" and the examination of the "cultural resources they mobilise and the way they cultivate functions" as important issues for anthropology (ibid., 3). In order to understand how expatriate youths "do this," or learn "expatriateness," I investigated spatial practices but also other forms of everyday activities that serve to create and perform a distinct collective expatriate identity. There are many such subtle practices of creating and maintaining this "expatriateness" – be it through sharing educational values or through demarcation towards those "back home" or towards local Shanghainese. I like to use three examples that appeared particularly relevant during fieldwork to tease out how "expatriateness" is performed, maintained, and taught among expatriate youths: firstly,

---

obliges anthropologists to position themselves "more self-consciously in relation to the wider system of power and hierarchy within anthropological knowledge is constructed" (Shore 2002, 2).

[88] For detailed insights into expatriate clubs and their role in the everyday life, see Beaverstock's (2011) article "Serving British Expatriate 'talent' in Singapore: Exploring Ordinary Transnationalism and the Role of the Expatriate Club"; for ethnographic accounts of expatriate associations and clubs in the lives of female expatriates, so called "accompanying spouses" see Fechter's (2007a) descriptions of the German Women's Association in Jakarta in *Transnational Lives: Expatriates in Indonesia*.

the common comfort lying in the norm of having a maid and a driver, secondly, the social concern cultivated through practices of charity and social outreach work, and thirdly, the distinctions maintained through their cosmopolitan cultural capital.

Example 1: Common Comfort

> Antonia: When I hear expat children talk, ey, then I think what kind of shitheads are they?! […] 'My ayi, my driver.' All these servants. <L> […] But it doesn't feel like that. It doesn't feel as if we were totally, no idea. That's not a chauffeur, with servants and so on. But it's just simply an *ayi* and a driver. It doesn't feel particularly [special].[89]

Antonia, on the one hand, recognizes the privileged ways of living in Shanghai for expatriate youths, but on the other hand, does not associate privilege or luxury with staff at home, but quotidian, ordinary life. Her double perspective, maybe triggered by my presence as researcher, reminds me of Conradson and Latham's call to look at the ordinary underlying transnational mobility:

> Viewed from this quotidian angle, even the most hyper-mobile transnational elites are ordinary: they eat; they sleep; they have families who must be raised, educated and taught a set of values. They have friends to keep up with and relatives to honour. While such lives may be stressful and involve significant levels of dislocation, for those in the midst of these patterns of activity, this effort is arguably simply part of the taken-for-granted texture of daily existence. (Conradson and Latham 2005, 228)

The ordinary of quotidian comfort is usually put in perspective in comparison to life in the (parents') home countries. Giovanni, after his return from a summer holiday "at home" in Switzerland, for instance, replies to my questions inquiring the experience of coming back to Shanghai by stressing the comfort life in Shanghai provides.

> Giovanni: I then realize that life is quite comfortable again. Because the driver waits for you. Because in Switzerland you don't have that sort of thing. And then I actually realize again and again how comfortable the life here is. That is actually the biggest difference, I think, that the life here is much more comfortable. If you live in a city in Europe, you just have to do a lot yourself, I think.[90]

His fellow student Andrea, during a follow-up interview around the same time, reflects in a similar way about her stay in Germany and her return to Shanghai.

---

[89] German original: [Wenn ich] Expatkinder reden höre, ey, dann denke ich was sind denn das für Scheißkinder?! […] „Meine Ayi, mein Fahrer." Die ganzen Bediensteten. <L> […] Aber es fühlt sich gar nicht so an. Also es fühlt sich nicht so an als wären wir so total, keine Ahnung. Das ist ja kein Chauffeur, und mit Bediensteten und so. Sondern das ist halt so eine *Ayi* und halt ein Fahrer. Das fühlt sich jetzt gar nicht irgendwie [besonders an].

[90] German original: Ja, dann merk ich eigentlich, dass das Leben wieder ganz bequem ist. Weil der Fahrer dann wartet. Weil in der Schweiz hat man ja so was nicht. Und dann merk ich eigentlich immer wieder wie bequem das Leben hier ist. Das ist eigentlich der größte Unterschied, denke ich, dass das Leben hier viel bequemer ist. Wenn man in Europa in einer Stadt wohnt, muss man halt schon viel selber machen, denke ich.

Andrea: Well, I found life in Germany this summer quite exhausting. You have to, well, life is just easier here. Life has much more luxury.[91]

Marco, during an interview with Peter in May 2011, comments on the strong financial situation of expatriate families by comparing students' possessions of mobile phones in his former school and his school in Shanghai.

Marco: You notice that the people here have more money. Well, I used to attend a public school in Germany. And there, erm, for example nobody had an iPhone. And here, about half of the class has one. That is a huge difference. You notice the differences. That people who come here are actually more like, like. The families who come here, the fathers have higher positions and therefore more money.[92]

Marco's comment directly addresses the privileged financial status that the expat community shares and how this can be seen in expat students' material culture, not only at their homes, but also at school. Housekeepers, drivers, and expensive electronic equipment turn the financial privileges of expatriate life visible and become the norm of expatriate lifestyle associated with "luxury" or – in the quotidian practices – with "comfort." Marco, recalling how in the beginning he had objections to move abroad, states that he does not regret the move as his life is "better" in Shanghai.

Marco: I think my life is better here than it would be in Germany.[93]

Bjoern, only about six months after his move to Shanghai, in a group discussion with Don and Alex, voices that he sometimes feels uncomfortable with the expatriate lifestyle.

Bjoern: [I miss] acting a bit chavvy. <x> from my environment. I used to be…

Interviewer: Acting a bit chavvy? <L>

Bjoern: Yes […]. Especially among the Germans. Here, for example, teachers [star at you/scold you] for coming to school in loose sweat pants <x>. And in Germany that wasn't a problem at all. One always wants a bit of high life here. That's the problem. I can't deal with that.[94]

Maybe these reflections on the common comfort as "luxury" or "high life" are one cause for the second element I observed as crucial for the building of collective expatriate identities: the willingness to engage in charity work.

---

[91] German original: Also ich fand das Leben in Deutschland diesen Sommer ziemlich anstrengend. Man muss eben viel, also, hier ist das eben leichter. Das Leben hat viel mehr Luxus.

[92] German original: Man merkt schon, dass hier die Leute mehr Geld haben. Also, ich war früher auch an einer öffentlichen Schule. Und da war halt, ehm, zum Beispiel hatte niemand ein Iphone. Und hier, hat ungefähr die Hälfte der Klasse welche. Das ist halt schon ein krasser Unterschied. Man merkt schon die Unterschiede. Dass hier halt mehr so die Leute hinkommen, die auch so so. Oder die Familien hinkommen, wo der Vater halt die höhere Position hat und insofern mehr Geld hat.

[93] German original: Ich glaub mein Leben ist hier besser als es in Deutschland wäre.

[94] German original: [Mir fehlt hier ein] bisschen asozial Getue. <x> aus meinen Umfeld. Ich war ja in … [Interviewer: Asozial Getue? <L>] Ja. […] Gerade bei den Deutschen. Hier wird man zum Beispiel von den Lehrern [komisch angeschaut/zurechtgewiesen] […] wenn man mal mit so einer weiten Jogginghose in die Schule kommt <x>. Und in Deutschland war das überhaupt kein Problem. […] Man will hier immer so ein bisschen high life. Das ist hier so das Problem. Damit komm ich nicht zurecht.

Example 2: Cultivated Concern

The illustrated connections through a common certain minimum of material wealth and displayed class status contribute to the meaning of "expatriateness." Meaning that will dissolve if the relations are not repeatedly performed. "Expatriateness" therefore is also a performance (Goffman 1966). One practice contributing to the performance of an expatriate community is charity work. When very early in my fieldwork I consulted different websites providing help for expatriates living in Shanghai, I registered for an event in September 2010 called Interkom CityServe that was directed at teenagers. Interkom is the youth program of the Community Center Shanghai that offers various courses and activities for the expatriate community. For the CityServe different outreach organizations were presenting their works at the community center in the Jingqiao district and teenagers had the opportunity to contact these organizations in person and to get involved in social outreach work in Shanghai. First impressed by the high show-up, I later in conversations with students found out that community work is part of the mandatory curriculum, if you pursue an International Baccalaureate. Social outreach work is thus a must for all students at many of the international schools.

Consequently, I registered for a so-called "sorting party" organized by the social outreach organization Rivers of Hearts in October 2010. The organization had been collecting clothing donations over the last months. I spent six hours sorting clothes to go to rural areas in China and hereby had glimpses at yet another part of expatriate life. Working at a table with three teenage girls from Taiwan, I learned through short conversations in between the shouts of "Men Winter? Women summer! Children winter!", "What do we do with towels? Shoes? Hats?" that many students were here communally from their school and were awarded credit points afterwards. The students from the school of the three girls I worked alongside were accompanied and supervised by a social worker from their school. While constantly running to bring clothes to the packing station or to get new piles of unsorted donations, I counted an estimate of 200 people attending the event, mostly teenagers, although young children from a girl and boy scout troop as well as a group of American college students on long haul travel and a few older adults, mostly teachers, helped out as well. The clothes had all been donated by expatriates in Shanghai and the event was entirely in expat hands, too. Everybody was in high spirits in the beginning and convinced of the good cause of the event. Only in the end, when the truck was packed and cleaning and tying shoes together were the last tasks to remain, students started to leave, tired from the work.

Figure 20: Community Work: Teenage Boys Loading Donated Clothes and Admiring their Day's Work.
Photo by M. Sander

While the German school I focused on pursued the German Abitur and thus social outreach work was not mandatory, the role of charity had also become an integral part of their community. When in spring 2011, for instance, the devastating earthquake hit Japan, the older students organized a bake sale to collect money.

Figure 21: Bake Sale at a German School. Photo by M. Sander

While observing the older students selling and the younger students buying the home-made (mostly by students' mothers) cake during school break, I learned that the school principal himself had approached students to encourage them to organize such an

event. The role of the school in communicating the importance of social outreach work becomes clear in this case as well. Cultivating concern for the social and ecological problems of today's world is not only part of schools' lesson plans. This concern is also expressed through charity work that simultaneously reaffirms collective expatriate identities as compassionate donors and managers of global problems. It is this claiming of a global outlook, however, that particularly unites and fosters the expatriate community.

Example 3: Convenient Cosmopolitanism

When visiting international schools I could not oversee the preference for decorating school buildings with various national flags. Indeed, it were often even these flags that let me recognize the school building at first sight.

Figure 22: Four Different International Schools: Flags as Decoration. Photos by M. Sander

The schools use flags, often representing all nationalities enrolled at the schools, also in the inside to decorate corridors as the first and fourth image above show. These banners are an element to the "social aesthetics" (MacDougall 2006) of all international schools. The pride taken in the internationality of a school community, rendered visible for every student and visitor in these flags, is also mirrored in the students' narratives of international school life. When during an interview in June 2012 just after graduating, student Kressi comments, as I heard so often, on the internationality and diversity of her classmates, I provocatively state that the German school might not even be very international as most of the students have German nationality. Kressi, however, insists and explains:

145

> Kressi: The point is, it isn't the[ir] cultures themselves, rather the cultures in which the people have lived. And […] this is also what defines them. They always had new knowledge. And there were always people who, so many people who saw new things, something you didn't know yet. Many things you already know as well, all people know, but somehow from other perspectives. And it is interesting how all this comes together, through stories and so on. It is not necessarily cultures, but everyone is so different here. You've simply had so many extremely different experiences. In my old class, for instance, there were two students who had moved almost every two years. And they were sixteen, seventeen years young, and had already been I don't know where in the world.[95]

Kressi's description of the different "perspectives," "stories," and "experiences" students share due to the "cultures in which the people have lived," illustrates how she sees classmates not simply tied to one culture, but as individuals whose practices and cultural identities are shaped by a plurality that relates to the ideas of *transculturation* that I introduced in chapter 2.4. In the realm of school and education, however, I think students' experiences of processes of *transculturation*, of experiencing different places as crucial of "what defines them," are better conceptualized as "globality," as defined by Jana Binder (2005). The German ethnographer Jana Binder (2005) interprets and summarizes backpackers' travel experiences in Asia and convincingly argues that long-term travellers develop their narratives of the trip along their competence to deal with the challenges of a globalizing world. She terms these experiences and their representations, such as being in a certain place, experiencing oneself in a different environment, meeting other nationalities, or changing one's common lifestyle, "globality." She further argues that this "globality" should be understood as a cultural resource in the Bourdieusian sense: as capital. Through the example of young backpackers, Binder shows how knowledge of contemporary processes of change and their associated discourses are turned into cultural capital and can be used advantageously (2005, 215). Applying her understanding of "globality" of travelling experiences as cultural capital that can be beneficial in the future, particularly with regard to careers, to the moving practices of expatriate teenagers, brings similar views to the fore. The accumulation of different place-experiences is seen by teenagers and their parents to bring status and competences, "globality." Similar to Binder (2005), Desforges (1998), who explores the way in which British middle class youths negotiate

---

[95] German original: Das Ding ist halt, dass, ehm, es eher nicht die Kulturen alleine sind, sondern die Kulturen in denen die Leute gelebt haben. Und […] das macht sie auch aus. Und die haben immer neue Kenntnisse gehabt. Und es gab immer Leute, so viele Leute die haben was Neues gesehen, was gesehen was du noch nicht kanntest. Vieles kennt man auch, also kennen alle Leute, aber von anderen Seiten irgendwie. Und das ist halt interessant wie das halt zusammen kommt und von Erzählungen und so. Also es ist nicht unbedingt Kulturen, aber man ist hier so verschieden. Man hat einfach so extrem verschiedene Erfahrungen gemacht. Zum Beispiel in meiner alten Jahrgangsstufe gab es zwei die sind fast jede zwei Jahre umgezogen. Und die waren dann halt mit ihren sechzehn, siebzehn Jahren schon, schon ich weiß nicht wo alles auf der Welt.

146

and build their identities through travel, claims that young people convert the cultural capital they gather from their independent travels into economic capital in the workplace upon their return. Desforges's article demonstrates that through their travel youths, as Valentine has summarized, "participate in a process of othering and constructing first world representations of the third world, while simultaneously earning themselves a privileged position in the West" (Valentine 2003, 45). As student Kressi argues, the exchange of the experiences of various different places, cultural practices and values within the school community provide students with a variety of "new things" and/or "other perspectives" – or, in other words, "globality" as cultural capital. Binder's notion of "globality," however, does not describe the degree of integration and entanglement of global experiences – the processes of transculturation –, but looks at them as experiences gathered to be beneficial in the future. Likewise, the experiences described by Kressi are seen by many students as helpful to gain a privileged position in the future. As sixteen-year-old student Lara phrased it:

> Lara: And they [her parents] decided that an international school abroad, later in your CV, will be well received. If you speak foreign languages, several languages, this will go down well. Experience of life, that you just see something different.[96]

Lara's quote further substantiates that growing up abroad and receiving an international education is linked to the idea of "globality" as cultural capital. Her way of imagining a future CV proves this particularly well. Nevertheless, the age-specific context has to be kept in mind, where parents play a major role in planning their children's lives and making decisions in their "best interest" (see for instance the discussions about the move to Shanghai in chapter five). Some attributions to the idea of "globality" drawn by Binder's study on backpackers, such as the counterdraft to everyday life and a special time for development and self-fulfillment are therefore not part of the expatriate youth's self-understanding. Youths consider being abroad as everyday life. The conceptualization of "globality" as the awareness of cultural resources that fit into globalized ways of living and subsequently serve as an important identity resource, however, is applicable to expatriate youths in Shanghai. It is the school that helps to provide, foster, and turn the youths' global experiences into "globality" as part of their educational ambitions as well as part of establishing their community markers and values. An international school fosters an international community that can see itself as open-minded, diverse, and cosmopolitan without specifically including the local neighborhood, Shanghai, or China. These are only used

---

[96] German original: Und [ihre Eltern] sind halt zu dem Entschluss gekommen. Internationale Auslandsschule. Wenn man später, Lebenslauf kommt gut an. Wenn man andere Sprachen spricht, mehrere Sprachen spricht, kommt's gut an. Lebenserfahrung, einfach, dass man mal was anderes sieht.

as yet another stage to experience difference contributing to their "globality." While expatriate youths and their families thus create their own communities, often revolving around schools, they practice demarcation towards "locals" in Shanghai as well as those back "home" – both perceived as lacking international experience. Similar to how Brosius, investigating the everyday lives of India's middle class, conceptualizes cosmopolitanism as "a practice of status-creation" (2010, 26), the students and their families use the educational environment and the surrounding network to mediate their "expatriateness."

My three examples showed how "expatriateness" is performed, maintained, and taught among expatriate youths under the influence of the international schools. Despite differences in nationality, class, or ethnicity a distinctive unifying group consciousness as expatriate youth is acquired and maintained through the networks of international schools. Looking at the everyday dimensions of transnational mobility at an international school, I highlighted the significant amounts of energy, resources, and organization that go into building and sustaining a community with its distinct practices and norms. It became apparent that acquiring the habitus of an expatriate, to claim belonging to an expatriate community goes hand in hand with processes of demarcation and a certain classism. While the habitus includes valuing cosmopolitanism and diversity, demarcation is an essential part in claiming these values and turning them into useful capital as "globality." *As* David Ley has argued, "cosmopolitanism itself is always situated, always imbued with partiality and vulnerability" (Ley 2004, 162). The performance of a collective expatriate identity is thus not only tied to aspiring and learning cosmopolitan values, but simultaneously to practices of demarcation towards peers perceived as less mobile, globally connected, and educated. For many students a school's "nationality" does not necessarily correspond to their own nationalities and the school is therefore seen as providing international orientation.

Nationality, in addition to the choice of school, however, still also provides a major marker along which various expatriate communities align themselves. It is therefore not surprising that access to a German school and German expatriate community proved easier for me than to other (school) communities. While I have set my focus on the schools' impact on the process of creating collective expatriate identities, it can therefore also be said that sometimes among expatriate communities, in Fechter's words, "national boundaries are still anxiously guarded" (Fechter 2007a, 110). Despite the efforts made to sustain a sense of community, the student body (as well as staff and parents) at the different international schools is highly diverse and internal divides

148

exist. These internal dividing lines might be even stronger at schools with a larger student body and a higher ethnic and national diversity than the German school I worked at, as my discussions with teachers and students from British and American international schools suggest. Danau Tanu's article focusing on these hierarchical divides and the ideal of being "international" at an international school in Jakarta, succinctly summarizes these internal school dynamics:

> Money and cultural hierarchies influence perceptions and interactions that take place on campus. Racial and other identity labels are sometimes used to signify status and cultural difference, but their meanings constantly shift and at times bear no semblance to actual physical appearance. Various forms of social assets, such as language, accents, mannerisms, and money, are used to mark and vie for status. Thus, being "international" is not a straightforward matter. International schools may be a multicultural bubble, but it is a bubble that is not immune to the dynamics at work in the world outside the school gates. (Tanu 2011, 231)

As Tanu's findings show, the student bodies of international schools are highly diverse and crisscrossed by many dividing lines under the cover of a school community and collective habitus.

The different stances of students on the experiences of international education that are presented in the next section allow for a few glimpses into these dividing lines underlying school communities. The section captures expatriate youths' reflections upon going to an international school by taking up their main narrative of privilege and pressure.

9.4. Privilege and Pressure: Youths' Experiences of School

> Paul: They have like a high standard of learning and if you don't have good grades, you get kicked out of school. Or it depends in the schools. There are warning systems and stuff. My school, if you have like a C, all the parents get emails, all the teachers get emails, you are like blacklisted. You have to have As or Bs to like do stuff at my school. If you have a C, forget about it. Parents are called and stuff. It is really a tough type. But on the other hand all the teachers are really nice.

"Tough type" but "really nice," as Paul, student at a Christian American school in Shanghai, puts it, succinctly summarizes the discourse about their schools among the international students. It is a discourse I came across in various narratives revolving around the privilege but also pressure of international education.

Fourteen-year-old Keith from Singapore for example praises the positive aspects, the privileges of international education.

> Keith: Well, I think, academic wise, the school is very open, to erm, every student. Especially in the international school, because they are dealing with very different cultures. So, for one the school is very open. So, it teaches different things at different levels, for different students. Like some are better in English, some are so-so. They split them into groups, and just, I think it is very helpful and effective in

teaching them. And they also have lots of extra-curriculum activities. Like sports and other forms of activities. And I think that is good, because it helps, teach, and educate in a very different and interesting way.

Keith, visiting an international British school in Shanghai, is clearly proud of his educational institution and during the group interview continuously stresses its quality. He describes his school as "open" and attending to the different needs of a diverse student body. Many students described their educational experiences in similar ways. German student Peter, reflecting on his education, regarded the privileged learning environment as rendering school easier.

> Peter: For me, school is easier here. Or rather, you simply study much better here and that's why it's easier. […] It's all much more efficient here.[97]

Peter bases his argument for school being "easier" on the privileged circumstances under which lessons take place. During the lessons I attended I also observed small class sizes, new equipment, and teachers who address students and their problems individually to support them rather than simply giving a bad grade. Based on this learning environment, Peter consequently argues that many of his fellow students would not be able to succeed in the same way at other schools that would require much more assertiveness. While some students thus rather experience private schooling as privileged, a privilege that echoes the theme of comfort and luxury that I presented above (Example 1: Common Comfort), others feel this privilege is tied to pressure. Mia, for instance, who indirectly compares her school in Shanghai to elite schools in Germany and thus stresses her privileged form of education, at the same time relates her school environment to a communal pressure to perform well.

> Mia: And it [school] is somehow taken much more serious here than in Germany. I believe here they all want an average of 1.3 or 1.4 [straight A in the German grading system] and in Germany they often don't care. Elite schools also exist in Germany, but in general, if you just ask around, for instance when friends move and then talk about their school, then you always think to yourself: 'What? They are happy about a 4 [equivalent to a D or simply a pass]!'[98]

The pressure to perform well, can surely be found among students elsewhere. Many expatriate youths, however, depicted this pressure as particularly crucial to their school experience in Shanghai. Norwegian student Britta and Charlie from the German school explain:

---

[97] German original: Für mich ist die Schule hier auch einfacher. Beziehungsweise man lernt einfach viel besser und deswegen ist es einfacher. [...] Viel effizienter ist das hier alles.

[98] German original: Und das wird hier ja auch irgendwie viel ernster genommen als in Deutschland. Ich meine hier wollen alle einen Schnitt von 1,3 oder 1,4 und in Deutschland ist's den eigentlich meistens egal. Also es kommt drauf an auf die Schule. Es gibt auch Eliteschulen in Deutschland, aber so generell, wenn man sich jetzt einfach erkundigt, zum Beispiel wenn Freunde wegziehen und dann von ihrer Schule erzählen. Dann denkt man sich immer so: "Was? Die freuen sich über eine Vier!"

Britta: And also in IB, I pretty much have to do like homework at least two hours every day. So, I don't really have that much, like, time after school. Just have to eat, and then do my homework. And then I have to go to bed as soon as possible after my homework. I get so tired. That is also something I don't like here.

Charlie: I somehow feel the pressure at the German school in Shanghai is also much higher. Actually, I can't really say. […] But I experience the pressure as very strong here.[99]

When talking to me students often drew comparisons to schooling elsewhere, particularly the German teenagers, and stressed the high expectations of their school, like Paul's, Mia's, Britta's, and Charlie's remarks demonstrate.

I want to discuss Charlie's perspective on schooling and pressure in detail and use her voice as one case-in-point to spell out the various factors leading to the (perception of) pressure. Charlie was sixteen when I first met her. Her parents were born in China and met in Germany during their studies at university. Charlie grew up in Germany and her parents took on German nationality. In the beginning of her high school years her family decided to move to Shanghai. One day, when I am interviewing Charlie out in the schoolyard during her free period, she abruptly changes the interview topic – we are discussing the rising taxi fares in China – and announces:

Charlie: I am scared of the Abitur [A-Levels, Final exams for the diploma].

Interviewer: What is it that scares you most about it?

Charlie: That in the end… Well, in the end I would really like to study medicine. And I am afraid that I won't succeed. Directly. I don't want to wait for six semesters or so to get in. Then I rather study something else. Because medicine already takes so long, then I would already be, no idea, twenty. And when I'm forty I would still be studying or so. Yes. That's why I sometimes put myself a little bit under pressure. And Antonia also puts herself always under a lot of pressure, because she, too, wants to study medicine. But her grades are really good. She doesn't even need to put herself under pressure. And then, when I'm standing next to her and she starts to put herself under pressure, 'I won't make it! I won't make it!' Then I think, okay, I can just forget about it. [100]

Due to her wish to go to med school in Germany, Charlie demands perfect scores and grades from herself. While she already has doubts about succeeding, the fact that

---

[99] German original: Ich finde irgendwie auch der Druck an der deutschen Schule Shanghai ist auch irgendwie größer. Eigentlich kann ich es nicht genau sagen. […] Aber ich finde den Druck hier halt sehr stark.

[100] German original: Ich hab Angst vorm Abitur. [Interviewer: Was macht dir da am meißten Angst?] Dass ich am Ende... Also, ich möchte am Ende voll gern Medizin studieren. Und ich hab Angst, dass ich es nicht schaffe. Direkt. Ich möchte aber auch nicht so wieder, sechs Wartesemester oder so machen. Dann studiere ich lieber was anderes. Weil Medizin dauert schon so lange, dann bin ich schon so, also keine Ahnung, zwanzig. Und wenn ich vierzig bin, bin ich immer noch am studieren oder so. Ja. Da mach ich mir manchmal ein bisschen Druck. Und Antonia macht sich halt auch immer sehr viel Druck, weil sie möchte auch Medizin studieren. Aber sie hat so gute Noten. Sie braucht sich gar keinen Druck machen. Und wenn ich dann neben ihr stehe und sie fängt an sich Druck zu machen, „Ich schaff das nicht! Ich schaff das nicht!" Dann denke ich mir, okay, dann kann ich es ja direkt vergessen.

others at her school are also fearing to fail entrance into med school, however, makes her feel even more under pressure.

When I discussed the high pressure to perform with teachers at the international schools, many pointed at the high involvement of parents in their children's education. During my fieldwork I also came across the idea of "tiger-mothers" (Chua 2011) constantly challenging their children, from piano lessons to Chinese tutoring. There is indeed a hyperactivity in many students' lives that seems to go hand in hand with expatriate (hyper)mobility; both seen as beneficial for the development of the child. When I ask Charlie about her parents' view on her med school plans, she explains:

> Charlie: They always say it doesn't matter what I study. But [...] I've wanted to study medicine for a long time. And now they've already told their friends. Like really proud, 'Yes, my daughter wants to study medicine.'
>
> Interviewer: And now you almost feel the pressure that you have to do it, something like that?
>
> Charlie: Yes. I would really like to do it, but I also don't want them to... No idea. I think it's maybe not that important to my parents. But, I don't know. It's somehow important to me that I don't disappoint my parents. No idea. It sounds really stupid.[101]

The pressure of parental expectations, as Charlie voices them, might be prominent in many students' lives around the globe. I feel, however, that in the case of the expatriate teenagers in Shanghai, their parents as successful transnational professionals set the bar particularly high. Charlie, a straight A student, however, thinks her parents are not necessarily demanding too much. She explains to me that her parents were rather conservative and her father had voiced his thoughts that if Charlie were a boy he would be much stricter and his expectations of her grades much higher. "I think he already gave a little bit up on it"[102], Charlie contemplates during our conversation in the schoolyard. When I voice my surprise about her father's position, she elaborates:

> Charlie: Yes, they just meant, probably, that boys have to work and so on and earn big money. And my parents just think that if I study medicine, I should open a practice. Have a child. Just laid-back. […]
>
> Interviewer: <L> That's not that laid-back! <L> Med school, just opening a practice!

---

[101] German original: Aber sie meinen ja auch immer, es wär ja egal was ich studiere. Aber [...] ich will schon sehr lange Medizin studieren. Und jetzt haben sie es auch schon ihren Freunden erzählt. So ganz stolz: „Ja, meine Tochter will Medizin studieren." [Interviewer: Jetzt fühlst du dich fast schon unter Druck gesetzt, dass du das machen musst, so ungefähr?] Ja. Ich würd es wirklich gern machen, Aber ich will jetzt auch nicht, dass die das... Keine Ahnung. Ich glaube meinen Eltern ist es vielleicht nicht so wichtig. Aber, ich weiß nicht. Mir ist es irgendwie wichtig, dass ich meine Eltern nicht enttäusche. Keine Ahnung, das hört sich voll doof an.

[102] German original: Ich glaube er hat es schon ein bisschen aufgegeben.

Charlie: No. But my parents think, well, university is really laid-back and so on. But I think that's also because they were in China before that. And studying in Germany is likely to be more relaxed than school in China. […] But my parents are actually pretty lenient. Well, for being Chinese parents. <L> Because they also let me go party in the evenings. Well, they don't like it if I go out too often. But once in a while is okay. And they support it when I do something with friends and so on. Just now they think studying for the Abitur [final exams] is the most important issue. But there are also parents who don't allow that at all.[103]

Like Charlie, expat youths generally consider Chinese schooling to be hard and academic success important for Chinese parents.[104] At school I consequently regularly came across the prevailing conception among expat teenagers that those who have Chinese born parents are automatically under more pressure than their peers from other backgrounds. Although friendships between students with Asian or non-Asian backgrounds were normal, I felt that having a Chinese parent was a dividing line sometimes subtly criss-crossing the shared experience of school. Through the eyes of the teenagers at the German school, for instance, high expectations from parents with Chinese roots are normal and also thought to indirectly influence the overall pressure to perform for all students in class. In school a student's "Chineseness" is thus often equated with diligent studying, learning to play an instrument, and abstinence from nightlife due to parents' objections. Students often play with these stereotypes and use these as a base for teasing or joking. They see their own international education as influenced by "Chinese" pressure and high expectations. Some students, mostly those who are relatively new to the expatriate community in Shanghai, voice their annoyance – sometimes by again "othering" students with Chinese backgrounds – about the pressure to perform.

Lara: And we don't have to say that it's bad to be good at school, or to think about the future. We do that, too. But we don't say it. The strong interest here [in school leads to] other things being pushed to the back that are actually pretty important to enjoy life. I mean, I don't live only to have achieved something in sixty years. No friends, no

---

[103] German original: Ja, die meinten halt, wahrscheinlich so Jungen müssen arbeiten und so und das große Geld verdienen. Und meine Eltern meinen halt, dass wenn ich Medizin studiere, [soll ich] eine Praxis aufmachen. Mit Kind. Halt so gechillt. [Interviewer: <L> So gechillt ist das auch nicht. <L> Mal ein Medizinstudium, eben mal eine Praxis aufmachen!] Nee. Aber meine Eltern meinten halten, so ja, Studium wäre voll entspannt und so. Aber ich glaub das ist auch weil sie vorher in China waren. Und in Deutschland Studium ist bestimmt entspannter als in China Schule. […] Aber meine Eltern sind eigentlich ganz locker. Also dafür, dass sie chinesische Eltern sind. <L> Weil sie lassen mich auch feiern gehen abends. Also sie mögen es nicht so gerne, wenn ich so oft gehe. Aber ab und zu ist okay. Und sonst unterstützen die das auch wenn ich was mit Freunden mache und so was. Nur jetzt meinen sie halt Abiturlernen ist das Wichtigste. Aber es gibt halt auch so Eltern, die das gar nicht erlauben.

[104] For urban Chinese youths' perspectives on the role of academic success in developing personal "quality" (suzhi) see Vanessa L. Fong (Fong 2007). Drawing from interviews and thirty-two months of participant observation conducted in schools in Dalian between 1997 and 2006, Fong examines how urban Chinese only-children negotiate the popular idea of "quality" by stressing the importance of different aspects, such as morality, cosmopolitanism or academic achievement that favored their own strengths.

contacts and then I die. That's not the meaning of life; I don't think so.[105]

Lara's perception of the importance of grades in her school is also connected to the feeling of being encouraged to work hard for future success. This emphasis on the future is discussed in more detail in chapter ten, "My time is now."

Privilege and pressure seem to have a dialectic relationship in the students' narratives and lives. The awareness of enjoying a privileged education and life style for some students also comes along with the pressure to perform well. While the community is heterogeneous and class-divides within Shanghai's expatria of course exist, the international students have no classmates whose parents have a working class background; unemployed parents for instance are unknown. Furthermore, in all expatriate families careers are valued as highly important as they are simply always considered worth the move to Shanghai. However, as I observed during fieldwork at the German school, students experience differences, in particular along the narrative of pressure, between students with Chinese or Western backgrounds.

9.5. Concluding Thoughts on "Expatriateness" and the Role of Schools

This chapter examined expatriate youths' shared experiences of belonging to an international school community – an experience that student Allen in the beginning of the chapter described as everyone being in "the same space." I described how this space is shaped by Shanghai's specific international school landscape that does not allow Chinese passport holders to enroll at any of these schools. These schools are almost hermeneutically sealed-off spaces. At the same time, as the second subsection illustrated, the schools put much effort into creating a shared experience for students. This making of a school community is based on establishing certain "social aesthetics" (MacDougall 2006) that involve a specific material culture and concrete everyday routines for students. These school communities are all unified in the collective experience of belonging to an expatriate network in Shanghai. The schools here play a vital role in mediating what it means to be or act like an expatriate. This way the schools not only affect students' lives, but also their families'. They are community hubs in Shanghai's expatria and offer parents an entrance to an expatriate community. I therefore argue that it is precisely in the spaces of the international schools that collective expatriate identities are negotiated and mediated on an everyday basis –

---

[105] German original: Und wir müssen jetzt nicht sagen, dass das schlecht ist, wenn man jetzt gut in der Schule ist, oder über Zukunft nachdenkt. Das machen wir ja auch. Aber wir sagen das halt nicht. Dieses starke Interesse hier [an Schule führt dazu], dass schon andere Sachen einfach in den Hintergrund geschoben werden; was eigentlich auch relativ wichtig ist um Spaß zu haben am Leben. Ich meine, ich lebe nicht nur damit ich in sechzig Jahren irgendwas erreicht habe. Keine Freunde, keine Kontakte und sterb dann. Das ist nicht der Sinn des Lebens, glaub ich nicht.

through community events, the communal valuing of the school for the youths' (cosmopolitan) formation, and through the admission process that requires the "right" financial means or jobs, the "right" passports and the "right" grades. These negotiations of collective expatriate identities do not always bridge internal divides – particularly along the lines of nationality or ethnicity, as the student discourse of the privilege and pressure of international education revealed – but still forge a common consent of what it means to be an expatriate in Shanghai.

While the spaces of the schools are much shaped by the institutional framework, there are also places that teenagers seek out and shape on their own. These places are crucial for teenagers to gain meaning and agency in their migration experience. As Massey (1995, 207) pointed out succinctly: "[The] making of place is part of constructing the identity and coherence of the social group itself." It is these reciprocal processes of space and (age and/or group) identity performances that the next part, by drawing on the concept of emplacement, aims to foreground to further understand expatriate youth cultures caught in the dynamics of "uprootings and regroundings" (Ahmed et al. 2003), "flows," and boundaries.

Part 4

EMPLACEMENT

Figure 23: The Shop: Students Walking through the Small Alley, June 2011. Photo by M. Sander

> Mia: It's really like that, if you're homesick, because you're somewhere in a foreign country or in a foreign city, you just have to do something.[106]

This part examines expatriate teenagers' narratives and practices of emplacement in Shanghai. While it continues to address the students as part of the expatriate community with its processes of demarcation and detachment from local Chinese communities, it zooms in on their particular age-specific spatial and social practices. I chose to foreground the youths' efforts of creating their own spaces, as I understand these as crucial for teenagers to gain meaning and agency in their migration experience. By drawing on the concept of emplacement by Howes (2007), this part aims to further understand expatriate youth cultures in Shanghai unfolding in specific everyday places, emerging in-between the dynamics of "uprootings and regroundings" (Ahmed et al. 2003). Howe's concept of emplacement stresses the importance of sensory experiences in everyday lives and regards sensories as "a field of cultural elaboration" and "an arena for structuring social roles and interactions" (Howes 2007, xi). For this ethnographic work, emplacement is generally understood as the physical experience of places, of being and engaging with the here and now. The process of experiencing places is also understood as simultaneously shaping one's environment. In this sense the process of emplacement is, like Howes argues, the counterpart to displacement – "the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment" (Howes [2005]2006, 7).

I firstly discuss students' conceptions of age identities (chapter ten) and then secondly, move on to related spatial practices. The two subsequent chapters each provide a specific example of youths' agency in creating their own spaces, that of going out (chapter eleven) and hanging out at the shop (chapter twelve). In contrast to the gated communities and the schools presented in the previous part, "Arriving," the teenagers choose these spaces themselves. The analysis of these spaces and the related age-identities also address the students' overall imaginations and representations of the city of Shanghai. The closing chapter thirteen consequently examines the teenagers' relations to Shanghai and its local citizens.

---

[106] German original: Es ist wirklich so, wenn du Heimweh hast, weil du irgendwo in einem fremden Land bist oder in einer fremden Stadt, muss man einfach was machen.

10. "My time is now": The Role of Age

> The focus on children's futures and adults' investment […] can […] blind us to their agency as social actors in their own right. (James and James 2008, 65)

Migration experiences are evidently age-specific, as the ethnographic vignettes on the decision-making process in chapter five show. Older siblings, for example, choose to stay, or at least consider staying, whereas younger ones often have no choice. This part therefore discusses the role of age by investigating the reflections and age-identity performances of the teenagers and ties them to current academic debates on the concepts of youth addressed earlier in the introduction (chapters two and three).

10.1. Wrong Time to Move, Right Time to Be There

I am sitting outside in the schoolyard in a rather undisturbed corner on a few steps behind the track, listening to Karina and Lara's accounts of their move to Shanghai about seven months prior. Although it is only the end of February the sun shines bright and warm. While the three of us enjoy the first spring moments, the two girls, like many of my interviewees, explain why they feel it was simply the wrong time for them to move abroad.

> Karina: The younger you are the less painful it is, I think. I don't know. When I was eight years old we moved to [a town in Northern China]. When my mother told me about it I was really happy. Right? Everyday I asked: 'Has dad signed the contract yet? Can we finally go to China?' and so on. Because, I was younger, and I wanted to experience something. But the older you get, the stronger your relations to others become. Somehow. I don't know, you get used to them. When you then get separated from them, I wasn't happy any more. Yippee off to China. Instead, I just screamed at my father. Because it just sucked.[107]

Both Karina and Lara, seventeen and sixteen years old, believe that age plays a role in the difficulties of moving, arguing that adolescence seems a particularly wrong time to them. Lara explains:

> Lara: It is more difficult. I just experienced that. At my age it just sucks. You have your friends, your boyfriend, whatever.[108]

---

[107] German original: Je jünger man ist, desto schmerzloser, ist es, denk ich so. Ich weiß nicht. Als ich acht Jahre war sind wir nach [Stadt in Nordchina] gezogen. Als das mir meine Mutter erzählt hat, war ich voll glücklich. Ja? Und ich hab jeden Tag nachgefragt: Hat mein Vater den Vertrag schon unterschreiben? Können wir endlich nach China und so. Weil irgendwie ich war noch kleiner und ich wollte was erleben. Aber jetzt, je älter man wird, desto fester wird auch die Beziehung zu den Leuten. Irgendwie. Ich weiß nicht, man gewöhnt sich an die. Wenn man dann einfach getrennt wird von denen. Dann war ich doch nicht mehr so glücklich. Juhu, nach China. Sondern ich hab meinen Vater einfach angeschrien. Weil ich das scheiße fand.

[108] German original: Ist halt schwerer so. Ich hab's ja jetzt gemerkt. Mit meinem Alter ist einfach doof. Hat seine Freunde, Freund, wie auch immer.

Transnational mobility challenges not only relations to places, but also to relationships. As both quotes from the discussion with Karina and Lara show, the two students argue that because relationships to peers grow stronger over the years and one becomes more independent from parents, the move abroad becomes more difficult. Both also point out that school makes it more difficult to move in the mid- or late-teens. They highlight that moving in the last years before graduation gives less time to adjust to the new environment, since grades often already count for the final diploma – a major issue that also Britta from Norway repeatedly stresses during her interview at a British school.

While most teenagers think of adolescence as the wrong time to move, it is the right time to be in Shanghai. The mega-city offers numerous bars and clubs that commonly do not enforce any age-based entry restrictions. The youths often take this opportunity to explore nightlife to a degree that is usually impossible for their peers in Europe or Northern America. Britta explains:

> Britta: There is so much nightlife, there is so much fun. 'Cause in Norway you have to be eighteen or twenty-one to get into the club.

The absence of enforced age restrictions in China's nightlife spaces makes the stay attractive for teenagers to explore their age-identities. Chapter eleven will provide detailed descriptions of these nightlife practices.

The youths' perspectives demonstrate how my informants perceive and convey adolescence as a difficult time to move. Moreover, they also show how students conceptualize being a teenager as different from childhood by arguing that the losses experienced by younger children are less severe and their integration in a new school is easier. The students I interviewed seem to be familiar with conceptualizations of children as part of families without social ties of their own, and even reiterate them. This goes hand in hand with concepts that see children as not yet fully developed human beings without social ties and have lately been criticized and re-conceptualized in anthropology and related disciplines (Bucholtz 2002; Hutchins 2011). Hutchins (2011), for instance, studying the experiences of children moving to Australia, stresses the role of their own social ties. I argue that the older teenagers themselves emphasize their difference to younger children in order to stress the importance of their own social lives and to counteract being perceived without these.

The two seemingly contradicting discourses presented here – of adolescence being the wrong time for moving, but the right time for living in Shanghai – actually support each other. Both narratives serve to perform and manifest specific age-identities of someone who gradually outgrows the realm of the family.

10.2. Future Benefits and the Art Project "My time is now"

As the subchapter 9.4 on students' narratives on the privilege and pressure of international education already highlighted, experiences abroad are often conceptualized as beneficial capital for the future: the hardship of moving will be worth it for the sake of the children's future. This focus on development for the future is common when discussing young people's lives and underlies the idea of adolescence. Mary Bucholtz (2002) has argued that anthropological and sociological works on adolescence have often conceptualized adolescence as a staging ground for integration into the adult community. These conceptualizations have framed young people's own cultural practices solely in relation to adult concerns. She has consequently called for a shift from the anthropology of adolescence to the anthropology of youth. With the call for a theoretical (not only terminological) shift to youth, she aims at research practices that focus on youth's own perspectives and that distance themselves from the conceptualization of adolescence as merely a phase dedicated to leading towards adulthood.

> Where the study of adolescence generally concentrates on how bodies and minds are shaped for adult futures, the study of youth emphasizes instead the here-and-now of young people's experience, the social and cultural practices through which they shape their worlds. (Bucholtz 2002, 532)

Bucholtz's argument is also echoed by James and James (2008, 64–65) who find that society's (and often research's) focus on children's futures "detract[s] from the recognition of the importance of children's experiences of the present and the significance of these experiences in shaping the adults they will become." James and James see societal reasons to secure people's contributions in the future as the source of this focus on children and adolescents' future:

> Thus the provisions that all societies make in some shape or form to ensure the health, education and well-being of their children in the present – their welfare- are also an investment in their future, as individual adults, and in the future of the society of which they will form a part and to which they are expected to make a contribution at some point in the future. (James and James 2008, 64)

In the group discussion with Bjoern and Don, Alex, for instance, explains his view of grown-up life:

Alex: I am not in this world to work. I want to have fun.

Don and Bjoern: <L> Yeah.

Interviewer: <L>

Alex: I want to enjoy that and so on. And of course find a job that I enjoy. In any case. My father, now, well, I observe that: He leaves at around the same time when I leave for school. At about seven. And he some- times comes home at ten. And then I think, that can't be it! Then he goes to his study and still does something. Locks himself in. And then on the weekend, he takes my mother to brunch somewhere or

161

something. Phh. I don't know. He looks happy, but I couldn't do it. No way.[109]

Alex criticizes the pressure to conform and work in later adult life, as he observes in his father's daily routine. At the same time he rejects the "investment in [his] future" (James and James 2008, 64), which he is supposed to prioritize in his life now. It is a rejection of the pressure he experiences in the future-driven environment and his own future-driven social status of a teenager.

While I myself in the future-oriented status of a PhD candidate ("What do you want to do afterwards?") might have been particularly sensitive to the pressures of planning and working hard on your future, the expatriate youths seldom directly verbalized this pressure of the future. In-between the lines, their worries of what to study, what to become, however, hinted at the future-orientedness that underlies expatriate youth's experiences of Shanghai. Pondering about the focus on what lies ahead, I was irritated, provoked, and relieved when I discovered an art project by German student Andrea – entitled "My time is now."
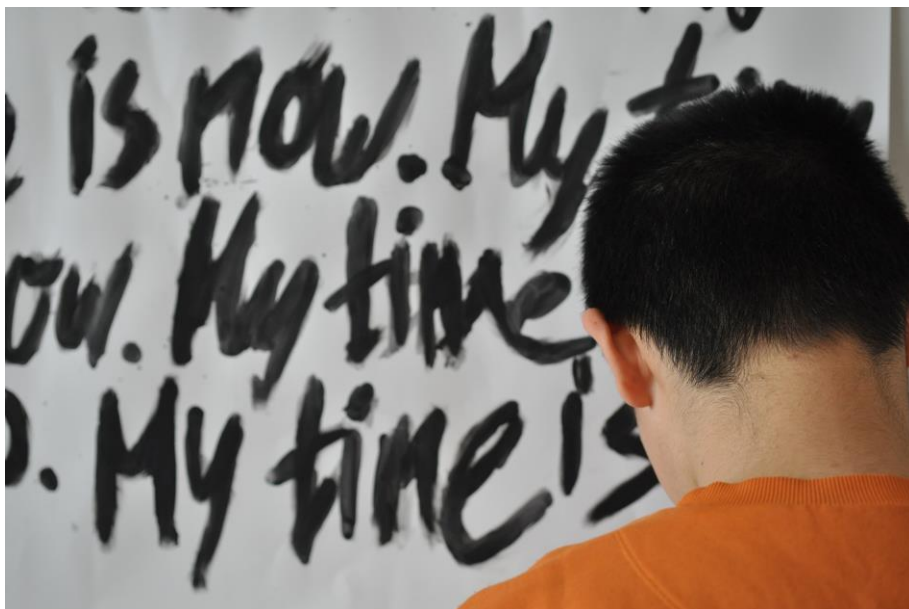

Figure 24: Student Art Project "My time is now" (Sign). Photo by Andrea

The art project consists of several photographs showing children and teenagers holding up or standing in front of a sign that displays endless lines of the text "My time

---

[109] German original: Ich bin halt irgendwie nicht auf der Welt um zu Arbeiten. Ich will Spaß haben. [Don und Bjoern: <L> Joa.] [Interviewer: <L>] Ich will das genießen und und. Und natürlich will ich einen Job finden, der mir dann Spaß macht. Dann auf jeden Fall. Mein Vater jetzt selber, also ich seh das ja. […] Der fährt auch um so die Uhrzeit los wenn ich in die Schule fahre. So um sieben Uhr. Und der kommt dann teilweise um zehn Uhr nach Hause. Und dann denk ich auch so, das kann doch nicht sein. Der geht dann noch in sein Büro und macht noch irgendwas. Schließt sich da ein. Und am Wochenende geht er dann mit meiner Mutter irgendwo brunchen oder so. Phh. Ich weiß nicht. Er sieht glücklich aus, aber ich könnte das nicht. Auf keinen Fall.

is now," as well as students wearing a white t-shirt with the same text. In many cases a group of students or individuals look into the camera, laughing, enjoying. To secure the anonymity of students, however, I am only able to include images of Andrea's project that do not reveal faces.[110]
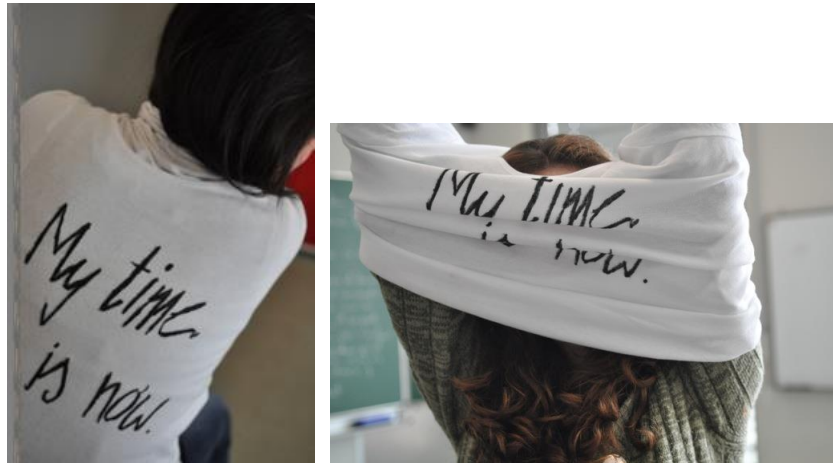

Figure 25: Student Art Project "My time is now" (T-Shirt). Photos by Andrea

In the context of preparing for future moves, education, and jobs, the message: "My time is now" seemed to me like a stop sign, an appeal to look at the "here-and-now" (Bucholtz 2002, 532), the time in Shanghai. However, it was not until my last fieldwork stay in June 2012, after having contemplated on these images during my months in Germany, that I arranged an interview with Andrea to discuss her art project. When sitting in a sidewalk café with Andrea, the voice-recorder between us, I ask her to explain the art project and its context of production.

> Andrea: It's a tradition at our school to do such a project every year. And last year it [the theme] was "time." […] And then art classes are requested to create a project according to the theme. An artwork, a painting, it should have something to do with photography. […]

While the school had given the topic of "time" and her art teacher had prescribed the method of photography to artistically engage with the theme, it had been her own idea to link "time" to the experience of school.

> Andrea: And […] I had let myself get inspired by American schools. They always like to draw attention to their community and so on, their school life – practically like a publicity campaign. That's extremely embarrassing, sometimes. Then I thought this would be appreciated at our school. And it was, by teachers and so on. So I proceeded like this: okay, now I do a project, [and] because I am not a good photographer, [it] doesn't need to be photographically convincing. But it can allude a little bit to us being one school, 'sheltered and grown together'

---

[110] Other images displaying smiling students capture a more positive atmosphere than those included in this chapter.

[referring to the school slogan] and so on. Because it's not really German to represent yourself like that, I thought my teachers might take it up. And erm <L>, everything was indeed pretty cheesy. And then I googled the Internet to see what kind of quotes exist, because I wanted to do something with text and photography. Well and then 'My time is now' appeared, which is really perfect. And a bit too kitschy. And then I made this t-shirt. I thought, okay, then they can wear that or hold it […]. And this sign. And then I walked around school and asked a few students to help me. And then I asked my friends if they would help me, because I don't like being like: 'Hello, my name is Andrea! We are <x>.' Of course I put some effort into involving some French students, because it refers even more to this social inclusion that is so popular at every school in Germany.[111]

While I had interpreted the art project as a statement against the pressure to focus on the future and as an appeal to look at the moment in Shanghai, the interview with Andrea pointed into a different direction. Her approach to the project had been more that of a designer working at a marketing agency, the customer – teachers and school – clearly in mind when choosing the theme and producing the images: "I thought this would be appreciated at our school." However, the success of her images within the school also shows on how fertile ground Andrea had planted her idea: her claim "My time is now" was used for the whole school's art project that would later even win an state-sponsored award for her German school's arts program (see chapter 9.2). Andrea's photography project rendered the future-orientedness in the students' lives visible to educators and the school community.

10.2. Rejecting "Old People" – Claiming Spaces

While the expatriate students like to emphasize their own social ties, as Karina's and Lara's narratives in the beginning of the chapter demonstrate, one should not be tempted into reading these as wanting to be "adult." Their practices of distinction from

---

[111] German original: Das ist ja an unserer Schule so eine Tradition, dass man jedes Jahr so ein Projekt macht. Und letztes Jahr war es "Zeit." […] Und dann wird halt […] im Kunstunterricht dazu aufgefordert ein Projekt dazu zu gestalten. Ein Kunstwerk, also ein Bild, also mit Fotografie sollte es etwas zu tun haben. […] Und […] ich hab mich da so ein bisschen von amerikanischen Schulen inspirieren lassen. Die ja immer sehr auf ihre Gemeinschaft und so, und auf ihr Schulleben anspielen, gerne auch - wie so Werbeaktionen praktisch. Das ist ja voll peinlich zum Teil. Ich hab mir dann gedacht, das käme an unserer Schule sehr gut [...] an. Also es war ja dann [so], also bei den Lehrern und so. Also ich bin dann so vorgegangen, okay, jetzt mach ich mal 'nen Projekt, muss ja jetzt nicht, weil ich kann nicht so gut fotografieren […], muss ja jetzt nicht fotografisch überzeugen. Aber es kann ja mal so ein bisschen anspielen, dass wir eine Schule sind, „geborgen und gemeinsam gewachsen" [Anspielung an Schulslogan] und so was. Weil das ja nicht so deutsch ist so was, sich da so selbst zu präsentieren […] dachte ich mir auch, dass das entsprechen von meinen Lehrern aufgegriffen werden könnte. Und ehm <L>, war ja schon sehr cheesy alles. Und hab dann im Internet gegoogelt, was es denn so für Zitate gibt, denn ich wollte gern so was mit Text und Fotografie machen. Und ja dann kam da „My time is now," was ja voll perfekt ist. Und so ein bisschen sehr kitschig. Und hab dann halt dieses T-Shirt [gemacht], ich dachte mir ja, okay, dann können die das tragen oder halten [...]. Und dieses Schild. Und dann bin ich in der Schule rum und hab ein paar Schüler gefragt ob die mir da helfen. Dann hab ich meine Freundinnen gefragt ob die mir da helfen, weil ich bin da nicht gerne so: „Hallo, meine Name ist Andrea! Wir machen <x>." Hab dann natürlich, ehm, mir Mühe gegeben ein paar Franzosen reinzubekommen, weil das spielt ja noch mehr diese soziale Integration an. Die bei uns ja in Deutschland an jeder Schule total beliebt ist.

younger children do not aim at being seen as "adult," but rather to be seen as "youths." This becomes clear in the rejections of "old people" I came across during several moments in fieldwork encounters and during interviews, as the following excerpt of a discussion with the girls Antonia and Olivia on nightlife spaces illustrates.

Antonia: Occasionally we go to Zapatas after Mural. Even though there are a lot of old people. But sometimes it's fun to dance on the bar.

Interviewer: <L> As old as I am?

Antonia: No. They are even much older!

Interviewer: Sometimes I find it strange; sometimes I find it cool that it is really mixed here, in terms of age. It's not like that in Germany, I think.

Olivia: But sometimes that is pretty annoying, too.

Antonia: Come on, people between twenty and thirty are okay. But if there are fifty-year-old men at the bar, then you think: aaah.

Olivia: I mean it's okay for them to be there. I mean it's their lives. If they want to do that, then they should do that. But then they should a least leave the young people in peace. <L> I mean it's just like that. A fifty-year-old can't hit on a, I don't know, twenty-year-old.[112]

The girls voice their annoyance about "old people"; it is an annoyance, however, about "old people" in spaces that the teenagers claim as theirs. The students, by claiming spaces in the here-and-now, distinguish themselves from adults and simultaneously find ways to counteract the focus on their future: nightlife is identified as such a space of youth.

11. Nightlife: Going Out

This chapter shows that Shanghai's nightscapes are a crucial platform for the identity negotiations of expatriate youths. While not all students participate in nightlife activities[113], foregrounding teenagers' clubbing practices is still pivotal, as these are

---

[112] German original: Antonia: Manchmal gehen wir nach dem Mural auch ins Zapatas. Auch wenn da sehr viel alte Menschen sind. Aber manchmal ist es lustig auf der Bar zu tanzen. Interviewer: <L> So alt wie ich? Antonia: Nein. Die sind noch viel älter! Interviewer: Manchmal finde ich es komisch, manchmal finde ich es cool, dass es halt so super gemischt ist, altersmäßig. Das ist ja in Deutschland nicht so, finde ich. Olivia: Aber das ist manchmal ziemlich nervig. Auch. Antonia: Na komm, Leute zwischen zwanzig und dreißig sind ja okay. Aber wenn so fünfzig-jährige alte Männer in der Bar sitzen, dann denkst du auch schon aaah. Und dann machen die einen auch noch an. Und dann aaah. Olivia: Ich meine die können da ja gerne sein. Ich mein das ist ja ihr Leben. Und wenn sie das machen wollen, dann sollen sie das auch. Aber dann sollen sie wenigstens die jungen Leute in Ruhe lassen. <L> Ich mein das ist ja wohl so. Einer über fünfzig kann sich ja nicht ranmachen, an eine was weiß ich zwanzig-jährige.

[113] The students interviewed at the Singaporean school and a few students from the German school, for instance, do not take part in the described nightlife activities. For the youths at the Singaporean school, instead, a certain shopping mall served as their center for after school activities. Here they shop, dine, go to the cinema, sing karaoke or play pool. Furthermore, watching DVDs and hanging out with family and friends are common activities for all teenagers. For insights into differing practices of adult expatriates from Singapore and Britain in China, see Brenda Yeoh and Katie Willis, 2002 and 2005.

central to their involvement with the city and an important form of dealing with the move to Shanghai. Teenagers are claiming new spaces collectively without their families. Firstly, this chapter analyzes Shanghai's nightlife spaces in general (11.1), to then examine the conditions for the teenage patrons (11.2): it puts forward that de facto no age-based restrictions to enter clubs or bars exist in Shanghai, and examines the resulting heated debates on teenage nightlife practices in the expatriate community, as well as students' accounts of negotiating parental concern. The next subchapter (11.3) then gives a detailed description of teenagers' ways of going out based on participant observation as well as interviews. Based on the Friday night routine at a club called Mural, it analyzes how going out is a break from school routine, a means to play with and affirm age, gender, cosmopolitan, and urban identities, as well as to assure friendships.

11.1. Shanghai's Nightlife Spaces

When entering bars or clubs in Shanghai, I often feel many of these could be in any large city or tourist location. The menu displays the same cocktails, wines, and liquors that are offered elsewhere. Occasionally, local beers, mostly *Qingdao*, are presented along with the international beer brands. The music playing, although varying between locations in Shanghai, is typical for mainstream party locations in Europe as well. People's attire depends on the locations' silently expected or openly stated dress codes, men often in shirts, women displaying more skin and make-up than during the day. Everyone seems to be engaged in practices familiar to me from nightlife locations in Europe: Chatting, drinking, and sometimes dancing. One finds the same tastes, same sounds, same visuals, and same practices. Thus, Shanghai offers a very internationalized dance club scene.[114] My own immediate familiarity with all these sensories and patterns confirms Farrer's (2011) conceptualization of Shanghai's bars and clubs as belonging to a "global nightscape." The idea of such a global nightscape is based on Appadurai's (1990, 296) understandings of the global cultural economy and its "dimensions of global cultural flow." In Farrer's (2011, 748) words, the concept firstly "refers to the ways in which these local urban nightscapes are sites of transnational flows." Secondly, these global nightscapes, as Farrer describes based on Chatterton and Hollands's (2003) findings, are "constructed through globalising cultural

---

[114] For a detailed description of the development of the internationalized dance club scene in Shanghai see Andrew Field (2008). Field provides four in-depth examples of clubs in Shanghai and succinctly illustrates the development, success, and failure of clubs in the context of the city's economic development and rapidly changing consumer culture between 1997 and 2007. For a brief overview of the earlier developments of dance halls from the 1920s onwards, as well as the rise of discos in the 1990s in Shanghai, see James Farrer's *Opening Up* (2002), primarily chapter nine. Here, Farrer pays particular attention to the links between dance and sexual culture.

and corporate processes that homogenise and stratify nightlife experiences" (Farrer 2011, 748). Farrer succinctly points out the consequences of emerging global nightscapes for foreign visitors:

> Pragmatically, nightlife globalisation means that anyone familiar with nightlife in other global cities could pick his or her way through Shanghai's global nightscapes with relative ease upon landing in the city, using the categories of spaces learned already in similar settings [...]. (Farrer 2011, 748)

Occasionally, some locations in Shanghai such as Karaoke centers, or clubs with big seating areas and small dance floors, beverages ordered by the bottle, and Chinese drinking games based on dice rolling, offer new aspects to the foreign visitor and challenge the notions of complete familiarity. However, the expatriate youths often choose clubs that are very international in terms of sounds, drinks, and practices. At clubs that they label as "more Chinese" they still pursue their familiar ways of partying. In general, Shanghai offers many locations that follow such a globally distributed pattern of nightlife and are easy to navigate for students and me alike.

Nightlife in Shanghai, however, is only easy to navigate if one can afford it: the drinks cost as much as a meal for two in a local restaurant, the cover charges are high, and taxi rides are necessary because the subway and most buses stop running at eleven pm. In consequence, the majority of the clubs are only affordable to the upper (middle) classes of Shanghai.[115] Despite, or maybe even because of this stratification, I argue that all the clubs and bars we visited fit into Chatterton and Hollands's (2003) definition of "mainstream" considering the spaces' profit-orientation. In *Urban nightscapes* Chatterton and Hollands argue that city nightlife today is characterized by "mainstream production, through the corporatisation of ownership via processes of branding and theming" as well as "regulation, through practices which increasingly aid capital accumulation and urban image-building." These practices simultaneously also heighten surveillance, and "consumption, through new forms of segmented nightlife activity driven by processes of gentrification and the adoption of 'upmarket' lifestyle identities among groups of young adults" (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, 7). Chatterton and Hollands's analysis is concerned with nightlife spaces in Great Britain, however, the processes of theming, urban-image building, surveillance and gentrification are also prominent in Shanghai, not only for nightlife spaces. In light of the world expo in 2010 the city has been polished in particular, stimulating further gentrification processes in areas like the former French concession.

As competitive and future-oriented as Shanghai presented itself hosting the expo, it simultaneously shone brightly with nostalgia, particularly at night. High-end restaurants,

---

[115] For the links between class and nightlife spaces in Shanghai, see again Field (2008). His article pays particular attention to the promotion of class identities through dance club visits.

bars, and clubs in Shanghai are often located either in old buildings of the former French concession or in those along Shanghai's waterfront, the Bund. Thus, the physical locations of nightlife spaces build upon the city's colonial past. Some places are even restored to its former glory, i.e. the premises of the former Shanghai Club located at the Bund, the principal men's club for British residents of colonial Shanghai with its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, famous for its thirty-four meter long bar. The Waldorf Astoria that now runs the building rebuilt the "long bar" after photographs from 1911 and re-opened it in October 2010 (McDermott 2010). Many of these places are highly frequented by expatriates and thus show the relevance of Fechter and Walsh's (2010) call for a closer look at dis-/continuities to colonial pasts in expatriate spaces. Amanda Lagerkvist's article (2007) "Gazing at Pudong – 'With a Drink in Your Hand'" explores the particular relationship between Westerners and today's Shanghai discussing "how Shanghai is currently being scripted for/by Western travelers as a multisensuous geography in a way that acts out overlapping temporalities" (Lagerkvist 2007, 186). Lagerkvist looks at travel writings and investigates into Westerners' practices of consumption in Shanghai, in particular at the famous Bund area, lined with buildings of the city's colonial past.

> [Z]ooming in on the restaurant, the cafe, and the villa garden as chronotopes of nostalgic dwelling brings into view scripted spaces of Western cultural superiority. In spite of the "semiotic skills" and "openness toward others" among the cosmopolitans, in these spaces they act out remembrances of the affluent and "golden" past. Consuming the city by consuming, for example, food, drink, views and music endorses power and control. (Lagerkvist 2007,163)

Lagerkvist describes these immersions as "imaginary journeys into the past, as well as into the future," and calls this multisensous practice "time travel" (ibid., 161). The incorporation of the past in the present urban planning serves the anticipated reappearance of Shanghai as the most important international city in China's future. Based on Möckel-Rieke (1998), Lagerkvist acknowledges how "cultural memory can only be established by media" (2007, 168), but points out how this remembering needs foreign travelers' active involvement (ibid., 167).

> But reminiscing only comes into being through the appropriation of the memory dispositif, and conversely, the "cosmopolitan visitors" come into being through these mediatized performances. In other words, they are constituted by their mnemonic acts and technologies. Hence, in the massive transition of Shanghai, foreigners have roles to play that are very important, at the same time, highly morally questionable. (Lagerkvist 2007, 168)

Lagerkvist's argument about the role the foreign tourists (or residents) play in reminiscing about Shanghai's past is interesting in the context of Fechter and Walsh's call for investigating colonial dis/continuities in expatriate lifeworlds (2010). Although, as this chapter will show, the high school students do not openly engage in

establishing connections to Shanghai's semi-colonial past, certain nightlife locations on the Bund or the former French concession inevitably open a connection to the city's past. Nightlife spaces in Shanghai are thus not only part of Farrer's "global nightscapes" (2011) and "mainstream" in Chatterton and Hollands's (2003) understanding, but at the second more sensitive look are also "Shanghainese," carrying along connotations and sometimes continuities of the city's semi-colonial past.

11.2. Open Doors and Bars: Negotiating Access and Parental Concern

While nightlife spaces are often associated with freedom and experimentation, access to commercial mainstream club spaces can also be regulated, stratified, and restricting (Hollands 2002; Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Knowledge about dress codes, financial means, and sometimes memberships or personal connections that put you on a guest list, might be required to enter. Access to these spaces is often also regulated on the basis of age. Restrictions of access arise indirectly through the availability of financial means and of independent transportation, and directly through policies (Valentine 2003, 38). For teenagers in the contemporary North, for instance, the law usually prohibits their consumption of alcohol and consequently restricts their participation in nightlife spaces. Accepting Valentine's (2003) observations that the lack of financial means and of independent transportation as well as laws and policies restrict access to nightlife spaces for many youths, I like to look closer at these aspects in China's mega-city Shanghai.

Students in Shanghai stress that these restrictions are comparably fewer in China than elsewhere. The lack of own money is less of a problem here. Many things are inexpensive relative to their parents' income and thus to the students' allowance, though not inexpensive relative to the local economy. Although some bars can be more expensive than, for instance, in Germany. As I described in chapter seven, "Making sense of the city," access to transport is also comparably easy. Returning home late in Shanghai – even after the subways system closes at eleven p.m. – proves easy, as taxis are readily available and affordable for expat youth. Not only transportation, but also safety, according to the two students Peter and Marco, is less of a concern than in Germany.

> Peter: Generally the city is very peaceful, I mean the clubs. That is also due to the police state.

> Marco: I don't know. I've never experienced that [nightlife] in Germany. I've never gone out in Germany. And I don't know what to pay attention to. I heard such things as that the last buses go at twelve. And because taxis are relatively expensive in Germany, everyone all of a sudden leaves at twelve. Well, and here some leave at one, others at four. Also because of safety: you can also just walk somewhere. You could get lost and wouldn't be robbed.

169

Peter: Yes, in any case you don't need to be afraid here. [116]

Most crucial, however, is that spatial restrictions on the basis of age concerning the access to bars and clubs are almost non-existent. Although in 2006 the Chinese government introduced the legal drinking age of eighteen ("China Bans Under-age Drinking" 2006; International Center for Alcohol Policies 2010), I have never witnessed an ID control at any club or bar in Shanghai. De facto, there are no restrictions if you can afford entrance fees. The teenagers are all allowed to enter the bars and clubs, and even gain unlimited access to alcohol at so-called "open bars."

Without policy-based spatial restrictions on the basis of age and with access to independent mobility and money, the only restriction to Shanghai's nightscapes remains parental authority. Parents do not allow their children to participate in all activities, and for my research subjects the participation in nightlife has to be constantly negotiated with parents. The teenagers report that one common reason for parents to limit nightlife activity is considering their children too young for these spaces.

Kressi: Usually, on Fridays, some people want to go out. Because it's always someone's birthday. But I'm only fifteen and therefore I'm not allowed [to go out] every week.[117]

Another reason for restricting nightlife activity is the parental demand to focus on school performance, as Alex in the group discussion with Bjoern and Don shares.

Alex: I don't remember when that was. That was sometime last year. My mother came into my room and said this sentence to me. I still wanted to go somewhere during the week, and she said, 'The week is only for the school. And on the week-end you can go out.' Because it had never been like that before. [...] That totally annoyed me.

All: <L>

Alex: Really! She entered, 'Well, from now on you will use the week only for school. Nothing else, only focus on school.' And then a sort of protest built up in me, a counter position.[118]

---

[116] German original: Peter: Überhaupt die Stadt ist sehr friedlich. Also die Clubs. Das liegt eben aber auch an dem Polizeistaat. Marco: Ja, also ich weiß nicht. Ich hab das in Deutschland nie so erlebt. Ich bin in Deutschland nie weggegangen. Und dann weiß ich auch nicht worauf man da achten muss. Ich hab auch so Sachen gehört, man. Um zwölf oder so fahren die letzten Busse. Und weil in Deutschland Taxi relativ teuer ist, sind dann um zwölf auf einmal alle weg. Ja und hier geht der eine halt um eins, der andere um vier. [...] Eben halt auch wegen der Sicherheit: Man kann auch mal irgendwo hingehen. Man kann sich auch mal verlaufen und man würde nicht ausgeraubt. Peter: Ja, also Angst braucht man hier auf keinen Fall haben.

[117] German original: Also meistens ist es so, dass freitags irgendwelche Leute feiern wollen gehen. Weil irgendwelche Leute immer Geburtstag haben. Aber ich bin ja erst fünfzehn und daher darf ich auch nicht jede Woche. Und jetzt in letzter Zeit war es eben öfter, wegen Olivias Geburtstag und wegen Semester, und ehm, diesen Freitag noch einmal wegen Mias Geburtstag. Und auch in den Ferien, aber sonst so DVD Abende.

[118] German original: Ich weiß nicht wann das genau war. Das war irgendwann letztes Jahr. Da kam meine Mutter in mein Zimmer und sagte dann zu mir den Satz so, als ich nämlich noch während der Woche noch irgendwo hin wollte, sagte so: "Ja, die Woche ist nur für die Schule. Und das Wochenende kannst du weggehen." Weil das war vorher nie so. Das war. Das hat mich total gestört. [Alle: <L>] Also wirklich. Sie

As Alex's story shows, negotiations between the youths and their parents around nightlife can be conflictual and leading to tensions. Some students report that they try to avoid these confrontations by lying to their parents. During a group discussion the three girls Charlie, Olivia, and Antonia, for instance, discuss their ways of occasionally trying to go around parental objections to nights out.

Charlie: I am not allowed to go out that often, from my parent's side.

Olivia: Hmm. Me neither.

Antonia: Me neither.

Olivia: Yes, but I don't lie to them.

Antonia: Me neither. <L> Sometimes. One time. <L>

Interviewer: Sometimes you have to find solutions so you can still go, one could say. How do you do that? I also used to do that.

Charlie: Sleep over at someone else's place

Olivia: She always sleeps at [a friend's] place.

Antonia: I usually say 'Mama, I am going to friends and I will sleep at their place.' That actually is half the truth, because first I go to friends, often before [going out] and later I sleep over at their place. It's only what's in-between <L> that's missing.

Charlie: I don't understand why parents have something against it. I mean they don't know that we're drinking there. And they think we're dancing. I always say, 'We're going dancing.'

Antonia: Yes, I too, usually say, 'Mama, I'm going dancing.' Well, in Chinese there is no word for clubbing or something. I just say, 'Yes, Mama, I'm going dancing.'

Charlie: I mean when I go to a sleepover, I'm also staying up late.[119]

While some students come up with strategies in overcoming parent authority with the help of friends, a few students simply rebel and act against their parents' guidelines. Seventeen-year-old Paul, for instance, shares:

Interviewer: What do the parents say?

Paul: Well, my parents didn't know. We snuck out. And eventually they started letting me go out.

---

kam rein: "Ja, die Woche nutzt du jetzt nur für die Schule. Nichts anderes, nur auf die Schule konzentrieren." Und da hat sich bei mir selber, so eine Art Protest gebildet, ein Gegenwillen.

[119] German original: Charlie: Ich darf gar nicht so oft von meinen Eltern aus. Olivia: Hmm. Ich auch nicht. Antonia: Ich auch nicht. Olivia: Ja, aber ich lüg sie nicht an. Antonia: Ich auch nicht. <L> Doch manchmal. Einmal. <L> Interviewer: Manchmal muss man Lösungen finden damit man trotzdem gehen kann, sozusagen. Wie macht ihr das dann? Hab ich früher auch gemacht. Charlie: Bei jemand anders übernachten. Olivia: Sie schläft immer bei [einer Freundin]. Antonia: […] Ich sag immer: „Mama, ich geh zu Freunden und ich übernachte dann bei denen." Das ist ja eigentlich auch die halbe Wahrheit. Weil erstmal geh ich immer zu Freunden, meistens vorher und später übernachte ich bei ihnen. Das ist einfach nur so der Zwischenraum <L> der fehlt. Charlie: Ich versteh nicht was Eltern dagegen haben. Ich mein die wissen ja nicht, dass wir da trinken. Und die denken, wir tanzen. Ich sag immer tanzen gehen. „Wir gehen tanzen."Antonia: Ja, ich sag auch immer: „Mama, ich geh tanzen." Also im chinesischen gibt es kein Wort für clubben oder so. Da sag ich einfach: „Ja, Mama, ich geh tanzen." Charlie: […] Ich meine wenn ich bei jemanden übernachte, dann bleibe ich auch lange wach.

In the same interview, however, Paul also admits that for this behavior he was grounded for a whole school year from any nightlife activity. These stories seem to be the parental nightmares that circulate among the expatriate community and fuel images of unruly teens.

Nightlife and alcohol consumption among teenagers are seen as a severe problem in the parental expatriate community in Shanghai. While a full discourse analysis is beyond the scope of this ethnography, I gained an overview based on local expatriate magazines, discussions with the community organization Shanghai Lifeline, an interview with a school counselor, and observations at talks targeted at expatriate parents. The discussions on teenage nightlife practices in Shanghai can be seen as oscillating between debates on health concerns on the one hand and moral panics on the other.

The easy access to clubs and bars, health concerns and fear of possible alcohol addictions, for instance, are discussed in detail in the article "Teenage Drinking" in the Summer 2007 issue of *City Weekend: Shanghai Parents and Kids*. The article teaser warns: "Buying alcohol in a convenience store is as easy as buying soda. With alcohol abuse on the rise amongst teenagers in Shanghai, a 16-year-old teen and his mother share their story" (Cheng 2007). Many of the articles and talks in the community are targeted at parents and I was not surprised to see the announcement for an event entitled "Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll" at an international school in Pudong in fall 2010. The evening event, well attended by parents, hosted a social worker and a speaker from the British Consulate. The two speakers gave insights into how to talk with teens about alcohol and drugs, and about the legal consequences of drug abuse in China. Parents were particularly concerned to clarify the rumors about possible expulsion from Chinese territory for the whole family in case of their children being caught with the possession of drugs.

Measures aiming to counteract alcohol abuse among teenagers have also been taken. In 2010, a help-line telephone service targeted at expatriates called Shanghai Lifeline, was at the midst of establishing workshops for youths to inform, counteract and/or prevent alcohol or drug abuse. Likewise, the Community Center Shanghai established a program called Interkom in 2007. They advertise Interkom as a program that "provides alternative to the rise of drug and alcohol abuse and accessibility to high risk activities to international teens in Shanghai" ("Interkom" 2010, 14). Parents, as I learned in a personal conversation with a worker of the Shanghai Lifeline project, also managed to influence certain restaurants in the Jinqiao expatriate residential areas to refrain from giving out alcohol to minors by threatening to blacklist these locations – mostly western family restaurants – in the expatriate community. Some of the

172

international schools have reacted to the open bars and the heated debate in Shanghai's expatria by introducing regular drug testing at school.

While these discussions very likely take place in other countries and environments as well, these negotiations seem particularly present in expatriate families in Shanghai, as parents are the only de facto regulating authorities. The Global Times China online paper in an article entitled "Shanghai's Tormented Teens" reviews a talk by Shanghai-based Dr. Tim Kelly on understanding teenagers and cites him: "Often families find that whatever were vulnerable points before coming to Shanghai, like arguments about curfews and homework, become exacerbated here" (E. Peterson 2011).

From the teenagers' perspectives, however, nightlife is an active way to forge ties with their peers. I observed that students who are not allowed (or willing) to accompany their peers to nightlife activities at all are pitied by their classmates and sometimes have difficulties in positioning themselves within certain peer groups or their class. It is also noteworthy in this context that my relations to the teenagers who I joined regularly in nightlife activities became closer and resulted to invitations to other activities.

11.3. Practices and Transformations: The Friday Night Routine

The last two subchapters described Shanghai's nightscapes as global, mainstream, and with links to Shanghai's past, as well as the absence of age-based restrictions to access clubs and alcohol and the resulting negotiations between parents and teenagers. I now like to zoom in on one specific place popular among the groups from the German school: a club called Mural. This place lends itself perfectly for a thick description and analysis of the teenagers' nightlife practices and their embedded meanings. I discuss seven aspects that are relevant for understanding the teenagers' nights out at Mural: 1. The social aesthetics of the club Mural, 2. The Friday night as marker between school routine and weekend, 3. The club and its open bar as key to play with age-identities, 4. The gendered ways of going out, 5. The nightlife practices as group activity, 6. Nightlife spaces as stages for cosmopolitan performances, and 7. Going out as an urban experience.

The Club Mural and its Social Aesthetics

Mural[120] with its open bar is the club of choice for the standard Friday night. The regular visits to Mural bring along repetition of certain practices and a familiarity with the material situation that heightens the creation of a particular shared aesthetic space among the teenagers. Drawing again on David MacDougall's (2006) concept of "social

---

[120] While other bars, such Tera 57 (fair priced cocktail bar that sometimes lets guests put on music) and Windows (cheap sports bar), occasionally serve as locations to warm up for further clubbing, for the two groups these are merely substitutes for Mural if a change is needed for some reason.

aesthetics" that describes "the creation of an aesthetic space or sensory structure" (ibid., 105), I here like to picture the material environment as well as the practices taking place and shaping the experiences of a night at Mural. With aesthetics not meaning notions of beauty or art, but a "wider range of culturally patterned sensory experience" (ibid., 98) MacDougall understands the social aesthetic field as a coalescence of different elements such as "objects and actions" and finds it a "physical manifestation of the largely internalized and invisible 'embodied history' that Bourdieu calls habitus" (2006, 98). While MacDougall applies his concept to a boarding school in India, I see how we can similarly experience certain social aesthetics of a nightclub. Malbon (1998), although not in relation to MacDougall's social aesthetics, describes how a shared space is created in nightclubs not only through sensuous experiences (lighting, music, bodies) but also through the repetition of certain practices. Malbon (1998, 276) argues: "Acting out certain roles, dressing in a similar manner, dancing in a certain way, even drinking similar beers are all ways in which the affinity of the group can be reinforced, the territory of the club experience claimed." In this creation of certain social aesthetics, Malbon (1998, 280) also sees the clubbers as actively shaping the experience: "the club situation offers clubbers opportunities to inscribe their own creativities upon a shared space to create a space of their own making of which they are also the consumers." What kind of social aesthetics with its patterns and emotional effects does a Friday night at Mural hold for the expatriate youth?

The club Mural lies in the heart of the city, just off Hengshan Road, a popular bar and boutique street that was already central to the former French concession and is nowadays undergoing massive gentrification. The bar is conveniently integrated in the web of the city with a subway station, restaurants and (still) some local shops around. In the evenings, street vendors selling cigarettes greet you outside on the pavement, right before you enter the club and follow down the stairs. Mural bar awaits its customers in the basement. It is a spacious location with a long bar, a section of tables and chairs, a section of couches and low tables and an elevated dance floor. The place has no windows, is dimly lit, and tealights on the table add to the atmosphere. Mural's makers present the bar on their website with pictures of the empty location with well-arranged furniture in warm lights. The accompanying text informs the online visitor:

> Welcome to 5000 Years of History !!! To the story of the silk road, to rumours and legends, to mogao caves and their past. With its fantastic interior, its traditional paintings and its cultural relicts, the bar will surely provide you unforgettable moments, besides the interior the bar of course offers much more. Live-bands and performances, exhibitions and shows, DJ Parties, Concerts,… All this will come up with a mix of Chinese tradition and western new age!!! ("Mural Bar and Restaurant | Shanghai" 2013)

174

I personally experienced the club differently. While the cave-like atmosphere is strongly supported by the location being in the basement, the "5000 years of history" as a theme are easily forgotten when the place is packed to its limits on a Friday night. The attempted theming of "a mix of Chinese tradition and western new age" interestingly, is pursued not only through old Chinese text on wooden tablets, but also through Sanskrit words and Sutra pictures on the stonewalls. These wall decorations, however, seem to regularly disappear behind bodies. Students could not recall the wall decorations in detail, although regularly spending their Friday nights in the club. The social aesthetics of the bar are also tied to specific events and their themes. Mural hosts a ladies' night on Wednesdays and a salsa night every Monday. It is, however, for Friday nights only that the two befriended teenage groups choose Mural as their standard location.

Figure 26: The Club Mural and its Cave-like Atmosphere. Photo by M. Sander

Every Friday night Mural hosts an open bar and the website flyer announces this weekly event as "Up Your Funk," and underlines this with the call "Free ya mind … and ya ass will follow." This, the website assures its visitors, will be achieved by the "hottest DJs" and the open bar. The music usually consists of a mix between, soul, funk, disco and other genres, going through different phases as the evening progresses. A dress code is not enforced and jeans, sneakers or t-shirts hinder no one from entering. Guests are mainly in their twenties. I estimate the ratio of Chinese and foreign patrons attending the club on Friday nights at roughly 1:2. The proportion of female and male clubbers is about equal. The open bar means that the cover charge of RMB 100 (€11) covers all drinks, from soft drinks and beers to cocktails and liquors. At the bar you are served the first three kinds of drinks, while at a special table set up next to the entrance

175

and the cloakroom, guests get two different kinds of shots. "The boys" always book a table with three couches in advance. This couch section serves as home base during the evening for both "the girls" and "the boys." Students come and go, moving back and forth between bar, dance floor and a couple of stairs just outside the club. The open bar ends at two a.m., usually leading to many guests going home or moving on to the next location.

For the students the most important parts of the club are arguably, people, music, the couches, and the special setting of the open bar on Friday nights. Their favorite club Mural through its location, decoration, drinks, and guests' practices of dressing and socializing, produces a specific landscape that the students perceive as particularly "relaxed." It is only Friday nights, however, that the two teenage groups come to Mural.

Letting Loose: From Week to Weekend

Friday nights often mean nights out for my group of students. Drawing on Gusfield's (1987) symbolic interactionist analysis of ordinary American drinking practices, which demonstrates "the symbolic meaning of alcohol in the temporal organization of daily and weekly life for a large segment of the American population" (1987, 75), I see the practice of going out, dancing, and consuming alcohol as a marker between the school-week and the weekend. This is a common conceptualization of nightlife from teenagers' perspectives as well:

> Lara: I party every Friday. That is a privilege. It is a must after that week. I couldn't do without. That would be too boring.[121]

Linked to this understanding of Friday night routines as rituals to mark the transition from the tightly structured school-week to the weekend, teenagers also bring forward the idea of reward for hard work in school.

The Friday night routine usually starts with a shared taxi ride to the downtown area – I have never witnessed anyone taking the metro to go out. Sometimes, students also dine out together before clubbing. For "the girls" the night often begins with practices of communal dressing up. The appropriate party outfit is an important ingredient of the nightlife experience and supports the break between week and weekend. When I join my group for the first time on a night out in January 2011, meeting at Mural after having texted with Antonia who had invited me, I feel a little bit out of place and have difficulties to understand what topics and practices are appropriate. My early field notes from this night out later remind of these beginnings:

> The girls were also dressed accordingly: High heels, tight leggings, short skirts or leopard printed dresses… I felt a bit clumsy in my jeans and sneakers next to the

---

[121] German original: Also jeden Freitag geh ich feiern. Das ist Privileg. Das muss sein nach der Woche einfach. Ich könnte auch nicht ohne. Das wär zu langweilig.

176

sixteen-year-old beauties, all dressed for the big nights out. (Field notes January 2011)

I naively thought youthful jeans and shoes appropriate for a rather casual place like Mural. While Mural does not demand a certain dress code, the girls enjoy the ritual of dressing up. The girls even share a photo album on facebook documenting this ritual with photos of them with eyelash curlers in front of bathroom mirrors. I quickly learned and felt I could blend in more easily when I joined them again throughout the following months and the two later stays in September 2011 and June 2012. Through different dress and drink the weekend is conjured up and the school world and its social relations among the teens are transformed into the particular sphere of weekend nightlife.

Acting Mature: From Teen to Club Guest

Friday nights at Mural, some students like to stay put on the couches, drink, smoke, chat, and listen to music, while others hit Mural's elevated dance floor. The students get up in turns to stand in line at the bar to fetch beers or long drinks, or, occasionally, to get a tray of shots at the small bar to throw a round for the group. Similar to how Gusfield (1987, 81) describes that by buying rounds "each person takes responsibility for payment of the drink of all members of the group, no matter his own consumption will be or has been," the open bar allows teenagers to provide their friends with drinks and to show they care for their group without having to ask for money from their friends or to strain their allowance.

Figure 27: Friday Night: Gathering with Drinks around the Table. Photo by M. Sander

The attractiveness of the open bar thus does not necessarily lie in the cheap possibility of binge drinking or getting drunk, but rather in the way it allows teenagers to foster their ties with their friends and the overall interaction within the group by allowing the students to bring each other drinks. They do not have to worry about spending too much on drinks, one person can always get drinks for everyone and a feeling of sharing arises.

By enabling teenagers to "buy" drinks for others, the open bar at Mural also provides the youths with a space to practice "typical" adult or patron behavior they associate with nightlife spaces. This testing and practicing of "appropriate" ways to behave in bars and clubs, is similar to Yuki Kato's (2009) observations of teenagers' practices in US American suburban malls. By exploring the two different practices of "sitting cars" – hanging out in the parking lot – and "browsing" – "a way of interacting with the merchandise, as one contemplates a purchase, either by looking at or testing the product" (ibid., 58), the ethnographer demonstrates how youths actively negotiate the behavioral norms associated with various parts of suburban commercial spaces in the US. Based on the observations of these spatial and social practices Kato argues:

> Teenagers' social in-between place may be embodied in their experiences of locating and performing with their bodies in public space. While performing in commercial space, young people share physical space with adults and explore their positionalities vis-à-vis the norms associated with the space. Some adapt eagerly and flawlessly to this performance, while others choose to avoid such constraints by opting to spend time away from adults' or authorities' eyes. These experiences of adolescents must be understood in the spatial and the social contexts in which they come of age, as their daily encounters with opportunities and constraints vary by place. (Kato 2009, 53)

This is similar for nightlife. While performing in nightlife space, teenagers "share physical space with adults and explore their positionalities vis-à-vis the norms associated with the space." The young nightlife participants I joined in their clubbing activities therefore often behave in ways that they associate with mature adults. As Kato describes for the teenage customers in the shopping mall under study, accepting and performing the role of a customer – or in this case a club or bar guest – "requires one's tacit knowledge of behavioral norms associated with being in [...] [a nightlife] space" (Kato 2009, 57).

Similarly, regarding these negotiations of norms and practices in the light of the liminal social space of youth, Northcote (2006), who investigated youths from eighteen to twenty-four nightclubbing in Perth in the mid 1990s, sees in these nightlife practices "self-made quasi rites of passage" (2006, 14). Likewise, nightlife practices for expatriate teens in Shanghai can be seen as transitional pathways to a more "mature"

status in society.[122] Discussing nightlife activities with the two boys Paul and Matthias, seventeen and eighteen years old, confirms how teenagers themselves see the nightlife spaces as tied to age-identities. The participation in these nightlife spaces is described as self-made tests of courage.

Paul: Shanghai is a bit of a distraction. Really.

Interviewer: How come?

Paul: Well, like really easy […] Biggest distraction. Cause anyone can go, any age. Really. Back in the day, like, kids didn't go out clubbing. But now it's more and more common. We were probably the first kids to go out. We were like thirteen, fourteen at the time. Now it's even younger than that.

Interviewer: What do the parents say?

Paul: Well, my parents didn't know. [I: <L>] We snuck out. And eventually they started letting me go out. But, erm. Yeah, before, back then. When, like people went out, the young kids. It was actually kind of cool, because there were so few of us. Like there were three kids in my school that went out. And I was one of them. And all of the older kids were like 'Dude, you guys are awesome, this is so cool. We gonna show you all the new cool places.' Right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Paul: Back then it was really cool to go out. But now, there is like hundreds of twelve-, thirteen-year olds out, thinking that they are like really bad-ass and stuff. It is just ridiculous, cause they don't have any self-control anymore; and it ends up the older kids have to look after the young kids cause they are drinking too much

Matthias: Way too much.

Paul: Can't control themselves. Just, the age has gone down. I feel old at a club now.

Interviewer: <L> Oho! How old do I feel now?

Paul: Just like the ages have gone down. The standard for being cool has, like, changed.

The way Paul describes his early nightlife encounters at a very young age reminds of a test of courage, a form of claiming new space, or in Northcote's (2006, 14) words again, a self-made rite of passage. Nightclubs seem like a space to conquer for the brave, the "cool." Conquering nightclubs means leaving childhood behind.

The relationship between identity performances and spaces becomes visible in this interview passage where being young in a space for older people is interpreted as "cool," whereas if everyone is younger than you your "standard for being cool"

---

[122] Valentine (2003) considers these self-made rituals and the perspective of youths themselves as central for studies that want to understand the transitional process to "adulthood": "In this sense perhaps rather than applying adult measures of the extent to which children have achieved 'adulthood' we need to pay more attention to the different ways young people themselves define and understand this boundary crossing. As such we also need to question to what extent social categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality actually have any meaning for young people as they grow up" (Valentine 2003, 49).

changes. While he remembers the older students calling him cool as he went out at a very young age, he now finds these young kids "ridiculous" and without "self-control." Coolness is related to transgressions of age-based space restrictions. Therefore we can understand expatriate teenagers' nightlife practices as ways of establishing and transforming age-identities; the nightclub provides the space for such transformations. However, we can also see the performance and affirmation of gender and group identities in these practices of "being cool" through nightlife participation.

Becoming Cool in Gendered Ways: Dressing Up and Downing Drinks

While "the girls" manifest their participation in nightlife and hence their coolness through dressing up and dancing, "the boys" often display their involvement with cool nightlife practices through drinking, smoking cigarettes and marijuana. The girls meet before going to the club to communally get ready by putting on make-up and changing clothes. The boys consume alcohol together before going out. Both practices are regularly documented by taking pictures and can be seen as integral parts of the night out. The preference for different locations can also partly be explained by these gendered practices: the girls particularly enjoy going to upscale clubs (where a dress code requires a more extravagant attire) and the boys prefer places like Mural (where the drinks are affordable). These differences in practices often reinforce the gender divide that plays a crucial role in the life of the teenagers I met. After having occasionally witnessed the reluctance of "the boys" to spend the night with "the girls," I ask sixteen-year-old Bjoern – somewhat a mediator between the two groups – to explain.

> Bjoern: If we were out as ["the] boys["], different things happened as if Antonia and Charlie and all the others ["the girls"] were there. Because we can let ourselves go much more. You know, in Germany it's not a problem. If you let yourself go and forty people watch, no harm. But here it is enough if two people watch, who don't know that you are doing that regularly, and it makes its rounds at school. Because we are such a small community.[123]

Bjoern is concerned with the issue of mutual surveillance, which he attributes to "the girls." He feels he and his male peers can "let themselves go," behave against expectations, if no one observes – and maybe later judges – them. While at first sight the teenagers eagerly and flawlessly adapt to the common (adult) practices in the club, at second sight forms of own nightlife routines and sometimes ways to avoid the expected "mature" performance become visible. The students, for instance, like to get

---

[123] German original: Wenn wir als Jungs weg waren, sind halt andere Sachen passiert als wenn Antonia und Charlie und alle anderen dabei waren. Weil wir uns auch viel mehr gehen lassen können. Weißt du, in Deutschland ist das kein Problem. Wenn du dich gehen lässt und das sehen vierzig Leute, ist kein Stress. Aber hier reicht's schon wenn zwei Leute dich sehen, die nicht eingeweiht sind, dass du das öfters machst und dann geht das in der Schule rum. Weil wir so eine kleine Community sind.

180

outside and sit on the stairs in front of the club. The security team at the entrance never makes any objections when you take your beer outside. Here students engage in conversation more easily and get some fresh air. "The boys" often seek the privacy of a nearby back alley to smoke pot. This is perceived as a boys' zone and "the girls" do not follow. I only witnessed marijuana consumption among "the boys," which "the girls" in the beginning of my fieldwork found rather annoying. During my last stay in June 2012, however, "the girls" were less objecting and some of them had meanwhile tried out smoking marijuana on one or two occasions. However, consuming drugs is a very gendered activity. While both "the girls" and "the boys" drink alcohol, none of "the girls" smoke cigarettes. "The boys" usually purchase their drugs by contacting a dealer via text message to then meet up at a nearby McDonalds. Occasionally, "the boys" spontaneously buy marijuana at some of the street barbecue stalls that set up place after dusk in the lively areas of Shanghai.

Teaming Up: Nightlife as Peer Group Activity

"I flee to the teenage group; they are my protecting herd now," I hastily write into my field diary sometime in the morning hours after a night out at Mural. I describe my own reaction to a man approaching me too closely on the dance floor. Feeling uncomfortable, I simply leave the elevated dance floor, pass the crowded bar area and retreat to the teenagers who are sitting in their usual couch section. It is one of these moments that are commonly described in ethnographic writings as eye-opening, moments that are stylized to demonstrate how the ethnographer feels achieving a new level of insight. To me this moment of dropping down on the couch next to the teenage students, reminds me of such accounts, as all of a sudden I experience the peer group as something new, as protective.

Interested in the importance of the group – teenagers' nightlife practices are almost always group activities – I discuss the issue with Bjoern during our interview in June 2012. He shares that if one of his close friends and group members cannot afford going out, the group will usually renegotiate their plans and meet at one of the boys' homes instead. Nightlife activities can thus be seen as finding and displaying alliances and friendships and as crucial for friendship and peer group development. Those who do not partake regularly have a more difficult position in the class at school or find it harder to become part of a group. The peer group also forms a basis for interaction in class during the week.[124] Establishing and belonging to a social circle of friends is a

---

[124] For a complex study of peer groups at American high schools see Milner's monograph *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids* (2004). For the role of the peer group in migration experiences see Wessendorf (2007) who conducted a study on adult second-generation Italians in Switzerland. Wessendorf argues that besides the migration experience and ethnicity forming their social networks, peer group formations during

process for youths all over the world. However, in an environment of constant coming and leaving, the task to find friends to communally experience the stay in Shanghai can be difficult. Bjoern recalls the beginnings of his time in Shanghai almost two years earlier:

> Bjoern: It was difficult to find out which friends suit me best. In the beginning I was hanging out with entirely different people. Because they had taken me in first. And the friends with whom I am befriended now, the ones I've spent the one and a half years with, they weren't even interested in the beginning.[125]

Bjoern's comment shows how the teenage students constantly negotiate their relations, trying to find friends that "suit best." Nightlife here plays a crucial role.

The two peer groups I worked with, in addition to mutual interests and being in the same school classes, are mainly based on gender. These gender divides are on the one hand strengthened by peer group nightlife routines. On the other hand, nightlife offers opportunities for the two groups and their classmates to casually interact. Sexual interests can be articulated towards members of the other group while the safety net of the own peer group remains intact. Several couples emerged within the two peer groups and their extended network over the two years that I have worked with the teenagers.

Flirting (with Cosmopolitanism)

Approaching girls or boys outside the network is seen as positive, but I rarely witnessed such interactions. Paul, student at an American school, explains in an interview:

> Paul: I guess, it's cool to date a chick at your school. But, people around my school, they go for girls who are at different schools. Like, there is a social stigma behind dating girls of your own school.

> Interviewer: Okay, so it is more, erm, cool if you have a girlfriend at a different school?

> Paul: Yeah. Pretty much.

> Interviewer: Pretty much.

> Paul: If you have friends from different schools.

---

adolescence were particularly influential and involved in her informants' identity negotiations: "This is especially prevalent during adolescence, a time when social affiliations and identifications are negotiated, and when a clear sense of belonging to a specific group becomes especially important. Even if reflections about belonging remain important as people grow older, the emphasis on affiliations to particular peer groups and the need to be recognised as a member of the group become weaker" (Wessendorf 2007, 125).

[125] German original: Ja, schwer war es wirklich herauszufinden welche Freunde am Besten zu mir passen. Ich war ja anfangs noch mit ganz anderen Leuten. Weil die mich halt als erstes aufgenommen haben. Und die Freunde mit denen ich jetzt befreundet bin, also die, mit denen ich die eineinhalb Jahre verbracht habe, die hatten am Anfang gar kein Interesse.

Interviewer: How about locals? Because in my age group, like late twenties, early thirties, a lot of guys date Shanghainese girls.

Paul: Older guys do, not younger guys.

Interviewer: Okay, <L>, that's what I thought. […] So, the coolest thing is to have a girlfriend at a different international school.

Paul: Yeah. […] Yeah, like the local girls are kinda too easy.

Paul's comment on Chinese girls startled me for its derogatory content, however, it seems to hint at dynamics in the expatriate community that I have come across during interviews with white expatriate women in Shanghai in 2007 – processes of "othering" Chinese women as exotic, erotic, white-men-hunting. These expatriate women, mostly so called "trailing spouses," during my first fieldwork in Shanghai's expatriate community perceived Chinese women and their possible encounters with expatriate men (their husbands) as threatening their marriage and lifestyle. James Farrer (2011), looking into these dynamics in the nightclubs, describes similar narratives of white foreign women feeling "sexually disadvantaged in the clubbing scene." Farrer (2011) and Farrer and Field (2012) understand Shanghai's contemporary nightscapes, based on a term borrowed from Joan Nagel (2003), as an "ethnosexual contact zone in which individuals find solidarity within their ethnic groups, but also seek contact across ethnic boundaries, with one major form of cross-ethnic contact being sexual interaction" (Farrer and Field 2012, paragraph 12). In the ethnosexual contact zones of Shanghai's nightclubs, spaces of both consumption and production of urban nightlife culture, racialized and gendered competitions maintain the relevance of racial categories to some extent (Farrer 2011; Farrer and Field 2012).[126] However, they also normalize certain forms of sexual sociability (Farrer and Field 2012, paragraph 24).

> Despite the complexities of these racial and gendered topographies of contact, the ethnographic evidence here points to the continued relevance of postcolonial racial categories in a gendered competition between a dominant but fading global whiteness and a rising global Chinese racial identity. This mapping of a fractious global nightscape challenges the idea of a seamless transnational capitalist class, and instead describes racial and gendered sexual competition as an important feature of the leisure culture of transnational mobile elites. (Farrer 2011, 761)

---

[126] For a positive reading of such cross-ethnic sexual fantasies and contacts, see cultural historian Mica Nava's (2002) reading of British *women*'s attraction to foreign men in the early 20th century. Focusing on commercial culture because of its responsiveness to the preferences of women customers, Nava demonstrates British women's interest in foreign culture, men, and cosmopolitanism. "Unlike the exoticizing narratives identified by critics of orientalism – in which 'other' women are cast as objects of sexual desire and the oriental landscape is represented rhetorically as erotic female – in the cosmopolitanism of the commercial and entertainment spheres, women appropriate the narratives of difference for themselves in contrary and even polemical ways" (2002, 85). Nava convincingly argues that these women's "flirtation with difference, with the outside, the elsewhere, the other" (ibid., 94) underlies an identification with the black male's position vis-à-vis the dominant white man. Her emphasis on the production of everyday cosmopolitanism in the first decades of the 20th century rather than racism, "however politically imperative" (ibid., 85), demonstrates the complexity and the relevance of gender-specific experiences and practices of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

Farrer's (2011) argument that nightlife spaces in Shanghai serve as ethnosexual contact zones between locals and expatriates, simultaneously enabling encounters across racial/ethnic divides and staging racialized and gendered competitions, does not seem to be of great relevance for teenage expatriate nightlife experiences and practices. Although flirting and seeking first romantic and sexual experience are part of their nightlife experience, it mostly remains within their social network, or at least within the network of international school students, as student Paul's comment shows. Within these networks romantic relationships across ethnic/racial divides, however, are normal. The lack of flirting with "local" Chinese in the clubs is most likely due to age, as "local" teenagers are usually not to be seen in clubs and bars.

However, the desire to meet people outside the group – and preferably of diverse background – still exists, and might be linked to what Chatterton and Hollands describe as lifestyle performance and distinction:

> Motivations for engaging in nightlife activity have also changed. While immensely varied, changes in the nightclub and pub/bar sectors mean that music, socialising, atmosphere, dancing and lifestyle performance and distinction are now among the main motivations for a night out (Hollands, 1995; Chatterton and Hollands, 2001), alongside more traditional reasons such as letting go, courtship or seeking casual sex. (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, 69)

Cosmopolitan encounters are a beloved theme for nightlife stories to be told in school during the next week – having met "crazy Australians," "cool Canadians," or generally people from elsewhere – repeatedly stress the cosmopolitan possibilities of Shanghai's nightscapes. These encounters, however, in my impression were fewer than the stories make them seem. The teenagers often stay in their group. Nightlife is a peer group experience. What is more, it is also a strong selling point for Shanghai, because it offers answers to the desires for urban and cosmopolitan identities. By conquering the spaces of Shanghai's nightscapes teenagers are not only repeatedly aspiring, negotiating, and confirming their youth and independence, their friendships and gender performances, but also express their "lifestyle performance and distinction" (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, 69) as cosmopolitan and urban. The cosmopolitan aspirations or "flirting with difference" (Nava 2002, 94), go hand in hand with a desire to be involved in the urban imaginary Shanghai, the "flirting with space" (Crouch 2005, 23).

Claiming the City: From Suburban to Urban Identities

Interestingly, in the interview passage that I quoted earlier (page 179), Paul describes the city as influencing his life, saying, "Shanghai is a bit of a distraction."

Firstly, this comment reminds of Sharon Zukin's point, that we not only claim spaces as ours, but that we are "claimed in turn by them" (Zukin 2005, 284). It shows a strong identification with the city and conjures up Ulf Hannerz's ([1996]2001) description of the

184

city as spectacle. Nightlife is part of this "Shanghai spectacle" that the international teenagers actually participate in and not merely gaze at:

> [T]he spectacle of the world city is something people constitute mutually. Everybody is not merely an observer, but a participant observer, and the prominent features of the spectacle may depend on one's perspective. (Hannerz [1996]2001, 133)

Hannerz (2001) already pointed out this connection of world cities, such as Shanghai, with other cities and peripheries and the possible role of privileged migrants – such as the expatriates under study – in the processes of connecting and building up the image of world cities.

> The managerial elites, as people in strong organizations, may stand a better chance than others to extend their habitats from the world cities into their other locations; corporate cultures are exported, to become more or less conspicuous, prestigious and influential in the periphery as well. The expressive specialists, when and if they return to their places of origin, are likely to become noticeable proponents of new styles in cultural commodities. Even if they go back to operating mostly in the respective local cultural market-places of the periphery, it is quite possible that their sojourns in world cities play a part, directly or indirectly, in enhancing their reputations. […] Together, all these, and returned tourists as well, may turn out to be conduits for the continued cultural flow from the world city, with their attention habitually turned its way, and with some investment perhaps at least emotionally in maintaining open channels. (Hannerz [1996]2001, 138–139)

Hannerz's description points to the fact that the young expatriate students also contribute to Shanghai's global nightscapes and global image through their involvement in the nightlife scene and its representation to others. Based on Field's (2008) and his own findings (Farrer 2002), Farrer for example argues that

> Expatriates – especially European and American and overseas Chinese – have long been visible consumer market leaders in Shanghai, and even important 'attractions' in Shanghai's nightlife scenes. (Farrer 2011, 749)

The youths' practices can strengthen or challenge the ideas/norms associated with a certain nightlife space and the location's distinctiveness as well as the youths' own positions.

Secondly, I like to point out that in his statement Paul uses Shanghai as a synonym for nightlife practices. Here we have to remember that spending the week on compounds and school territory, the clubs in the former French concession, Jing'an district and sometimes the Bund are get-outs and provide the basis for their regular involvement with the city. Northcote (2006) concisely points out how cities and nightlife are inextricably linked. On the one hand "the nightclub itself amplifies the elements of urbanity" – for instance "movement, sound and visual excitement" – and represents the mythical excitement of the city (Northcote 2006, 7). On the other hand,

> club-goers themselves see nightclubs as inextricably part of the urban scape. Nightclubs are, along with pubs, cafes, restaurants and theatres, a prominent

component of city night-life, and club-goers themselves do not tend to treat nightclubs as significations of an urban setting as much as intrinsic elements of that setting. Hence, nightclubs have become something of what Baudrillard (1983) refers to as a 'simulacrum' – originally the signifier, but now the signified. Inside the nightclub, the carefree hedonistic excitement of youth and popular culture merges indistinguishably with the freedom and excitement of life in the big city. (Northcote 2006, 7–8)

Likewise, students regularly reduce their relationship to Shanghai to nightlife activities. Nightlife therefore plays a key role for expat youth in identifying with Shanghai as their city in the migration process.

Thirdly, Paul's statement "Shanghai is a bit of a distraction" – through stressing Shanghai's luring attractiveness – also indirectly contrasts Shanghai to other places that might not have the same tempting potential. Attending to this contrast in more detail, German school student Andrea makes a clear distinction between "Dorfkneipen" [country pubs] she knows from Germany and the restaurants she enjoys frequenting in Shanghai.

> Andrea: But then again it's so great that you can just drive up to the Bund, if you want. […] And then you can go out to eat really lovely. In Germany you have to, I don't know, there are these kinds of country pubs somewhere. It's not that exclusive. Shanghai is exclusive. That's nice.[127]

This juxtaposition of "exclusive" urban nightlife in Shanghai to "Dorfkneipen" [country pubs] is often accompanied by comments on age-based restrictions to nightlife spaces in Germany. All youths going to bars, concerts, or clubs are eager to point out that their peers abroad are not allowed to enjoy these spaces as freely. The youths in this context, however, admit that their friends abroad organize house parties instead.

> Antonia: But there are [ID] checks, so there are more house parties. Also because it is expensive. And so cheap in China. That's why we go out partying every weekend.[128]

French school student Arnaud, also comments on the difference between house parties and club visits, contemplating about the different behaviors that come along with the social aesthetics of these spaces:

> Arnaud: On weekends I usually go out to bars, and erm, maybe sometimes to clubs with friends. And I think in Shanghai it's, it's special, cause in Europe its much more difficult to <x> in a bar or a in a nightclub. You got home parties and I think it gets much more, like, fucked-up, I think. [I: <L>.] Because you try to stay at least a bit sober when you

---

[127] German original: Aber dann ist es eben wieder so toll, dass man eben an den Bund fahren kann wenn man will. […] Und dann kann man schön Essen gehen. In Deutschland muss man dann, ich weiß nicht, da gibt es dann so Dorfkneipen irgendwo. So exklusiv und so ist es nicht. Shanghai ist exklusiv. Das ist schön.

[128] German original: Also da gibt es Kontrollen, da gibt es dann mehr Hausparties. Auch weil es so teuer ist. Und in China so billig. Deswegen gehen wir jedes Wochenende feiern.

are in a public place. To not to mess up everyone. [I: Okay]. And I think it's different in a house party.

This comparison to peers "back home" and their house parties[129], evoking ideas of domesticity, serves to highlight their nightlife experiences in Shanghai as particularly urban and exciting. Arnaud also points out that nightclubs as public places require cultivated behavior – an idea that underlines my descriptions of the routine practices of club visits as practicing "mature" behavior. Nightlife experience hence proves to be a major aspect the expatriate youths like about Shanghai and through which they identify with the city.

After a few hours at Mural, usually when the open bar closes at two a.m., my young informants enjoy another cab ride home or to the next location. Further clubs such as Dada (a university student location), Shelter (Shanghai's "underground" venue in an old bomb shelter), Mint (a rather exclusive and expensive club at the top floor of a high rise building that sticks to guest lists and strict dress codes), Park 97 (upscale location in the heart of the French concession), Bar Rouge (upscale venue at the bund) or M2 (medium price range and a higher percentage of Chinese locals) are on the agenda. The night out usually ends with a stop at McDonalds on the way home to the outskirts of Shanghai, back to the compounds of the expatriate enclave.

11.4. Staging Youth Culture: Concluding Thoughts on Nightlife Practices

While the social aesthetics of Shanghai's internationalized nightclubs prescribe certain outfits, practices and financial means, the clubs do not enforce any minimum age. Expatriate teenagers thus usually negotiate their access to these spaces, forbidden in most of their "home" countries, with their parents only. The students successively acquire certain routine practices through regular club visits with their friends. While Farrer and Field (Farrer 2011; Farrer and Field 2012) have convincingly argued that these nightlife spaces in Shanghai serve as ethnosexual contact zones between locals and expatriates, the expatriate adolescents use Shanghai's bars and clubs rather to manifest age, gender, cosmopolitan, and urban identities, as well as to assure their friendships. Furthermore, nights out provide the counterpart to structured school life

---

[129] For insights into teenagers' home parties, see Demant and Østergaard's (2007) article "Partying as Everyday Life: Investigations of Teenagers' Leisure Life" that explores the meanings behind such practices among Danish youths. Conceptualizing partying and alcohol consumption as a rite de passage on the one hand, but situating these events in everyday life on the other, their analysis suggests that at such home parties the collective consumption of alcohol is a means to transform the parents' living room into an appropriate space for partying. Using both qualitative and quantitative material the authors demonstrate that drinking alcohol collectively does not only mean to experiment with intoxication, but "symbolises commitment to both the party and to the specific group of friends" (ibid., 517). Like nightlife activities for the teenage subjects of my study in Shanghai, partying at home for Danish youths, then, is also a way to reaffirm friendships. Therefore, Demant and Østergaard argue, it is an integral part of adolescents' everyday life. It helps to extend the network of friends as well as to continuously reassure existing mutual attachment.

and its pressure. As Northcote (2006) has suggested, the youths' nightlife practices can be seen as small self-made rite of passages, nightlife offering space for transformations through repeated practices in shared space with adults. These transformations in nightlife spaces, however, are manifold and are not only concerned with gaining adult or mature status. The communal process of claiming youth and independence through partying is also accompanied by processes of claiming urbanity – through choosing downtown nightlife locations – and cosmopolitanism – through choosing to share a space with international clubbers. Moreover, gender performances are brought to the fore and first romantic and sexual encounters take place. Here the network of the peer group offers safety to fall back on. Simultaneously, these friendships are strengthened through repeated collective experiences. Like a stage offers room for performances but also for (temporary) transformations, Shanghai's clubs provide a space for teenagers' practices of exploring new narratives of the self. The meanings attributed to nightlife practices are central to their involvement with the city and as a mechanism of dealing with the move to Shanghai by making weekends special and by claiming new spaces collectively without their families. Shanghai's nightscapes therefore stage expatriate youth culture and its emplacement in the city based on the participants' own agency. It is mainly nightlife that helps teenagers to transform their enclaved experiences in the schools and compounds to desired young urban identities.

12. The Shop: Hanging Out

While the previous chapter has provided one example of expatriate youths' agency in creating their own routines and social spaces embedded in Shanghai's global nightlife culture, this chapter examines another space and its related practices: the shop.
Students above grade ten at the German and French school campus are allowed to leave the school premises during the school day. The older students often make use of this privilege during breaks and free periods and often have lunch outside. Consequently, it is not surprising to find a French café/bakery and a German bakery nearby, providing familiar tastes to the staff, students, and their families. Students, however, are particularly attracted to a small street in campus vicinity, which hosts Chinese eateries and small shops selling cheap dishes, snacks, and drinks.

12.1. "The shop is our place to chill": The Shop as the Space for a Break
Here, in this small alley, a five-minute walk off the school campus, students like to get cheap drinks, purchase a lunch of fried rice or noodles, or simply hang out. The street
188

differs from the surrounding gated communities and the café and bakeries that otherwise are located in the school vicinity. The small alley is separated by a wall from the main street that runs parallel to it. When entering the lane, a different atmosphere all of a sudden welcomes the students. Shabbier houses, make-shift stalls, new and broken pool tables, laundry hanging out to dry, women cleaning vegetables, and smells of fried food draw one in into a world entirely different from the school campus one just left behind. The students simply refer to this lane and its entire offerings and atmosphere as "the shop."

Figure 28: The Shop: Students and Locals in the Small Alley, June 2012. Photo by M. Sander

The shop has undoubtedly become part of their everyday life. Seventeen-year-old student Karina, for instance, explains her lunch break routine in the last school year:

Karina: The shop close to the school is our place to chill. Well, at least it used to be. We went, I went there five times a week during lunch break. I bought something to eat, for example *gongbao* or something else. It is incredibly tasty and pretty cheap. But a huge portion. They really cook well. Although, if you closely look at the environment, pretty shabby, then you think, concerning hygiene, you rather don't want to eat there. But it is really good. At the shop most students buy something to drink, bread rolls, sweets, chewing gum. It's our provider.

The shop provides a space to "chill" during lunch break, a space to recharge for further lessons and activities. The English word "chilling," or here adapted to German grammar as "chillen," is a term to refer to specific practices of "hanging out" and seems to have spread among various youths. Vanderstede (2011, 175), for instance, explains the spatial practice of "chilling" among Belgian youth:

It refers to quite diverse activities and atmospheres. Most often it stands for meeting up with friends in a very 'relaxed' ambience (sitting, hanging and often lying on the ground). On the other hand the same word was used to refer to more active behaviour, like wandering, roaming or cycling around in the city, physical activity games (football, teasing each other, etc.), or even playing party games. Essential for 'chilling' is that it is an activity you do with friends and not with parents.

Likewise, "chilling" is a common term for German expatriate youth to describe their communal leisure practices – mostly related to places such as their friends' homes or the shop.

The importance of spaces like the shop for teenagers has also been proven in other environments. Vanderstede (2011) in his descriptions of spatial practices of teenagers in the Belgium city of Mechelen, for instance, also points out the relevance of such spaces for students' relations to the school environment.

> The presence of quality public space (traffic calming measures, comfortable spaces for hanging around and sitting) and the availability of services (food shops, snack bars, and public transport) around secondary schools are highly important for teenagers. Where such public spaces were available near the school, teenagers stayed much longer after school. School environments lacking such public domain or surrounded by traffic spaces, were emptied within 10 minutes after the courses. (Vanderstede 2011, 180)

The shop as a chosen hangout place is thus first of all connected to the proximity of the school and the space it provides for recreation and meeting friends during and immediately after school. At the same time being at the shop confirms the expatriate teenagers' age identities as older students, which they can express through making use of their privilege of being allowed to leave the campus during school time. The shop is therefore also an age-specific experience and unlike the school cafeteria and the schoolyard does not need to be shared with younger children.

12.2. "The shop is not expat": The Shop as an In-between Space

Besides being frequented by expatriate teenagers, the small street also has regular local Chinese customers who usually eat at one of the restaurants.

Figure 29: The Shop: Inside the Small Restaurant, June 2011. Photo by M. Sander

The shop-owners themselves, who also live in the buildings, also use the space of the little street for their daily chores and leisure. Students thus also describe the shop as local, Chinese, or in Antonia's wording "not expat"[130].

    Antonia: These shops, the shop is not expat. These shops exist everywhere.[131]

While many students regularly eat out at foreign restaurants with their families or friends (see chapter seven), the food in the small alley is for many expatriate youths the only local food consumed except for dishes prepared at home by the *ayi* (see chapter 8.2. on food). Students point out that the shop is obviously "more China" than their other everyday spaces such as the compounds or the schools (see chapter eight and nine). Here, some of them have their only regular contact with locals, as sixteen-year-old Bjoern explains.

    Bjoern: Sure, you also meet a lot of Chinese. You get to know, or I know all the shop-owners in person. They are all very open.

While it is true that the little street is frequented by Chinese locals, the fact that the shopkeepers have responded to the desires of the foreign students is also visible at first sight: their inventory, for instance, includes foreign candies such as imported Haribo gummy-bears, which I have not discovered in any other small Chinese-run shop in Shanghai.

Figure 30: The Shop: Inside the Small Shop, January 2011. Photo by M. Sander

---

[130] On a side note, it is interesting to see how Antonia says "not expat," making "expat" the unmarked unit of reference.

[131] German original: Die Shops, dieser Shop ist ja nicht Expat oder so. Diese Shops gibt es ja überall.

Furthermore, the shop-owners have set up pool tables that now cover the street and put a small stereo outside where students can plug in their mp3 players to play their favorite tunes. The European students themselves have actively shaped the spaces by putting graffiti on the walls.

Figure 31: The Shop: Pool Tables, Graffiti and Laundry, January 2011. Photo by M. Sander

However, I want to point out that the local shopkeepers still use the spaces according to their own needs. They often play pool themselves, use these tables to prepare food or display wares for the local community, or hang their laundry to air-dry outside (see detail of photo above).

Figure 32: The Shop: Use of Pool Table to Display Wares. Photo by M. Sander

This little street, called the shop, gives room for experiencing the locale. It is according to the students also a place that is more in touch with Chinese than any of the other places they occupy: They share the pool tables; they eat at the same restaurant. While the relations between shop-owners and students clearly underlie that of customer and service provider, the students and shop-owner and their families also share a common leisure space, playing pool, sitting outside, eating, smoking, chatting and relaxing. The shop is no longer neither "typically local" nor, as Antonia pointed out in the interview, is it a well-groomed "expat" space, it sits in-between. It thus also requires site-specific knowledge, which I myself as a researcher had to acquire as successively as the new students. This included learning the menu of the little restaurant to order their dishes in Chinese, knowing when and where to sit, or how much items cost in the small shop.

12.3. "The Shop is somewhat like a park": The Shop as Open Space

Sharon Zukin's (2005, 284) article "Whose culture? Whose city?" shows how "culture is intertwined with capital and identity in the city's production systems." Investigating the role of investors, urban planners, but also of minorities, Zukin points out that "people with economic and political power have the greatest opportunity to shape public culture by controlling the building of the city's public spaces in stone and concrete" (ibid). However, she finds that "public space is inherently democratic. The question of who can occupy public space, and so define an image of the city, is open-ended" (ibid).

> [Public Culture] is produced by the many social encounters that make up daily life in the streets, shops, and parks – the spaces in which we experience public life in cities. The right to be in these spaces, to use them in certain ways, to invest them with a sense of our selves and our communities – to claim them as ours and to be claimed in turn by them – make up a constantly changing public culture. (Zukin 2005, 284)

Zukin's understanding of public culture in the city as also "socially constructed on the micro-level" (ibid.) points out that even small public spaces like the shop can be seen as part of Shanghai's larger public culture.

For the Chinese context, however, German geographer Dieter Hassenpflug (2009) suggests using the term "open space" ("offener Raum") instead of the notion "public space" to describe such spaces as the little street of the shop. He finds the notion of "public space" unfitting to the situation in Chinese urban politics, as it relates to western norms of democracy, participation and civil society (ibid., 32). He puts forward that the dualism of "open" and "closed space" is better suited to understand the urban environment in China (ibid.). The "open space" is usually undefined space, Hassenpflug suggests (ibid., 31), and is opposed to the "closed," meaningful space. The open space is treated with little respect (ibid., 33) unless it is claimed through rather "private" practices and rendered meaningful (ibid., 31). Hassenpflug's examples

of how "open space" is used and claimed are immediately familiar to every Shanghai visitor: the laundry line on the sidewalk, people going for a stroll in their pajamas, or people playing *go* – a Chinese chess game. All these practices probably fall into the realm of the "private space" in Western cities. It is in the understanding of such "open space" that the Chinese shop-owners use the little alley of the shop: cleaning vegetables, drying laundry, or sitting outside with friends, neighbors, and family.

The dualism of "closed" and '"open space" is visible in the expatriate teenagers' spatial practices as well. Bjoern's mental map, for instance, highlights students' movements from one "closed space" to the next.
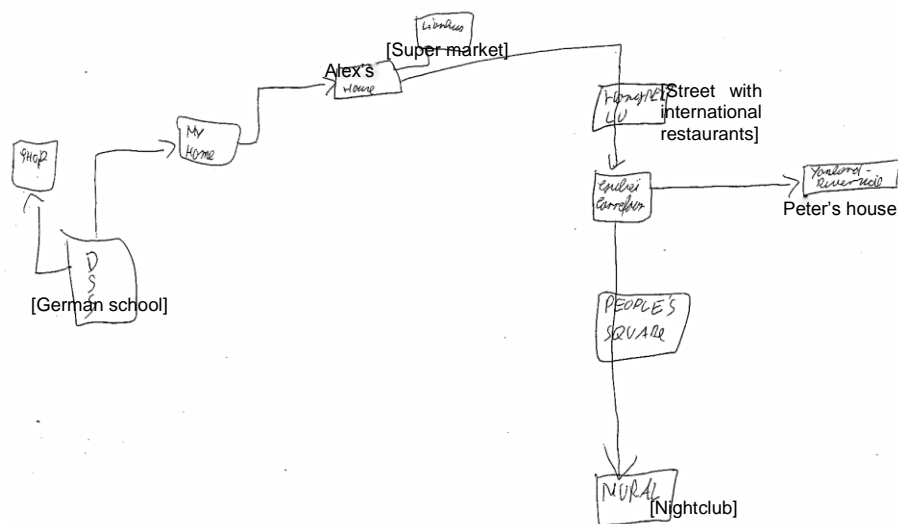
Figure 33: Mental Map of Shanghai. Drawing by 16-year-old Boy Bjoern

I have anonymized the name of friends and annotated places that might be unclear. The locations displayed on this map are almost all closed and demand either financial means [nightclub, restaurant] or a specific purpose [housing areas, school] to enter. The only two "open spaces" the student placed on the map of "his Shanghai" are the People's Square and the shop. Shanghai's central People's Square, however, is less a space to stay in than a place of transit due to its many intersecting metro lines. Bjoern's use of arrows in his drawing, also suggests the transitory role of the square as the arrow simply crosses through it, rather than pointing at the unit. If we contextualize the experience of the shop in these larger spatial everyday experiences, the shop – despite its own rules or access regulations by the school – appears as one of the few "open spaces" the teenagers use.

I argue that it is this openness, the fact that this liminal space provides a flexible freedom for simply hanging out, which attracts students most. Bjoern explains the usage of the shop by comparing it to public spaces in Germany. In his comparison,

194

however, he chooses public spaces that – similar to Hassenpflug depiction of "open space" in Chinese cities – can be claimed by hanging out communally, listening to music or drinking beer:

> Bjoern: For me the shop is somewhat like a park; or what a bus stop or a playground is for youths in Germany. That is what the shop practically is. There are no problems with disturbance or breach of the peace. […] You come here, bring your stuff along. Sit down on the pool tables and drink. You listen to music. Everything is allowed. It's like a public place in my opinion, where teenagers can just go.
>
> Interviewer: So you don't have to feel restricted here?
>
> Bjoern: In any case, there are no guards here. If we all meet for example at my compound, the guards pass by every two hours or so to see if we are destroying things or something like that. And here, I'd say, here you are simply free. [132]

The shop, as Bjoern's contrast to the guarded housing compounds suggests, is an "open space" that for him comes with freedom and escape from strict rules or even surveillance. The following three images that I took over the course of fieldwork depict the various seating areas in the little street and provide insight into the students' ways of 'hanging out' and using the shop as an "open space."

Figure 34: The Shop: Hanging out in the Alley, September 2011. Photo by M. Sander

---

[132] German original: Für mich ist der Shop eine Art Park oder Bushaltestelle oder Spielplatz halt in Deutschland für die Jugendlichen, das ist bei mir quasi der Shop. Wo es halt nicht die Probleme mit Ruhestörung oder so was gibt. [...] Hier gehst du halt auch hin, nimmst dein Zeug mit. Hockt man sich halt auf die Billardtische und trinkt da. Und hört halt auch Musik, weil darf man hier ja alles. Das ist eigentlich einfach wie ein öffentlicher Platz meiner Meinung nach, wo man als Jugendlicher auch hingehen kann. [I: Ohne das man sich jetzt eingeschränkt fühlen muss?] Das ist vor allem, hier gibt es auch keine Guards oder so was. Wenn wir jetzt zum Beispiel alle bei mir im Compound sind, kommen die Guards schon alle zwei Stunden mal vorbei und gucken ob wir was kaputt machen oder so. Und hier ist man einfach, sag ich mal, frei.

Figure 35: The Shop: Places to Sit in the Alley, September 2011/June 2012. Photos by M. Sander

The students describe the shop as dirty, run-down, but chilled. It gives room for graffiti, music, and pool games. It is a place more organically grown than the well-designed schools, compounds, and nightclubs. Students do not do homework here or study, but socialize in a way that is less restricted than interaction at school or in nightclubs. It is the only space they visit during the week that is outside the school and the expat compound. The street might be understood as a space of freedom, where the teenagers can socialize, smoke, get a break from school and parents. As sixteen-year-old Bjoern further adds: "You're not at home, but you' re undisturbed."[133]

12.4.   Concluding Thoughts on The Shop

The shop is an "open space" (Hassenpflug 2009), which the Chinese residents of the small street and the expatriate students of the German and French school campus close by communally use and shape. The German students see this alley as an area for having a break from school and for "hanging out." The shop offers a feeling of freedom and openness in contrast to the rather sealed-off spaces they spend most of their time at: gated communities and school grounds.

If and when students are allowed to be at the shop, however, is still negotiated with school authorities. At the same time, through these negotiations, the shop confirms their age identities as older students who state they privilege of leaving the campus during school time. The shop is a place for teenagers, not elementary school students.

The German teenagers additionally describe the shop as one of few spaces that they share with local Chinese, or where they sometimes interact. In this way the shop is, in the students' words, "not expat." The owners of the small eateries and little stores, viewing the little street as "open space," tolerate students' behaviors of cycling, listening to music or even spraying graffiti. The youths' practices at the shop have developed in compromise with the economic interests of the shop-owners, who see in the teenage behaviors opportunities to enhance business and therefore provide pool

---

[133] German original: Man ist nicht zu Hause, aber man ist halt ungestört.

196

tables, couches, the desired snacks or even a stereo for the youths to play their own music. The students' practices are thus not only negotiated with the school close by, but also with the shop-owners, as the teenagers – despite all friendly conversations – also remain customers.

The concluding chapter of this part on the emplacement processes of expatriate youths in Shanghai further examines the students' relations to Shanghai's "local" citizens.

13.   "Guests stay guests": The Lack of "Local" Friends

Exploring, experiencing, and identifying with Shanghai is crucial for expatriate teenagers to manage the meaning of their stay and to gain agency as the previous chapters have demonstrated. At the same time Shanghai – despite being an international metropolis – has been described by other scholars as rather excluding. To be regarded as "Shanghainese," for instance, is an almost impossible status even for migrants from other parts of China, as Sonja Schoon's (2007) work on the relations between *waidiren*, citizens from outside of Shanghai, and *shanghairen*, Shanghainese, has shown. Donald and Gammack (2007), in reference to work by Lu Hanchao (1999), have commented on this divide and the inherent exclusion of Chinese and foreign migrants from claiming urban citizenship:

> The very criteria for being identified as Shanghainese are vague, in view of the fact that neither by birth or language, yet definite identifications as Shanghainese (or not) can be made […] The system of waiguo and waidiren (i.e. non-Chinese foreigners and Chinese from outside the city more generally) as official excluding categories is symptomatic of the sense of self that operates according to principles of exclusion rather than according a positive welcome to the new city strangers. In this Shanghai differs markedly from, say, London, where newcomers declare themselves Londoners within a very few years of taking up residence. (Donald and Gammack 2007, 153–154)

Donald and Gammack suggest a general atmosphere of Shanghai, a "sense of self" that "operates according to principles of exclusion." In the chapters of the previous part, "Arriving," I have shown that many of the places teenage expatriates routinely frequent, like the schools and housing areas, are secluded and not even considered as part of the city by the students themselves (see chapter six on managing Shanghai by dividing it into "the city" and the familiar spaces). Students and their families draw strong boundaries around their expatriate circles and their contacts to local Chinese are very limited. Consequently, Shanghai's citizens have remained rather absent in my accounts tracing the youths' everyday spatial practices. Is this absence only due to the boundary drawings of expatriates as means of distinction and finding comfort and

community? What role do the "principles of exclusion" Donald and Gammack attribute to Shanghai play in the lack of interaction between expatriate and Chinese youths?

To overcome a claustrophobic view on diasporas, Avtar Brah (1996) proposes the concept of "diaspora space" to examine "the economic, political and cultural modalities of historically specific forms of migrancy" and "the relationality of these migrancies across fields of social relations, subjectivity and identity" (1996, 16):

> Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. (Brah 1996, 208–209)

Brah's term "diaspora space" aims to conceptualize the entanglement of the experiences of "migrants" and "locals." Applying her analytical concept to my work means to focus on the relations of the two heterogeneous groups, expatriates and "those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah 1996, 209). This chapter investigates the "diaspora space" by asking the expatriate teenagers about their relations to China and Chinese citizens to further understand the boundaries I have observed and described throughout the ethnography. How do the students perceive their (lack of) interaction with Chinese citizens? How do the expatriate students see themselves in the context of Shanghai and China?

Since "diaspora space" as an abstract theoretical concept was ill-suited for the interview discussions, I simply asked students if they feel accepted in China and the teenagers self-reflectively commented on their relationship to Chinese society. Thereupon, I brought the term "integration" into the discussion. It became obvious that the term "integration" for many of the students had never been put in relation to their own situations, but remained reserved for migrants in Europe or elsewhere. Based on these new reflections upon integration and by tracing their view on the role of the expatriate community and the expatriate status, the chapter investigates the young people's positioning in China (13.1). It then draws attention to a topic that emerged during interviews – the teenagers' experiences of "not fitting in," of being a visible foreigner in the city (13.2). Subsequently, to shed further light on the "diaspora space," I examine the barriers to integration that students perceive, the difficulties and obstacles of connecting with Chinese youths (13.3). Finally, the chapter explores students' subjective views of Chinese authorities' attitudes towards foreigners (13.4) and shows how integration and feelings of being accepted in China, according to the students' experiences, can only be understood as being welcome as "a guest" (13.5).

13.1. Autonomous and Special? The Demarcation of the Expatriate Community

Chapter nine of this ethnography identified the international schools as hubs in Shanghai's expatriate networks and explored practices and values that foster the sense of an expatriate community. These "inner" definitions are tied to distinctions towards China that become visible when discussing the idea of "integration" with expatriate students. During an interview in September 2011, seventeen-year-old Giovanni whom I know from the German school explains:

> Giovanni: In a sense you are integrated. But you actually don't need the others. You can move around quite independently. And that is why you actually only need the taxi drivers.[134]

Giovanni's description of independence from local Chinese, or "the others" in his wording, is firstly based on a clear divide between "us" and "them." Secondly, it derives from the idea of relationships across this divide that center merely around service or business, not around casual encounters or friendships as his usage of "need" suggests. Giovanni's statement also startles me, as he seems to show no curiosity in regards to Shanghai's citizens. When during our interview I inquire further about processes of integrations, he comments:

> Giovanni: Erm. Integrate? You try to adapt, a little. But when you are at home, in your home or apartment, you are actually totally different again. […] And when you are out with other foreigners, somewhere, like on Hongmeilu, then you don't adapt to China either.[135]

While Giovanni acknowledges a little bit of "adapting," he sees most of the daily routine – whether at home or eating out with friends – as "totally different." Like Giovanni, American school student Paul describes the expatriates in Shanghai as forming a circle of their own.

> Paul: Well, yeah, everyone here kinda sits in their own group. Like, in Jinqiao[136], where my school is at, it's a, like, really international community. There are very few Chinese people that live around there. So everyone just stays in that bubble. They don't have to experience China if they don't want to. They just kinda stay in that group.

Both Paul's description of the "bubble" and Giovanni's comments on not needing "the others" illustrate how from their experience the expatriate community functions almost independent of Chinese society. This image of an autonomous community is based on

---

[134] German original: Eigentlich ist man schon integriert. Aber du brauchst die andren eigentlich gar nicht. Man kann sich hier eigentlich ganz selbständig bewegen. Und deswegen braucht man eigentlich nur die Taxifahrer hier.

[135] German original: Eh. Einfügen? Man versucht sich halt anzupassen, ein bisschen. An die andren Sitten hier. Aber. Ja, wenn du dann zu Hause, in dem Haus oder der Wohnung bist, ist man eigentlich wieder ganz anders. […] Und wenn man halt mit auch Ausländern unterwegs ist irgendwo, wie in der Hongmeilu, dann passt man sich auch nicht groß an. An China.

[136] Jinqiao is part of the newly developed Pudong area in the east of Shanghai. It hosts particularly many expatriate housing estates, supermarkets and restaurants catering imported food as well as campuses of several international schools.

the unifying and comforting experience for its members, but is simultaneously linked to strong boundaries towards Shanghai's citizens.

When Giovanni and I are further discussing his occasional interaction with local Chinese, I ask him to assess the Chinese perceptions of foreigners. He answers by describing a situation he has just experienced on his way to the interview:

> Giovanni: I asked for directions, out there. But they don't even notice you when you speak English. They simply continue walking. And otherwise, some have a lot of respect, because you are a foreigner.[137]

Giovanni's use of "out there" to describe the interaction with Shanghai's citizens while sitting in a restaurant highly frequented by expatriates, again illustrates the strong local-expat divide. Furthermore, Giovanni addresses his experiences of being treated with respect due to being a (visible because white) foreigner. This being treated differently and the inherent demarcation of the expatriate community also come up in the discussion with his classmate Andrea:

> Andrea: We actually kind of live in our foreigner bubble. Yes, we are here. They don't treat us impolitely. I wouldn't say that. I also like it here. But it is not that I have many Chinese contacts. Nor do my parents have many Chinese contacts. Erm. I think we always have this special status. I always find that the foreigner in China has a very different status. [...] I wouldn't say that the Chinese law applies in the same way for us.[138]

Andrea, like Paul, uses the metaphor of the "bubble" to describe the expatriate experience in Shanghai. Furthermore, she stresses that foreigners in China have, in her wording, "this special" and "very different status." Andrea, familiar with expat postings elsewhere due to her networks of friends and family, considers this foreigner status not only as "special" in comparison to local Chinese, but also to expatriates elsewhere:

> Andrea: I don't know, but I find the expats here are different from expats in Singapore, or in Spain or somewhere. The foreigners, the German expats. Because here it is still, here it is still very different. Here, you still have a driver, here you also don't have to learn the language. I don't know, but if you as a German go to Mexico, and you work there, you have to learn Spanish. I think, in my opinion. And when I go to Singapore, then it is not like that either. […] If you are lucky, you get

---

[137] German original: Da hab ich nach dem Weg gefragt, da draußen. Aber die beachten einen eigentlich gar nicht wenn man auf Englisch redet. Da gehen sie einfach weiter. Und. Sonst. Manche haben halt so Respekt, weil du Ausländer bist.

[138] German Original: Eigentlich wohnen wir so in unserer Ausländerblase und. Ja, wir sind hier. Sie behandeln uns jetzt nicht unhöflich. Ich würd jetzt nicht sagen. Ich find es auch schön hier. Aber es ist jetzt nicht so, dass ich jetzt hier viele chinesische Kontakte hab. Oder das meine Eltern viele chinesische Kontakte haben. Ehm. Ich glaube wir haben immer diesen Sonderstatus. Ich find immer, der, der, Ausländer in China, besonders in China, hat der Ausländer einen ganz anderen Status. [...] Also, ich würde nicht sagen, dass das chinesische Rechtssystem jetzt so unbedingt auch für uns so gilt.

a car, I think. That's what I heard, from friends, but not everyone gets one. It is much more expensive.[139]

In Andrea's view the status of expatriates in Shanghai is different to that of expatriates elsewhere due to the financial benefits and clear difference to the local income. Andrea argues that this status has influences on the relationship between foreigners and local Chinese: expats do not even have to learn Chinese.

Her friend, sixteen-year-old Antonia, a Shanghai veteran and child of a German-Chinese marriage, admits she enjoys the lifestyle she has, but strongly voices her anger about this perception of a "special status":

> Antonia: And many are sometimes a little disrespectful towards China. […] Generally, how we live here. I don't know. I think it is so… Yes, I think arrogant is a good word. [I: Hmm.] As if we were something better or something. And then we live our lives where we just have fun and go out.[140]

She further expands her view during the same interview:

> Antonia: And therefore we are always welcome. We come into the city. We are the foreigners, we feel better than all the others. We spend loads of money, are completely disrespectful towards money, because it is actually so little, for us. And erm, we just have fun.[141]

Although I do not present my own critical stance on certain aspects of expatriate ways of living, Antonia's self-critique might be triggered by my presence and the questions I raise about integration. However, reflecting on her own lifestyle and the implications of status leading to expatriates "feeling better than all the others," shows how she feels uncomfortable with the relationship between foreigners and locals. She also identifies the different financial means as a dividing experience and points out that expatriates might be welcome mainly due to their high spending power. Although she criticizes expatriates' attitudes towards China as well as what other students present as a "special status," she can also relate to the experience of such a status. She argues that from her experience Chinese always treat her as a foreigner in the sense of something special and that this therefore also hinders friendships:

---

[139] German original: Ich weiß nicht, aber ich finde die Expats hier sind auch was anderes als zum Beispiel die Expats in Singapur, oder in Spanien oder so. Die Ausländer, also die deutschen Expats. Weil hier ist das noch so, hier ist das noch ganz anders. Hier hat man noch einen Fahrer, hier muss man auch nicht unbedingt die Sprache lernen. Ich weiß nicht, aber wenn du jetzt als Deutscher nach Mexiko gehst, und dort arbeitest. musst du spanisch lernen. Glaube ich, meiner Meinung nach. Und wenn ich nach Singapur gehe, dann ist das auch nicht so. […] Wenn man Glück hat, dann kriegt man ein Auto, glaub ich. Also so hab ich das mitbekommen, von Freunden, aber nicht jeder hat eins. Das ist viel teurer.

[140] German original: Und Viele sind auch manchmal, also, ein bisschen respektlos gegenüber China. […] Allgemein wie wir leben. Ich weiß nicht. Ich finde es so. Ja, ich glaube arrogant ist schon ein gutes Wort. So. [I: Hmm.] Als wären wir irgendwas Besseres oder so. Und dann leben wir unser Leben wo wir einfach nur Spaß haben und ausgehen.

[141] German original: Und dadurch sind wir auch immer so freundlich willkommen. Wir kommen halt in die Stadt. Wir sind die Ausländer, wir fühlen uns besser als alle anderen. Wir geben einen Haufen Geld aus, total respektlos gegenüber Geld. Weil es so wenig ist eigentlich, für uns. Und ehm. Haben einfach nur Spaß.

> Antonia: You are always regarded as a foreigner. Well. Not in a negative sense, a bit in a positive one, as something special. But, then again you are also not integrated.[142]

Antonia argues that the positive discrimination she experiences impedes integration. This argument can be applied to the experiences by her fellow students as well. Giovanni, who interned as a teacher at a Chinese sailing school, recalls how he felt that his presence was welcome merely due to the status-gain the sailing club hoped to achieve by displaying a (white) foreigner:

> Giovanni: But the reason for us [he and his brother] being there, was actually not to teach them, but rather, that they [the customers] see that there are also foreigners. That was my feeling.[143]

This experience of being presented as a foreigner to make a Chinese enterprise look more international goes hand in hand with the teenagers' perceptions of being treated with respect due to one's physical appearance. Giovanni, however, would have liked to pursue a more meaningful role at the sailing school.

In the following narrative Charlie, born in Germany to Chinese parents, contrasts the different forms of reactions towards foreigners in Germany and in Shanghai that she and her family experience.

> Charlie: They [Expatriates] often see China as a country where they go for a few years and then leave again. And I think people often don't really respect the country. They feel they can get away with things they would never do in Germany. Because they think they have a special status because they are foreigners. It is so different here. In Germany, if you are a foreigner, it is not necessarily regarded as positive. And here it is like that. They get excited about foreigners, 'oh foreigners' and so on, and are happy about it. And sometimes even get special treatment or something. My dad caused an accident once, a small one. And then he had to show his passport at the police station. And then: 'Oh my God, he is German.' And so on. […] And in Germany you will hear 'ching chang chong' or something like that.[144]

---

[142] German original: Man wird für immer angesehen als Ausländer. Also. Und nicht im negativen Sinne, sondern im positiven. So als was Besonderes. Aber, dann ist man ja auch nicht wirklich integriert.

[143] Aber der Grund warum wir da waren, war eigentlich nicht, dass wir das denen beigebracht hätten. Sondern, dass die sehen, dass da auch Ausländer sind. Hab ich so das Gefühl gehabt.

[144] German original: Oft sehen die China auch so als Land, da bin ich jetzt ein paar Jahre und dann geh ich wieder weg. Und ich finde auch oft respektieren die Leute das Land nicht so richtig. Die erlauben sich dann so Sachen die sie in Deutschland nie machen würden. Weil sie denken sie haben hier einen besonderen Status weil sie Ausländer sind. Das ist auch hier total anders. In Deutschland wenn du Ausländer bist, wird das ja nicht unbedingt positiv angesehen. Und hier ist das direkt so. Die freuen sich, wenn Ausländer, „oh Ausländer" und so, und freuen sich immer. Und kriegen vielleicht manchmal sogar Sonderwünsche oder so was. Mein Papa hat mal einen Unfall gebaut, so einen kleinen. Und dann war er auf dem Polizeiamt und da musste er seinen Pass zeigen. Und dann: „Oh Gott der ist Deutscher" und so. […] Und in Deutschland kommt „Ching Chang Chong" und so was.

Charlie's account clearly shows how migration experiences are deeply influenced by the larger geometries of power and the prevailing stereotypes in the mainstream "host" society.

Sixteen-year-old Don from the German school openly addresses his frustration about the different treatment of foreigners in China. Himself looking Chinese, Don often experiences differences in the way Chinese "locals" look at him in contrast to his white friends who are immediately identifiable as foreigners:

> Don: You get treated differently as, if you are... […] Well, last year and the year before, I always hung out with German friends, so to say. They all look, well, tall built and western. And when you walk through the streets with them, and when we get in trouble, then it's most often the Chinese who gets dissed first. As a Chinese, if you look Chinese, you generally get less respect from the Chinese. They respect foreigners to the max.[145]

This section has shown that the expatriate students feel they have a "special status in Shanghai" and are often treated differently to Chinese citizens. Some of the students' descriptions could even be labeled as cases of positive discrimination. This is particularly true for those who are already identifiable as foreign at first sight. Many of the students echo Don's account above of Chinese citizens' "respect" for foreigners, in particular for white people. The next section further explores the role of expatriate students' bodily difference or similarity to Chinese in regard to their experiences of Shanghai. While it further elaborates upon the privileged status of whiteness, it also examines the white high school students' experiences of "not fitting in" as well as the constant gaze of the "other."

13.2. "We don't fit in": The Gaze of the "Other"

"[B]eing a migrant is, amongst other things, a profoundly bodily experience" (Fechter 2007a, 60). Consequently, for many expatriate students the body and their bodily differences to Chinese, their whiteness, play a crucial role. Whiteness has recently come into the focus of scholars, who explore the cultural construction of whiteness and challenge it as an unexamined and unmarked category (Hill 1997). Whiteness as examined in these white studies, as Donald (2000, 157) summarizes drawing on Richard Dyer's *White* ([1997]2008), "is a racial category; generally understood as a construction of privilege in many political, social, and economic environments." Whiteness is not only seen as a bodily difference in regards to skin color, but the

---

[145] German original: Man wird auch anders behandelt als, wenn man. […] Also letztes und vorletztes Jahr. Ich bin ja immer mit, ehm, deutschen Freunden, so zu sagen. Die sehen halt alle, also groß gebaut und westlich aus. Und wenn man mit denen halt durch die Straßen läuft, und wenn da, wenn wir dann Stress bekommen, dann ist meistens der Chinese derjenige der als erstes angemacht wird. Als Chinese, wenn du aussiehst wie ein Chinese, hast du hier generell weniger Respekt von Chinesen. Die respektieren Ausländer ja aufs Übelste.

perceived difference includes height, body size, hair texture or eye shape. White does not stand for skin color, but for an intricate web of aspects, as Dyer highlights:

> A person is deemed quite visibly white because of a quite complicated interaction of elements, of which flesh tones within the pink to beige range are only one: the shape of nose, eyes and lips, the colour and set of hair, even body shape may all be mobilised to determine someone's 'colour'. For instance, it has been customary in the West to call the complexion of Chinese or Japanese people yellow, yet it is by no means clear that their complexions are so distinct from that of white Westerners; it is generally the shape of the eyes that is critical in deciding whether someone is 'white' or 'yellow'. (Dyer [1997]2008, 42)

The expatriate students observed that in China being white often means preferential treatment, as in many cases it is synonymous with a financially strong background. While the perceptions of racial superiority among expatriate youth in Shanghai are not as extreme as the accounts collected by Jacqueline Knörr (2005, 60–64) of white expatriate youth in Africa[146], it seems clear, however, that whiteness is regarded highly in China.[147] M. Dujon Johnson (2011) researching racism in Taiwan and Mainland China sums up his encounters and discussions:

> The line of reasoning of white racial superiority (that the most advanced societies are predominantly white), exits today in most segments of Chinese culture and the result is that mainstream society associates wealth, status, education and power in the west with individuals of visible and identifiable Caucasian origins (skin pigmentation). (Johnson 2011, 43)

The students' feelings of being ascribed a "special status" in Shanghai is based, as Johnson's findings suggest, on the tight link of whiteness to "wealth, status, education and power."

Keeping the privileged status that is attached to being white in mind, this "special status" as the students themselves labeled it, however, also means that blending in is impossible. The expatriate youths' "exotic" appearances – as student Antonia once put it – provoke curiosity and stares from local citizens. Sixteen-year-old Karina remembers this experience vividly:

> Karina: When two friends of mine visited Shanghai, we were always out. We went downtown every day. I think thousands of Chinese took pictures

---

[146] Jaqueline Knörr (2005), writing about experiences of (re)migration of expatriate youth from Africa to Germany, reflects upon the effects that the experience of whiteness can have for children. She describes the link between whiteness and superiority in the following way:

> The message the majority of white children growing up in "black" Africa get is that being white goes along with being rich and superior. While blacks may also (be)come rich and advance economically for different reasons, being rich appears to be an innate and natural feature of being white, a feature of social class, which in most cases goes along with a feeling of cultural superiority. Whereas white parents in most cases have experienced that being white does not have such implications everywhere, many white children lack this experience altogether - and many of their parents prefer forgetting it while in Africa. (Knörr 2005, 61)

[147] For an historical account of constructions of race in China see Frank Dikötter (1992), *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. For a contemporary approach and a more personal account see *Race & Racism in the Chinas* by African-American author M. Dujon Johnson (2011).

204

of us, or filmed us. It's probably simply this curiosity. Because they have never seen foreigners. Especially small children. They just walk up to you and always say 'hello'. <L>. And are always extremely nice and really cute somehow.[148]

German student Lara has similar stories to tell:

Lara: I can't even count the times I have been filmed or photographed in the metro anymore. Because they think I come from the moon or something. Because blond is not the color here. Especially if you go out. I mean you have to know that. You get stared at. […] In the beginning I thought it was funny. Meanwhile I think it is a bit annoying.[149]

Their whiteness causes the teenagers to stand out while moving through the city and attracts a lot of attention. While some students can accept the curiosity, others feel unsettled by the "'gaze of the Other'" (Fechter 2007a, 62) and complain that they find such treatment vexing and irritating. My own reactions to attracting stares depended on the context and my own mood. Re-reading my field diary from 2007, where I had commented more frequently on the gaze than in the time between 2010 and 2012, my own desire to be able to blend in, to be not immediately visible as a "stranger" becomes apparent. This relates to Stephanie Donald's point that we are unaware of our whiteness as ethnicity due to the norm and status it often brings along:

The bearers of whiteness so often pretend to neutrality. We refuse our ethnicity, while playing on its potential for advantage in the main streams of money, power and political clout. (Donald 2000, 157)

This becoming visible as white that I often experienced as disturbing can be understood in the context of Richard Dyer's argument:

Whites must be seen to be white, yet whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen. To be seen as white is to have one's corporeality registered, yet true whiteness resides in the non-corporeal. (Dyer [1997]2008, 45)

Dyer's description of losing power through being registered as white and becoming aware of one's corporeality explain my own and the teenagers' unsettlement through locals' stares. Norwegian girl Britta, for instance, in similar manner to my early experiences, describes how it can be difficult to deal with not blending in:

Britta: Also people staring, not being shy at all. Just like in the metro and stuff. […] And we are like, yeah I know I look like, weird. I know. We just feel like, so, I don't know, just trying staring back and they are still like

---

[148] German Original: Als jetzt zwei Freundinnen von mir in Shanghai hier waren, waren wir immer unterwegs. Jeden Tag in der Stadt. Wir wurden glaube ich von tausenden von Chinesen fotografiert, aufgenommen. Das ist einfach wirklich diese Neugier womöglich. Weil sie einfach noch nie Ausländer gesehen haben. Vor allem Kleinkinder. Die kommen dann zu einem hin und sagen immer so "hello" <L> und sind immer total freundlich und voll süß irgendwie.

[149] German original: So oft wie ich schon gefilmt wurde in der Metro und fotografiert und sonst was. Kann ich gar nicht mehr zählen. Weil die denken ich komme vom Mond oder so. Weil blond ist hier ja eh schon hier nicht die Farbe. <L> Vor allem wenn man abends weg ist. Ich meine, das musst du ja auch wissen. Man wird so angestarrt. […] Am Anfang fand ich es lustig. Mittlerweile finde ich es ein bisschen nervig.

staring at [you]. […] There were like many weird things about coming here. […] They laugh and smile and take your hair.

Seventeen-year-old Britta describes how she feels uncomfortable and tries to defend herself by "staring back," a strategy that proves unsuccessful.

In addition to the sudden awareness of corporeality, my ethnographic material on expatriate women gathered in 2007 and an article by Willis and Yeoh (2008) on single British migrants, give evidence that white women experience feelings of unattractiveness in China. According to Willis and Yeoh, the phrase "Bridget Jones in China" was commonly reported to be a term by which women referred to themselves. Some, for example, reported of Chinese people commenting on their "fat arms" (Willis and Yeoh 2008). As Katie Walsh (2008) observed among expatriate women in Dubai, increased physical activity – with fitness courses on the compound – and beauty treatments such as manicures, pedicures, and facials are very common among adult white women in Shanghai as well. The adult female interviewees I worked with in 2007 also reported feeling large and ungainly when talking about the difficulties of buying fitting clothing.

While some of my female teenage informants share this experience, they – in contrast to the adult women – seem not to feel threatened in their beauty. Nevertheless, buying clothes in China heightens their experience of "being different" and literally not fitting in:

Lara: Shopping is an issue. You have to find your shopping area. H&M and such things, that's what I prefer.

Karina: Yes. C&A.

Lara: These Chinese shops, I don't even enter them.

Karina: No. The fashion. Chinese fashion isn't really

Lara: Doesn't fit us. I must say I don't fit into the pants. The tops don't fit. They are too tight at the bust.[150]

While these anecdotal accounts of physical difference first appeared to me as "typical" teenaged girls' attempts to stage their own beauty, I now see how these experiences of physical difference play an important part in the migration experience. Evidently, white youths' experiences of Shanghai are significantly affected by the stare and the reaction of Shanghai's citizens. These local practices, a form of power, are something they cannot escape because blending in is impossible.

This discomfort of constantly being seen as different and one's own sudden awareness

---

[150] German Original: Lara: Also, Shoppen ist so ein Ding. Man muss ja eigentlich seine Shopping Area finden. H&M, solche Sachen. Da tendiere ich hin.
Karina: Ja, C&A
Lara: Also, diese chinesen Läden, da gehe ich gar nicht erst rein.
Karina: Nee. Die Mode. Chinesiche Mode ist nicht so, unbedingt.
Lara: Passt uns auch gar nicht. Ich muss sagen ich pass in die Hosen nicht rein. Mir passen die Oberteile nicht. Die Oberweite ist zu eng.

of being white, as I described above based on my own experiences, might be one reason for the students to seek out spaces they claim as expatriate, leading to further boundary drawing. Eighteen-year-old Peter, for example, explains how he feels exhausted and estranged in the urban environment due to the language barrier, but also due to the impossibility to blend in:

> Peter: I am annoyed. Well, I am not annoyed by it, but life is very exhausting here. Well, in part it is really exhausting. Because of all the traffic, all the people here. And that is inevitable. And the problem is also that I don't master the language at all. And I don't like that. First of all everyone looks at you. That might be normal. You look different from them and many others in their environment.[151]

Peter's remark that "life is very exhausting here" stands in stark contrast to the comfort of expatriate life students usually describe (see for instance the narratives I take up under "Example 1: Common Comfort" in subchapter 9.3). However, Peter's account here delineates life outside the "bubble" and at the same time points out the factors that contribute to the withdrawal and maintenance of the "bubble." Britta, for instance explains this phenomenon:

> Britta: Also it is nice when you go to places where you see other western people. Like. You don't feel like the only one who is blond in the whole building. You can like, look around and see, maybe they are American or German.

The bodily experiences therefore clearly shape the space making processes of expatriates. The physical walls that protect the gated communities or international schools and the boundaries around the body – cultural constructions of whiteness – often support each other. Fechter has similar findings for expatriates in Indonesia (2007a, 59–82):

> [T]heir movements through public space similarly reflect and shape their experiences of, and attitudes towards 'Indonesia'. In particular, many expatriates feel rather uncomfortable being looked at by Indonesians, and their wish to avoid this 'gaze of the Other' therefore informs many of their spatial practices. (2007a, 67)

Thus, not only the own view of the city, but also the being viewed shapes the urban landscapes and might be one of many motives to avoid certain spaces, for example the subway, and to embrace others, such as nightlife spaces.

However, while expatriates are usually imagined as "western" – and this is often used interchangeably to refer to whites – not all expatriates are white. Based on Bonnett (2004), Fechter and Walsh (2010, 1204) emphasize that the usage of "western" for

---

[151] German original: Mich regt auf. Also mich regt es nicht auf, aber, die, es ist sehr anstrengend hier auch das Leben. Also teils ist es sehr anstrengend hier. Durch den ganzen Verkehr, durch die ganzen Menschen hier. Und das lässt sich auch nicht vermeiden. Und das Problem ist auch, dass [ich] die Sprache einfach überhaupt nicht beherrsche. Und ich mag das nicht. Erstens gucken einen alle an. Das ist ja vielleicht auch selbstverständlich. Man sieht anders aus als sie selbst und viele andere in ihrer Umgebung.

white "may be true in both the imaginations of expatriates and those they come into contact with." While many expatriates in Shanghai are not "western" as they come from other parts of Asia (for instance the majority of the students at the Singaporean school I visited), even many of the "western" expatriate students are not regarded as white. While I have not accompanied any black expatriate students in Shanghai, I have met many students of Asian or racially mixed phenotype, because either one of their parents is Chinese or their parents or grandparents migrated to Europe or North America from Hong Kong, China or other parts of Asia decades before taking on an assignment in Shanghai. These children form a great percentage of the students at all of the international schools and their experiences of Shanghai partly differ from their fellow white students – also due to their phenotype.

While Don, born to Chinese parents in Germany, for instance, voices his anger about different treatment by guards in the gated communities (see chapter 8.1), other students with Chinese appearance stress their ability to blend in as positive. French student Arnaud for instance describes his freedom to play with being an expat or not:

> Arnaud: Sometimes you want to, like. I don't know how to say this.
>
> Interviewer: En francais?
>
> Arnaud: Je fondre dans la masse.
>
> Interviewer: Okay. Like, you go with the flow, no, you hide in the masses.
>
> Arnaud: Yeah yeah. You hide in the masses. Exactly. When you see some kind of French guy, you don't want to see. And you pretend you are friend with the Chinese guy. [Interviewer: <L>] And then you just go, and he doesn't see that. That is pretty cool, I mean I like the way to deal with this. Yeah.

However, being able to fit in on the outside does not mean these teenagers feel they are part of Shanghai's society. Charlie, for instance, nonetheless states that she feels like a tourist:

> Charlie: I got used to the environment. But sometimes out on the street, when there are a lot of people, then I feel that I am not a part of it. What is strange is that when I am in the city, I almost feel like a tourist sometimes.[152]

Although the experiences of physical differences encourage the longing to seek out spaces frequented by foreigners, the accounts of "Chinese looking" expatriates demonstrate that this aspect alone is inadequate to explain the local-expat divide. Investigating the "diaspora space," the entangled relations between expatriates and Shanghai's citizens further, I like to turn again to students' contemplations on other barriers towards symmetrical encounters with local youth.

---

[152] German Original: Also an die Umgebung habe ich mich gewöhnt schon. Aber ich finde es halt manchmal auf der Straße so. Wenn dann, da sind halt ganz viele Leute. Also ich fühle, dass ich nicht dazugehöre. […] Das Komische ist, wenn ich in der Stadt bin, fühl ich mich fast manchmal wie ein Tourist.

13.3. Barriers to "Integration" or the Difficulties of Making "Chinese" Friends

In 1969, Fredrik Barth ([1969] 1998) already proposed in his influential edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* that it is worth to take a close look at boundaries and barriers as it is "the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth [1969]1998, 15). While this might be an overemphasis, I agree that it is interesting to investigate the perception and drawing of boundaries – a focus that has also been promoted in the realm of transcultural studies. Both Maya Nadig (2004) in her concept of transculturality in progress and Pütz (2004) in his idea of transculturality as practice highlight the relevance of the processes and practices of drawing cultural boundaries to understand transcultural relations. Consequently, this subchapter explores the students' articulations and perceptions of boundaries within the "diaspora space" that hinder encounters between expatriate and "local" youths.

When I introduce the term "integration" during several interviews, it promptly triggers contemplations on what "integration" might mean, and students often aim to apply the idea to their own social worlds in Shanghai. These discussions at the same time implicitly show youths' perceptions of borders, as seventeen-year-old Karina's definition of "integration" demonstrates:

> Karina: Integration, I would say, is when you move into a foreign country, China for instance. Then I would integrate, in the sense that I, for example, just learn the language. Or I should maybe also study their culture. That I adapt myself a little to them. Not only do my own thing, my own culture, so to say, again. That I maybe show interest in their culture. That I start trying Chinese food. That I behave like a Chinese. <L> That I tune to the same wavelength, so to say. I believe the language is very important.[153]

When in September 2011 Karina and I spend the whole afternoon at a downtown café, chatting and eventually recording an interview, she defines "integration" by applying it to her own situation in China and by seeing it as the efforts she should make, such as learning the language, getting to know Chinese culture, food, and behavioral practices. Taking up the four barriers that Karina implicitly names – language, culture, food, and behavior – this section illustrates expatriate youths' experiences of these.

The majority of the students tries learning Chinese at some point of their stay in Shanghai and all the international schools now offer Chinese language courses. While some students keep learning Chinese, many find it too challenging and quit studying.

---

[153] German Original: Also, Integration, würde ich sagen, wenn ich in irgendein fremdes Land ziehe, zum Beispiel China. Dann würde ich mich integrieren, in dem Sinne von, dass ich einfach zum Beispiel die Sprache lerne. Oder. Ich soll deren Kultur vielleicht lernen. Also, dass ich mich ein bisschen nach ihnen richte. Also nicht immer so mein Ding durchziehe. Also, sozusagen meine Kultur wieder, dass ich mich vielleicht auch für ihre etwas interessiere. Dass ich anfange auch das Chinesische essen irgendwie zu probieren. Dass ich mich sozusagen benehme wie so ein Chinese. <L> Also mich auf deren Wellenlänge bewege sozusagen. Die Sprache finde ich ist sehr wichtig.

Some students have proficient Chinese skills, as at least one of their parents is a native speaker. Different dialects, however, can still make it difficult to understand Shanghainese citizens completely. Furthermore, all parental native speakers of Chinese usually have a good command of their children's schooling language. Charlie, for example, describes how her parents occasionally talk to her and her sister in Chinese, but that the two usually answer in German. Don, who speaks a certain Chinese dialect with his parents, judges his Chinese as "not so good" and considers learning Chinese for foreigners in general extremely difficult:

> Don: And I also believe that foreigners as such, that they cannot really achieve it, to learn Chinese. Well, I myself had problems. In the beginning I really studied a lot. Chinese. Nothing stays. It's really. You have to study every day. Every day. And no foreigner here at the school does that.[154]

Many of the students at the German school actually enroll in Chinese language classes the school offers as part of their curriculum. However, as Don points out, the time for most students does not suffice to achieve a good conversational level or to learn reading Chinese characters. Then again, other students who are proficient in Chinese demonstrate that language skills – though helpful – do not necessarily enable friendships across the local-expat divide.

> Antonia: I can speak fluently, but I nonetheless don't have any Chinese friends. When I think about it, that isn't normal, usually, living in a foreign country and not knowing the people in that country. (silence) […] It is even stranger if you, for instance, take [student's name]. He has been living in Shanghai for eleven years now. In China. And doesn't know a word, hardly any Chinese. He could live here perfectly for eleven years without speaking Chinese. That shows how little we are integrated. You don't have to know Chinese. We are a group of our own where you get by with German. Actually, I should talk to Chinese people more often, when I think about it. It is really strange how few Chinese friends I have. That is: none.[155]

Antonia argues that the extrinsic motivation to learn Chinese for some students is very low, as they manage their daily lives successfully without any Chinese language skills. When voicing her regrets about the lack of Chinese friends in her own life, Antonia

---

[154] German original: Und ich glaub auch, dass Ausländer an sich, dass die das nicht wirklich schaffen können. Chinesisch zu lernen. Also ich selber hatte Probleme. So am Anfang hab ich ja richtig viel gelernt. Chinesisch. Es bleibt nichts mehr hängen. Es ist echt. Du musst jeden Tag lernen. Jeden Tag. Und kein Ausländer hier in der Schule macht das hier.

[155] German original: Aber ich kann ja fließend sprechen und so und ich hab trotzdem keine chinesischen Freunde. Wenn ich drüber nachdenke ist das eigentlich nicht normal. Wenn man im Normalfall in einem andren Land lebt. Und die Leute in dem Land nicht kennt. Also. (silence) […] Noch komischer ist zu Beispiel [Name eines Schülers] wohnt elf Jahre in Shanghai. In China. Und kann kein Wort, kaum. Chinesisch. Der konnte hier elf Jahre perfekt leben ohne Chinesisch zu können. Also das zeigt wie wenig integriert wir sind. Man muss kein chinesisch können. Wir sind eine Gruppe für sich wo man mit deutsch komplett durchkommt. Eigentlich sollte ich mich mal mehr mit Chinesen unterhalten, wenn ich drüber nachdenke. Das ist echt komisch wie wenig chinesische Freunde ich habe. Nämlich gar keine.

furthermore demonstrates that language is not the only issue. She thinks she should make a greater effort in talking to Chinese youths.

Paul, though not knowing any Chinese, also assumes that there is a further barrier in addition to language:

> Paul: […] We can't talk to those people.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think it is the language barrier that makes it difficult to interact?
>
> Paul: A bit. Also it is the whole culture thing.
>
> Interviewer: Hmm.
>
> Paul: Unless you grow up here, it's hard to have like Chinese friends.

Paul readily labels the barrier hindering him to have Chinese friends as cultural – "the whole culture thing" –, nevertheless leaving it unexplained. Norwegian student Britta's description of her first encounters with a Chinese family touches up on this and shows how the cultural barrier can be understood as unknown practices, for instance eating habits.

> Britta: I like it so much more when I have western friends, or like, I don't know, like international friends. Then they can just take me [along] and you don't have to figure out the stuff. […] In the beginning we were with this Chinese family, and they just took us to these really hardcore Chinese food places and we are like: How can we eat this? We are not used to this. And can't even use chopsticks. So I am like glad that I find similar things to home then.

Britta experiences the necessity "to figure out the stuff" in order to cross the local-expat divide apparently as stressful, uncomfortable, maybe even frightening. She thus actively seeks out the company of, in her words, "international friends." Therefore, it can be said that the international high school students participate in the boundary drawing of the expatriate communities. However, as Britta's quote shows, the demarcation also gives expatriate teenagers, who constantly move, a sense of continuity through finding "similar things to home." The tentative exploration of Shanghai's environment, the coping with emotional strains of moving and the integration into the expatriate community are a host of experiences expatriate teenagers already collect and deal with.

Sixteen-year-old Charlie, whose parents grew up in China, gives different daily practices as an explanation for the difficulty of having Chinese friends:

> Charlie: I think you can fit in. Especially, if you speak the language. But it is difficult. I can't speak from my own experience. But my friend [child of Chinese parents, born in Germany, at the German school] for instance has Chinese friends. And she also notes every time, that there is a difference. And that they mostly have no time because of

school. Because they always have to study. And that they think differently. It's a little different.[156]

Charlie here argues that the separation of international and Chinese schools and the extremely time-consuming Chinese schooling renders friendships to local Chinese difficult for her. Based on accounts from her friend, she also assumes that they "think differently."

While the accounts above, which I related to the four barriers stemming from Karina's interpretation of "integration," mostly revolve around differences, some students also reflect upon the lack of opportunities and too little effort made in getting to know Chinese youth.

> Antonia: But I had a Chinese friend. The daughter of my mom's friend. We were always close friends. And then, in fifth or sixth grade her school got really tough. And then we couldn't see each other anymore. And since then we are hardly in touch anymore. That is a little difficult with the people here, because they have so much school. But still, when we go out for example, I like to talk to Chinese. They are mostly university students, because then they have time to party. And then I feel accepted. But I still feel like a foreigner at the same time. Because they see me as a foreigner.[157]

Antonia's statement also reveals the different schooling systems as a key factor in impeding friendships with "local" students. She also points out that this divide through school grows more intense with age. My own observations confirm that especially for teenagers there is very little overlap in the everyday spaces, as I already demonstrated in the chapters on gated communities and the international schools. Additionally, even the spaces that are less demarcated – nightlife spaces (chapter eleven) and the shop (chapter twelve) – present few possibilities to meet Chinese of the same age group.

In addition to their own drawing of (spatial) barriers to create comfort zones, the language difficulties, the different practices surrounding food and education, and the lack of spaces to meet Chinese youths, some expatriate teenagers also perceive the Chinese state and its citizens as active agents in keeping foreigners foreigners.

---

[156] German original: Also ich glaube man kann sich schon integrieren. Also besonders wenn man die Sprache spricht, kann man das. Aber es ist schwer weil. Also man kann, also ich kann jetzt nicht so viel aus eigener Erfahrung sprechen. Meine Freundin zum Beispiel, die hat ja auch chinesische Freundinnen. Und sie merkt halt auch jedes Mal, dass es anders ist. Und dass die auch meistens keine Zeit haben wegen der Schule. Weil sie immer lernen müssen. Und dass sie halt auch ganz anders denken und so. Ist schon ein bisschen anders.

[157] German original: Aber ich hatte eine chinesische Freundin. Auch die Tochter von einer Freundin meiner Mama. Und mit der war ich immer sehr gut befreundet. Und dann fing sie an, ehm, so in der fünten, sechsten wurde bei ihr die Schule richtig hart. Und dann konnten wir uns gar nicht mehr treffen. Und seit dem haben wir kaum noch Kontakt. Das ist halt ein bisschen schwer hier mit den Leuten, weil die einfach so viel Schule haben. Aber. Zum Beispiel jetzt beim Feiern, ich rede dann auch gern mit Chinesen. Meistens sind es dann Studenten, weil die haben dann ja Zeit zum Feiern. Und so. Und dann fühl ich mich schon angenommen. Aber ich fühl mich gleichzeitig auch ein bisschen als Ausländerin. Weil die mich als Ausländerin sehen.

13.4. Youths' Perceptions of Local Attitudes towards Foreigners

Some students also voice that they feel China, or Shanghai's citizens, reject or limit non-Chinese to be part of its society. Keeping the expatriates' practices of demarcation in mind, I still want to present three teenage girls' perceptions of exclusion. Two perspectives, that of the two white girls Andrea and Karina, comment on the emotional level as well as on the state policies and its treatment of foreigners. The last exemplary perspective is that of Antonia, whose parents are German and Chinese. She reflects on her status in Chinese society and describes how Chinese people constantly ascribe a foreigner status to her. It shows that her idea of urban citizenship – a claim to be Shanghainese – can be be difficult to pursue.

Sixteen-year-old Andrea, who moved with her family into a downtown Chinese compound, expresses her feelings:

> Andrea: On an emotional level, I'd say that we are not really, well, we are not a part of it. […] The Chinese also call us foreigners. That's what we are. I don't think we will ever, I don't know. Well, I don't have the feeling that they allow us in entirely. We have our special [status], we are treated differently. I notice.[158]

Contemplating on her relations to Chinese society, Andrea feels she could never be part of it. She also ties this emotional perception of being an outsider to questions of Chinese politics:

> Andrea: The state doesn't permit it. I don't think I would be allowed to attend a Chinese school. With my views, politically. I think I wouldn't be allowed to. That's why. That might actually be an example of us not being integrated.[159]

While Andrea's assumption is not entirely true, research by Anna Greenspan (Greenspan 2008a; 2008b; 2011b; 2011a) demonstrates the extreme difficulties for expatriates choosing local schools. Greenspan's research comments on the difference in Chinese and "Western" education, a debate that gained prominence in the USA, but also in Germany, after the publication of Amy Chua's *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011). In her blogs and writings Greenspan discusses the cases of western families choosing the Chinese education system. Investigating parents' and children's challenges in adjusting to the different school system, Greenspan shows that enrollment at local schools in Shanghai is possible, but only if parents and children

---

[158] German original: So auf einer emotionalen Ebene würde ich sagen, dass wir hier jetzt nicht so. Also wir sind kein Teil. […] [D]ie Chinesen, nennen uns ja auch die Ausländer. Wir sind es ja auch. Ich glaube wir werden nie. Also, ich weiß nicht. Also ich habe nicht das Gefühl, dass wir komplett reingelassen werden. Wir haben da schon unsere Sonder-, wir werden schon anders behandelt.

[159] German original: Der Staat lässt es ja auch nicht zu. Ich glaube nicht, dass ich jetzt auf eine chinesische Schule gehen dürfte. Mit meinen Ansichten, politischen, also. Ich glaube das dürfte ich nicht. Deswegen. Es ist ja eigentlich ein Beispiel dafür, dass wir nicht integriert werden.

possess the necessary language skills and persistence. One mother interviewed by Greenspan describes the difficulties in the enrollment process:

> My husband literally banged on gates to get us in. He went to probably ten. He would bang on the gates and say: "I want to come here" and they would answer "laowai[160], why are you here? Go away." He had to go back a few times. Eventually we ended up near Loushanguan Lu ditie zhan – that was the only one we could get into. (Greenspan 2011b) [161]

These extraordinary efforts foreigners have to make to send their children to a Chinese local school become apparent in Greenspan's interviews. At a joint talk with James Farrer at a workshop[162] organized by Heidelberg University's Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a global context," Greenspan discussed cases of the few parents and children who choose this option. She found teachers continuously ascribed a foreign status to the foreign children, i.e. using them to shame other students who performed less well in class than the foreigner. Many western parents, Greenspan argued, also feel uneasy concerning the political education their children undergo at Chinese schools, conflicting too strongly with their own values.

It is the political and legal situation in China that high school student Karina finds affecting her experiences of Shanghai.

> Karina: Here in China I feel safer. Because it is more strict. Here they still have the death penalty. That maybe warns the people off a little. Erm, but concerning the police, I always sidestep them. I don't know. I am afraid of them, I fear them somehow. That is different in Prague. Because it is so dangerous there. I don't know. There I always feel safer close to the police. […] Here I avoid them. I don't know why. Somehow.

> Interviewer: Just how you feel?

> Karina: How I feel. Because I know how it works here. As a foreigner, you usually get the short end of the stick, when you do something. Especially. Here, one of my father's co-workers had an accident. He went to prison, although it wasn't even his fault. The Chinese, they all stuck together. They arranged something, discussed and then jumped on him. And told him: 'It is your fault.' And then of course the police was against him. […]

> Interviewer: So on the one hand you feel safe

> Karina: but on the other hand <L>

---

[160] colloquial for foreigner

[161] That's Shanghai Magazine. "Local experiences: Anna Greenspan interviews Emily Meyer on her experiences with the local education system." Last modified April 21st 2011, accessed April 10th, 2012. http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/368/local-experiences.

[162] James Farrer and Anna Greenspan: "Raising Cosmopolitans: Expatriate Families Navigating Shanghai's Local Schools." The workshop "Growing up and growing old in Shanghai, Delhi and Tokyo. Inter-generational stories from Asia's global cities" was organized by the Cluster of Excellence: Asia and Europe in a Global Context" of Heidelberg University, Germany and held in Shanghai from September 7th to September 10th, 2011. Their work differs from mine as they look at the minority of foreign passport holders whose children are enrolled at Chinese local schools. Moreover, it is mainly based on the parents' perspectives.

214

Interviewer: on the other had the security forces are dubious to you.

Karina: Yes. It's extreme. If you know how it works here. Especially: death penalty? They still get shot here in prison. When I look at Ai Weiwei, he disappeared without trace. Nobody knew where he was.[163]

While other students feel Chinese law would not apply to them, and find buying drugs easy and the police not intimidating at all, Karina clearly states her fear of the Chinese judicial system. Karina's account of the police also differs from Charlie's account of her father's preferential treatment due to his German passport (see page 202). Experiences can therefore quite differ. Karina's Czech family background and discussions at home on issues like the Prague Spring, also contribute to her fear of arbitrary state power, consequently making this more an issue to her than to other students, leading to her perception of the Chinese state as hostile to foreigners.

Her classmate Antonia – child of a Chinese-German marriage – , in contrast, is one of the few students who actually makes claims to being Shanghainese.

Antonia: I feel accepted in MY society. But I wouldn't say that I am part of Chinese society. Sometimes. In parts. Through my mom [who is Shanghainese]. But that are all those who have studied together with her. That is a different society than, erm, those who you see every day. […] More educated. Not affluent necessarily, but very educated. My mom and her engineering students.[164]

Antonia makes clear that "Chinese society," as I provocatively named it during the interview, is a diverse group. Antonia explains how education – or even education abroad – plays a huge role in how Shanghai's citizens encounter foreigners. She further clarifies her own position in Shanghai:

Antonia: It's not that I am being excluded or anything. But, you're not really a part of Chinese society.

Interviewer: Yes. I don't know. If you'd use, for example, the term integration…

---

[163] German original: Hier in China fühl ich mich sicherer. Weil das auch strenger ist einfach. Hier gilt auch noch die Todesstrafe. Das schreckt die Leute vielleicht auch noch ein bisschen ab. Ehm, aber was jetzt die Polizei angeht, da mache ich immer einen großen Bogen drum. Ich weiß nicht. Vor denen hab ich, vor denen fürchte ich mich irgendwie. Das ist in Prag wieder anders. Weil es dort nämlich so gefährlich ist. Ich weiß nicht, da fühl ich mich bei der Polizei immer sicherer. […] Hier mache ich einen großen Bogen drum herum. Ich weiß nicht warum. Irgendwie. [Interviewer: Vom Gefühl her einfach?] Vom Gefühl her, weil, ich weiß einfach wie es hier läuft. Als Ausländer hat man hier meistens eh die Arschkarte wenn man was macht. Vor allem. Hier, ein Mitarbeiter von meinem Vater, der hat einen Unfall gebaut. Der ist in den Knast gewandert, obwohl es noch nicht mal sein Fehler war. Die Chinesen, die haben sich alle zusammen getan. Haben irgendwas abgemacht, besprochen und sind dann auf ihn losgegangen. Und haben ihm gesagt: „Das ist deine Schuld." Und die Polizei war dann natürlich auch gegen ihn. […] [Interviewer: Also, einerseits fühlst du dich sicher] aber auf der anderen Seite <L> [Interviewer: aber andererseits sind die Sicherheitskräfte dir suspekt.] <L> Ja, das ist heftig. Wenn man weiß wie das hier vor sich läuft, vor allem. Todesstrafe? Das ist auch ziemlich heftig. Die werden hier immer noch erschossen im Knast. Wenn ich mir jetzt Ai Weiwei angucke. Der ist spurlos verschwunden. Niemand wusste wo er ist.

[164] German original: Also ich fühl mich in meiner Gesellschaft angenommen. Aber ich würd nicht sagen, dass ich so in der chinesischen Gesellschaft bin. Ehm. Manchmal schon. Teilweise. Durch meine Mama. Aber das sind auch alle die, die mit ihr studiert haben. Das ist noch einmal eine andere Gesellschaft als die, die, eh, man so jeden Tag sieht. […] Gebildetere. Wohlhabend nicht unbedingt, aber es ist eine sehr gebildete Schicht. Meine Mama und die ganzen Maschinenbaustudenten halt.

> Antonia: No, the people are not being integrated here. If, for example in Germany, foreigners come, then normally many stay and the next generation and so on. And then they should integrate themselves. Start speaking German and so on. But here. The foreigners learn Chinese to be able to communicate a bit. But they will always stay foreigners. They don't integrate. And this is due to them leaving again soon. And because here you simply get by being a foreigner. Probably, even precisely because you are German. You are here at a German company. That is not really integration.[165]

Antonia expresses a distance to "typical expats" and her experience could be placed in the context of long-term settler narratives. James Farrer (2010) interrogates narratives of emplacement of foreigners, like Antonia and her family, who have been living in Shanghai for more than five years. His interviewees differed from expatriates who are in Shanghai on a temporary assignment, as they had made a conscious decision to stay on. Farrer (ibid., 2) argues that the different narratives of these long-term settlers are "claims to cosmopolitan urban citizenship in the emerging global city." He explains:

> These narrative typologies show that Western expatriate narratives of emplacement cannot be reduced to a single postcolonial temporality, though postcolonial imaginaries remain a useful expression of simultaneous belonging and dislocation in the twenty-first-century Asian global city. Long-term foreign settlers mix narratives that situate them in multiple temporalities – postcolonial, post-socialist and post-modern – each implying a different fragile possibility of urban citizenship. Reduced to their sociological content these stories are symbolic claims to urban citizenship: a claim of cultural citizenship (as 'Old Shanghai hands' or 'New Shanghailanders'), a claim of social citizenship (as witness to history and local residents), and a claim of economic citizenship (as 'players' in Shanghai's global economy). Woven altogether – as they sometimes are – they form an ideal of a culturally cosmopolitan, locally integrated and economically contributing global/urban citizen, conveniently eliding the nation-state. Few settlers actually live up to this nearly impossible ideal, and thus these narratives of emplacement often serve as claims to relative virtue or entitlement in comparisons with other 'foreigners.' (Farrer 2010, 15)

Like Farrer's informants' "claims to relative virtue or entitlement," Antonia's claims to being Shanghainese have to be seen as distinction to her expatriate classmates. At the same time, however, Antonia, like Farrer's informants, has a high ideal of being a, to quote Farrer, "culturally cosmopolitan, locally integrated" citizen. Antonia's reflections show how it is difficult to, in Farrer's words, "live up to this nearly impossible ideal."

---

[165] German original: Nicht dass ich ausgeschlossen werde oder so. Aber, man ist nicht wirklich ein Teil der chinesischen Gesellschaft. [Interviewer: Ja. Ich weiß nicht. Wenn man jetzt zum Beispiel den Begriff Integration benutzen würde, so.] Nee, die Leute werden hier nicht integriert. Wenn in Deutschland zum Beispiel Ausländer kommen, dann bleiben ja normal viele leben und die nächste Generation und so. Und die sollten sich dann eigentlich integrieren. Anfangen deutsch zu reden und so weiter. Aber hier. Die Ausländer lernen chinesisch um ein bisschen kommunizieren zu können. Aber werden für immer Ausländer bleiben. Die integrieren sich nicht. Und das liegt auch daran, dass sie bald wieder gehen. Und weil du hier auch einfach als Ausländer durchkommst. Und, ehm, in deinem Beruf auch mit Englisch durchkommst. Wahrscheinlich gerade weil du Deutscher bist. Hier bist bei der deutschen Firma. Da ist es nicht so richtig Integration.

Being the child of a mixed marriage and even speaking Chinese, she still describes how she feels she could never fit in.

> Antonia: Well. I don't see myself as a foreigner. I consider myself Shanghainese. But others see me as a foreigner. They are nonetheless very nice to me, but somehow, they always see me as this exotic animal.[166]

She further explains how this lack of acceptance of herself as Shanghainese by Chinese society leads her to doubt her performance of a Shanghainese identity and claims to Chineseness. To be regarded as "Shanghainese," however, is also an impossible status for migrants from other parts of China, as I briefly discussed drawing on Schoon (2007) and Donald and Gammack (2007) in the very beginning of this chapter. Antonia, consequently, sees herself also as a foreigner: "But at the same time I feel like a foreigner, because they see me as a foreigner."[167] I further elaborate on her identity performances in chapter fourteen of the dissertation. Nonetheless, her descriptions are also interesting in the context of Shanghainese - expat relations. Her own words put this relationship in a nutshell:

> Antonia: Well, you are welcome and people are hospitable and so on, but you are not integrated. […] Guests stay guests.[168]

Having shed light on the prominent divides between locals and expats, I nonetheless like to state again that my discussions with the foreign youths generally agree with Farrer's findings in Shanghai that "some form of cultural and social integration is seen as a desirable goal by most foreign migrants" (2010,16). Although a difficult pursuit, close moments exist.

> Andrea: I am closest to China when I walk my dog, and, well, walk amongst Chinese people, and the Chinese man next to me is walking his dog, too. That is when I am close.[169]

13.5. Concluding Thoughts on the Local-Expat Divide for Youths in Shanghai

Expatriate teenagers turn towards the city's transnational spaces aiming to be part of Shanghai's cosmopolitan image, as for instance chapter ten on nightlife has illustrated. Further, the young expatriates explore and claim open spaces like the shop that sit outside the glamorous image of the metropolis to simply hang out with friends. Their

---

[166] German original: Also ich seh mich nicht als Ausländerin. Ich seh mich als Shanghainesin. Aber andere sehen mich als Ausländerin. Die sind dann zwar total freundlich zu mir. Aber halt irgendwie. Die sehen mich immer wie so ein exotisches Tier.

[167] German original: Aber ich fühl mich gleichzeitig auch ein bisschen als Ausländerin, weil die mich als Ausländerin sehen.

[168] German original: Ja, also man ist zwar willkommen und gastfreundlich und so, aber man ist nicht integriert. […] Gäste bleiben Gäste.

[169] German original: Ich bin am nächsten zu China, wenn ich mit meinem Hund raus gehe, und, ja, und durch die Chinesen laufe und der Chinese neben mir auch seinen Hund ausführt. Dann bin ich am nächsten dran.

engagement with the city through such places is an important way to find a sense of emplacement as well as to regain agency after the move that their parents have brought onto them. In order to foster a sense of continuity, community and class and to create comfortable ways of living (see part three, "Arriving"), however, the expatriates draw boundaries towards Shanghai's "locals." The experience of emplacement and locality is thus at the same time tied to expatriate practices that attempt to exclude "China" to a certain extent from their everyday spaces – for example at international schools, gated communities, Western restaurants, or imported food stores.

Focusing on the "diaspora space," a "point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested" (Brah 1996, 208–209) by discussing students' ideas about "integration" in Shanghai, this chapter demonstrated that transgressing or even dissolving the strong local-expat divide is generally difficult for expatriate teenagers. None of the students I accompanied in their everyday routines have local friends. Youths often see their expatriate community as self-sufficient or even "autonomous." This lack of interest often has to do with the transient aspects of their stay in Shanghai (see chapter five). This chapter, however, identified further reasons the students see as causing difficulties to interact with or even befriend Chinese youths.

Being perceived as different in physical appearance unsettles white students. These experiences of bodily differences, of all of a sudden being *consciously* white, often lead to spatial practices that are based on seeking out places with high numbers of other whites. Teenagers are also afraid of barriers in language and cultural practices. Furthermore, expatriate teenagers, who have been in touch with Chinese children when younger, now experience Chinese teenagers as too involved with school and having no time for friendships outside their schools. Neither the students' school nor their leisure spaces coincide. The problem is thus also related to the concrete lack of meeting places. This lack of meeting places is interpreted by some students as the Chinese government's wish to keep Chinese and foreign youths apart. Chinese passport holders are prohibited by the Shanghai municipal government to enroll at international schools, and Chinese local schools are no – or at least a very difficult option (see accounts by Greenspan (2008a; 2008b; 2011b; 2011a) that I summarized above). Expatriate teenagers consequently perceive the Chinese state as either intimidating or as not pertinent to them, emphasizing their different, even "special status" as foreign passport holders. Furthermore, the expatriate teenagers that attempt to cross such perceptions and borders of difference feel Chinese youths regard them as "exotic" and Chinese society only accepts them as "guests."

The lack of interaction with Chinese youths demonstrates that the most influential part of the move to Shanghai for some students might thus not necessarily be exploring or learning about their new cultural environments or specific cultural practices in Shanghai, but rather the general experience of difference and the emotional challenges of being uprooted. In the words of ethnographer Hage (2005) who studied Lebanese communities in different national settings:

> [O]ne should also be careful not to think that just because we feel we are crossing international borders, the change from one national culture to another is the most significant aspect of our move. (Hage 2005, 470)

The following part five, "Dwelling on the Move," aims to investigate, following Hage's wording above, "the significant aspects of the move," the meaning of the stay in Shanghai for different expatriate teenagers. It traces five students' processes of identity positionings by closely listening to their narratives of the self and identifies the common ground of these different subjective experiences.

Part 5

DWELLING ON THE MOVE

Figure 36: Mind Map on "Identity." Drawing by Three Students

The mind map displayed (Figure 36) at the beginning of this part, "Dwelling on the Move," was produced by the three students Mia, Kressi, and Bjoern during Ethics class at a German school in December 2010. The Ethics class teacher had asked me, after a few days at school, to participate or teach in his class instead of merely observing. I came up with the idea to discuss the topic of "identity" with students. The teenagers were asked to exchange their ideas of what the term "Identität" [identity] meant to them in written form, working in small groups of three or four. Their discussions, as the map illustrates, revolved around "Prägungen" [influences], such as "Erziehung" [education], "Freunde" [friends], "Kultur" [culture] or "Heimat" [home], as well as the idea of "eigenständige Entwicklung" [independent development]. The students also discussed and agreed on the "veränderbar" [changeable] nature of identity, for example "durch bestimmte Ereignisse" [through certain events] in life. The mind map shows how the students also think about how "viel nachdenken" [contemplating] or "philosophieren" [philosophizing] helps to find one's identity. Although the mind map project was designed out of the necessity to maintain social access to the Ethics class, it later proved to be very valuable. The mind maps inspired me to take a more sensitive look at the students' self-reflective ways of thinking about their positions in the world. Anthony Giddens (1991) in his classic study *Modernity and Self-Identity* has stressed the power of such reflexivity and conceptualized it as humans' ways to forge "narratives of the self." The following chapter fourteen centers on such "narratives of the self," on expatriate youths' own reflections on their lives. Zooming in on five student portraits it aims to offer insights into the subjective experiences of dwelling on the move and aims to embed these in the theoretical discussions on cultural identity.

14.   Negotiating Cultural Identity: Five Students' Narratives of the Self

> Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*. (Hall 1990, 226, emphasis in the original)

In the realm of postcolonial studies many authors (see among others: Bhabha [1994]2009; Hall 1990; 1994; 1996; and 1997; Brah 1996) have pointed out how the cultural construction of (collective) identities plays an important role for people living in the diaspora or in other forms of cultural complex environments. Likewise, my fieldwork and in-depth interviews with expatriate youths reveal that growing up "on the move" and in a transient space – despite all its privileges and opportunities – demands coping with constant changes and losses. The inherent questions of belonging, and identity

are an ongoing and ever-changing process of "positioning," in the words of Stuart Hall quoted above.

On the one hand, the construction or performance of collective identities entails the creation of cultural (and spatial) boundaries – sometimes entangled with racism, classism, sexism or forms of fundamentalisms. On the other hand, the creation of such collective cultural identities also opens up a (much needed) shared space that helps the individual to deal with daily and emotional challenges when living in a cultural diverse or unknown environment. They facilitate bringing forward claims for participation and making one's voice heard. My previous chapters have shown how, for instance, the concept of "Third Culture Kids" (chapter 2.3), or the international schools (chapter nine) aim to foster such collective identities.

This chapter fourteen now focuses on the very subjective level of these processes of negotiating cultural identity and presents five students' ways of positioning themselves. The five examples demonstrate that expatriate youths are often walking along borders that commonly mark collective identities, while rethinking, bridging, crossing and shifting these to find their own position, their own cultural identity. The portraits are based on multiple interviews with the students and aim to trace their "narratives of the self" (Giddens 1991). These narratives have to be seen in the context of fieldwork and the encounter between the students and myself out of which they emerged. As Nigel Rapport (2000) points out, although not linking his concept to Giddens, narrative is both an individual's creation of own self and a fieldwork technique.

> One of the most important stories to emerge is that of the individual's own self. The self comes to know itself through its own narrational acts. In narrative constructions of past, present and future, of relations of sameness and difference, the self is given content, is delineated and embodied. Moreover, while the self is an 'unfinished project', continually subject to being rewritten, never conscious of its story's end, and while consciousness at any moment may be fragmentary, narrative still holds together. Narrative transforms the inchoate sense of form in our experience, transforms the temporal and spatial fragmentariness of our lives, offering coherence: a sense that our lives may be, at every moment, at least partially integrated into an ongoing story. Narrative counteracts a sense of fragmentation, contingency, randomness, dislocation (both temporal and spatial); even anomic happenings can be interpreted in terms of established patterns, and to that extent rendered meaningful as routinized departures from norms. (Rapport 2000, 76)

Rapport (2000, 74) argues that the narrative form acts as a "modus Vivendi," a way of living, for "fieldworker and subject of study alike," as both seek "a place cognitively to reside and make sense, a place to continue to be" in a moving world. I experienced that in many conversations, interviews, and group discussions I shared such a space of making sense with the teenagers – the informants meanwhile being constantly aware that their narratives were becoming part of my anthropological endeavor and overall

narrative. However, their accounts were not only given to feed my story, but also to make sense of their own experiences through narrative. As Rapport's quote above highlights, it is through such "narrative constructions of past, present and future, of relations of sameness and difference," that the young people's "self is given content, is delineated and embodied" (ibid., 76). While all people go through such processes of negotiating their individual identities through narratives, the five following teenagers' discursive understandings of self reveal that their identity practices are particularly shaped through their experiences of mobility. Their moves bear various shifting points of references and borders along or across which they have to find their own positions.

14.1. Antonia: "I consider myself Shanghainese, but others see me as a foreigner"

In December 2010 I am nervously introducing my research project to eleventh grade students at a German school. All of a sudden a girl in the back of the room suggests, that if I want to know more about expatriate youth culture, I should study nightlife. Indeed, in the coming days this sixteen-year-old girl, Antonia, invites me to come along to a Friday night at the club Mural. Antonia turns out to be a key "gate-opener" to leisure spaces and over the course of fieldwork often includes me in various group activities. I record a first group-interview with Antonia and her two friends Olivia and Charlie in January 2011. Later, two individual interviews follow – an extensive one in a downtown café in September 2011, and a brief one at her house in June 2012. We regularly spend time together during nightlife activities, dinners, or at school and even meet three times after her move to Germany in summer 2012.

Antonia was born in Germany, but grew up in Shanghai and is one of the very few expat teenagers who have been at the same school all their lives. Her father is German, her mother a successful Chinese businesswoman who studied in Germany. Over the course of fieldwork I came to know Antonia as a determined, smart young woman, who likes to be in control of things, has high expectations of herself and generally highly values intelligence and analytical minds. She enjoys discussions and is known by other students for her vigorous argumentations, as well as for her generous ways. Antonia herself often stresses her difference from other expatriate children who only pass a few years in Shanghai.

Sitting outside in a downtown café in early September 2011, trying to converse despite Shanghai's street noises, Antonia tells me she only knows Germany from holidays and reflects upon her recent stay in Europe four weeks prior to the interview.

> Antonia: When I come to Germany, I have to get used to it. Every time. What I
> also find annoying in Germany are things like inviting people, like,
> they take the bill, 'well, you have to pay 4.20'. But I don't have twenty

224

cents right then. Such things. That's much more relaxed with my friends here.[170]

It is Chinese custom to invite your friends out and pay for everyone. While Antonia and her friends sometimes also share the costs of eating out or going for a drink, she finds practices such as splitting the bill particularly pedantic in Germany. Antonia generally distances herself from such cultural practices that she considers typically German and describes many incidents in Germany that she finds rather alienating. In the interview that we recorded in June 2012, Antonia also voices her concern about the upcoming move to Germany and her anxieties about being able to fit in (see chapter 16.3).

While not considering herself "really German," she also talks about the experience of being perceived as a foreigner in Shanghai.

> Antonia: Others see me as a foreigner. They are nonetheless very nice to me, but somehow, they always see me as this exotic animal. <L> Oh! A foreigner who can speak Chinese well! It's like that. […] Well, not always. It's not that I am being excluded or anything. But, you're not really a part of Chinese society.[171]

Antonia has spent almost her whole life in Shanghai. Her mother is Chinese and Antonia speaks Chinese at home with her grandmother and her *ayi*. In the interview quote above she, nevertheless, describes the impossibility to be "Chinese," as she is constantly being labeled as a "foreigner" or an "exotic animal" by Chinese citizens – for instance local university students she occasionally converses with at nightlife settings. Antonia's life seems to oscillate between the two defining poles – "German" and "Chinese." Having a German passport and a German school education, but having spent the last fourteen years in Shanghai, for Antonia, both models of cultural identity are contested and not confirmed as fitting to her by others. Furthermore, being a child of a mixed marriage and speaking both languages at home, also means that difference is also present in the intimacy of the domestic home.[172] Family life therefore does not offer a clear point of reference to position herself either.

---

[170]German original: Wenn ich nach Deutschland komme, muss ich mich dran gewöhnen. Immer. Was mich auch immer nervt in Deutschland ist so Sachen wie mit dem Einladen, wie, die nehmen dann die Rechnung, „ja, du musst 4,20 zahlen." So, ich hab gerade keine zwanzig Cent. Solche Sachen. Da ist das hier bei meinen Freunden viel entspannter.

[171] German original: Andere sehen mich als Ausländerin. Die sind dann zwar total freundlich zu mir. Aber halt irgendwie. Die sehen mich immer wie so ein exotisches Tier. <L> Oh! Eine Ausländerin die gut chinesisch kann! Das ist so. […] Also nicht immer. Nicht dass ich ausgeschlossen werde oder so. Aber, man ist nicht wirklich ein Teil der chinesischen Gesellschaft.

[172] Anderson (1999), who analyzes the experiences of children from bicultural marriages in Athens, Greece, illustrates how different and sometimes rivaling cultural ideas of child-raising have to be managed in the intimacy of the domestic home. Based on ethnographic material from British-Greek families, Anderson highlights the intra-familial "edges [such as] language, the body and certain aspects of social protocol"(ibid.,18) in which parents or extended family experience and express their specific Greekness and Britishness with respect to their children. Examining the ways these children deal with the differences within the family, Anderson concludes that they "generate their own conceptual spaces and identities 'in-between' culturally differentiated adult thoughts and actions through certain identificatory media and thereby effect not merely a role of cultural brokering but hybridized identities in their own right" (ibid. 13).

When we discuss the expatriate lifestyle in Shanghai, Antonia shares how she sees herself as part of the expatriate collective. However, Antonia claims to be "a little less" part of the expatriate lifeworld "than others":

> Antonia: Actually I am also in the expatriate bubble. Maybe a little less than others. But I am definitely in it.[173]

Antonia addresses the exclusion of Chinese locals by using the term "bubble" to describe expatriate life – a point which I have discussed in more detail in chapter thirteen. She simultaneously attributes a sense of community to her "expatriate bubble," as well as a difference to German but also Chinese society, which she particularly notices upon every return to Shanghai after holidays in Germany.

> Antonia: I do notice that it is a different group of people. Although they are partly Chinese, partly Germans who've spend almost their whole life in Germany, somehow you change here. Because it's really a different group of people. As if it's a different nationality.[174]

While she rejects being entirely part of the "expatriate bubble" as a world of foreigners mingling in Shanghai with the exclusion of locals, it is a new form of cultural identity that emerges from the mixture of "Germanness" and "Chineseness" that creates her subjective experience of Shanghai – her (expatriate) community that is almost a "different nationality." She looks at this community that she feels part of as an amalgam – a perspective from which she also looks onto her own self and that I have conceptualized earlier as transcultural (see chapter 2.4). Such a transcultural perspective can shed light on shifting and merging of different cultural practices, positions, and creative formations of new subjectivities, but can also serve to inquire moments of boundary drawings and practices of distinctions. During our interviews Antonia looks upon the different influences on her life, trying to grasp these and narrate them from such a perspective to demonstrate that she feels uncomfortable to position herself as either "German" or "Chinese." Instead of simply making "expatriate" (or similar "Third Culture Kid") her main identity reference, she instead strategically claims an urban citizenship as a hybrid form to express her narrative of the self: "I consider myself Shanghainese." This positioning is not about rejecting being Chinese, German, or expat, but about embracing all these points of references in its amalgam. This is of course her subjective positioning and does not necessarily reflect the common discourse of being Shanghainese (*shanghairen)*, which – despite the idea of migration and westernization making up much of the discourse on Shanghai's specific culture

---

[173] Ich bin eigentlich auch in der Expatbubble. Vielleicht ein bisschen weniger als andere. Aber ich bin es auf jeden Fall.

[174] Ich merke schon, das ist eine andere Gruppe von Menschen. Obwohl das so, teilweise Chinesen sind, teilweise Deutsche die fast ihr ganzes Leben in Deutschland gelebt haben, irgendwie man verändert sich hier. Denn es ist wirklich eine andere Gruppe von Menschen. Als wär es eine andere Nationalität.

(*haipai*) (Farrer 2002, 88–92) – is usually tied to being born in Shanghai, speaking Shanghainese, and having a Shanghai residence permit (*hukou*) (see Schoon 2007). As Antonia points out in a quote cited earlier in this chapter – Chinese locals might not accept her positioning as Shanghainese.

Drinking coffee and gazing at the passing cars, bikes, bicycles, and pedestrians on Hengshan Road, Antonia explains her close relationship to the city:

> Antonia: In my head Shanghai is always, I don't know, this host of many things, just all these impressions, the whole time. […] It makes me totally hyper – every time I'm in the city of Shanghai, in this area. […] When I came back [from Germany] to Shanghai I went shopping with my friend, but we didn't even get to the shopping part. We had something to eat and simply walked through one street and were full of energy and happy to be in Shanghai again. […] As soon as I am in the city, or take a taxi from club to club, or go shopping… I am just, I get… Well, it doesn't seem like "Oh my God so much stuff," but rather as if I had more energy.[175]

Antonia enthusiastically speaks about moving through Shanghai and experiencing the urban environment. She sees the city as a host of impressions that give her energy. Antonia shares that she feels Shanghai is her home (see chapter 8.3 for a detailed discussion). To sixteen-year-old Antonia the urban experience of Shanghai is a point of identity reference that she uses to bridge the various notions of difference, as the city for her includes all of these.

Antonia's story shows, in the words of Stuart Hall (1990, 227), that "the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference." While Antonia stresses her ways of bridging the boundaries between German, Chinese, and expatriate circles that she experiences as tied to certain cultural practices and processes of labeling, Bjoern, the next student I want to present, positions himself as someone who has to come to grips with boundaries along the line of class that emerged for him with the move to Shanghai.

14.2. Bjoern: "Shanghai's the best that can happen to you, if you're a hick"

Sitting in class, listening to teachers and students, the first thing I particularly notice about Bjoern is his rolling "R," a hint to his upbringing in Bavaria. Bjoern is sixteen years old when I first meet him in December 2010 at the German School and has only come to Shanghai a few months prior at the beginning of the school year due to his

---

[175] German original: Shanghai ist in meinem Kopf für mich immer so. Ich weiß nicht. So ein Haufen von Vielem einfach. Einfach so, ganz viele Eindrücke die ganze Zeit. […] Mich macht das voll hyper. Immer wenn ich sofort in der Stadt von Shanghai bin, so in diesen Gegenden. […] Also als ich zurück [aus Deutschland] in Shanghai war, war ich mit meiner Freundin shoppen und wir sind gar nicht zum einkaufen gegangen, gekommen. Wir waren essen und sind einfach nur durch eine Straße gelaufen und waren aufgedreht und froh wieder in Shanghai zu sein. […] Sobald ich in die Stadt komme und in der Stadt bin, oder mit dem Taxi fahre von Club zu Club oder shoppen gehe… Ich bin einfach, ich werd… Also es kommt mir nicht so vor "oh Gott viel Zeug," sondern dann so eher, als hätte ich mehr Energie.

father's job posting. He has never lived outside the small village that he grew up in and in a first group interview with two other boys, Don and Alex, he shares that initially he was against his parents' move to China.

From December 2010 on I regularly meet Bjoern at school, during nightlife activities or school outings, where we chat or listen to reggae music on one of our MP3 players. Bjoern is particularly familiar with German reggae artists, German popular culture, and youth cultural practices outside the expatriate communities. We regularly exchange reggae music and also bond over our common experience of having grown up in a small German village. I observe how Bjoern quickly establishes friendships with his new classmates, although one and a half years after our first interview, in June 2012, he shares in retrospective that finding out "which friends suit me best" has been difficult. Nevertheless, Bjoern seems to be the link between the two gendered peer groups "the girls" and "the boys" (see chapter 4.5 and 4.6) in his class – interacting with both. As I spend much time with "the girls," it is thus not surprising that Bjoern is one of the boys I feel most comfortable talking to and who becomes one of my key male informants over the course of fieldwork.

Analyzing Bjoern's narratives of the self shows that in our many conversations he positions himself as someone who has to come to grips with boundaries along the line of class. In contrast to many of his classmates, Bjoern has just experienced his first move abroad and sometimes feels uncomfortable with the expatriate lifestyle. The move to Shanghai has brought a certain awareness of differences in class to him. He often describes his lifeworld in Germany and contrasts it to his new social circle in Shanghai. During my time in Shanghai, he often states his preferences for places like the shop (see chapter twelve) to high-end bars and occasionally voices his annoyance about everyone in Shanghai wanting the "high life" and how he misses "acting chavvy." In June 2012, as we are sitting at the French café next to his school discussing what being an expat actually means, he illustrates his view:

> Bjoern: Expat. Expat is a little like the senator status at Lufthansa. You are treated better. If you're a senator or a first class passenger at Lufthansa for instance, you get, for example, into this Lufthansa Lounge and you don't sit with all the others, the somehow ordinary, down there on these nasty seats. Instead, you are sitting on a massage chair, drinking your drink, eating a little caviar. That's being expat. Being expat is: 'What does your daddy do?' 'He works this and that.' 'Well, and what do you do here?' 'I drink up all the money that my dad earns.' That's expat.[176]

---

[176] German original: Expat. Expat ist wie so ein bisschen Senator-Status bei Lufthansa. Man wird besser behandelt einfach. Wenn du Senator oder first class zum Beispiel bei Lufthansa bist oder so, dann kommst du zum Beispiel in diese Lufthansa Lounge und hockst nicht mit allen anderen, den normalen irgendwie, da unten auf diesen ekligen Sesseln. Sondern hockst auf deinem Massage-Stuhl, trinkst da deinen Drink noch mal, isst noch ein bisschen Kaviar. So ist Expat sein. Expat sein ist: „Ja, was macht dein Daddy?"

228

Bjoern, by exaggerating the comfort expatriate lifestyle offers, emphasizes the issue of class that preoccupies him. He chooses the metaphor of flying first class to describe his expatriate life – a metaphor that for him is tied to class consciousness and distinctions from the "ordinary." Bjoern highlights a practice of distinction that anthropologist Jacqueline Knörr (2005) has likewise found underlying the concept of "Third Culture Kids" and led her to criticize the creation of a "TCK" identity as unproductive in coping with the migration experience. Knörr, based on her study of German expatriate youths having lived in Africa, argues:

> [C]reating a "TCK" world and ideology of difference as a result of having been brought up in an expatriate environment may well not be primarily a sign of actual third-culturedness, but of a transformation of an expatriate ideology of "natural superiority" over the local African population to a "TCK" ideology of "cultural superiority" over the "ordinary" local German population - a transformation, which neither supports a child's (re-) integration nor its further personal development. (Knörr 2005, 75)

The expatriate youths I accompanied constantly experience how a high social standing is attributed to them due to their financial means in respect to the local environment, their private and international education, their many travels and their multi-lingual proficiency. Everybody believes they will be the makers of the future. It is thus tempting, as Knörr describes above, to feel superior to locals – whether in the "host" or "home" country. The "TCK" ideology, and here I again agree with Knörr, channels this superiority, gives it a form of expression and helps to maintain such feelings. The "Third Culture Kid" concept seems to leave insufficient room for reflections and often rather surfaces as a form of "TCK" nationalism that claims hybridity for their own "TCK" nationals and essentializes others.

Bjoern, instead of using his privileged lifestyle as a major identity resource – although his account might include some upgrading of his position through self-stigmatizing –, self-reflectively contemplates and comments on the issue of status in his life. The borders he experiences between his friends in Shanghai and in Germany might be difficult to bridge, but the awareness of class is something expatriate life has brought along.

To me his comparison of expatriate life to flying first class therefore also offers another interpretation. Flying can also be seen as a symbol of viewing the world from above and of seeing and crossing borders. It is this dialectic of a class-consciousness – that Bjoern finds disturbing and arrogant – and the great view he deeply enjoys that marks the Shanghai experience for him. While feeling uncomfortable with the luxury and privilege the environment in Shanghai brings to him, he simultaneously enjoys these

---

„Ja, der arbeitet das und das." „Ja, und was machst du hier?" „Ich vertrink eigentlich nur das Geld, das mein Papa verdient." Das ist Expat.

and considers the stay as a positive experience. Bjoern sees how the Shanghai experience changes his outlook, his ideas about the future, and his self-confidence in believing what might be possible for him to achieve.

> Bjoern: Shanghai's the best that can happen to you, if you're a hick. You open up to everything. Also to opinions. You are not stuck.[177]

He labels himself (or his pre-Shanghai-self) a hick [Dorfmensch] who learned new ways and possibilities to live his life in the metropolis. In contrast to his peers at school, for instance Antonia, Bjoern never talks about negotiating his cultural identity in terms of questioning his "Germanness." This might be due to his upbringing in a single village in Bavaria. In contrast to the other students, the move to Shanghai has been the only one in his life. It is rather the differences between rural and urban, and the status and class consciousness, which came with the experience of moving, that startle and unsettle him.

When it comes to ways of coping with this experience of taking off first class, Bjoern – besides gaining a reflective perspective – develops plans for landing through the search for "a little trouble." During our last interview in June 2012, just after his graduation, Bjoern talks about his plans to study in Europe (outside Germany) starting the following year. He first wants to stay in Shanghai and take a Chinese language course together with his girlfriend Kressi. Bjoern explains that he particularly dreams of making his way on his own – without the help of his parents and their networks. His parents suggested sending him for a few months to Peru where he could live with a German family they know from Shanghai and intern at a German consulate.

> Bjoern: I can live with them for free and work at the consulate. That would be it. I'd arrive there and would already have everything made, somehow. But that's actually not what I want. That's why I also don't want to study in Germany, because looking for an apartment will always be easy, because you can speak German. I actually like to have a little trouble. When I get it, I want to be able to say, it wasn't that easy, but now I got it. Now everything is good. And not like, I arrive, the apartment has long been rented over the Internet, I only go in, furniture is already there, because my mom has organized everything for me. I'd find that boring. […] [The stay in Peru] would be like having it got made, really.[178]

---

[177] German original: Shanghai ist schon das Beste was einem passieren kann, wenn man ein Dorfmensch ist. Man öffnet sich so zu Allem. Zu Meinungen auch. Man ist nicht festgefahren.

[178] German original: Ich kann bei denen wohnen umsonst, kann beim Konsulat arbeiten. Das wär schon alles. Ich käme dahin und hätte ein fertig gemachtes Nest irgendwie. Aber das ist eigentlich das was ich nicht will. Deswegen will ich auch nicht in Deutschland studieren, weil da ist das mit Wohnungssuche immer leicht, weil da kann man deutsch reden. Ich möchte es eigentlich mit ein bisschen trouble haben. [...] Wenn ich das hab möcht ich sagen können, ja war nicht so leicht, aber jetzt hab ichs. Jetzt ist gut. Und nicht so, ja, ich komm dahin, die Wohnung ist schon lange gemietet über Internet, ich geh da jetzt nur noch rein, die Möbel stehen schon da, weil das meine Mama für mich gemacht hat. Das fände ich halt langweilig. [...] [Der Aufenthalt in Peru] wär ein fertig gemachtes Nest, wirklich.

230

This quote again reveals how Bjoern processes his experiences of class consciousness and class difference that create one aspect of the expatriate community. His example of renting a furnished apartment via the Internet reminds of expatriate packages that include services that help renting furnished villas in Shanghai. Bjoern is looking for ways to "earn" his privileges in the future or to be treated more equally with people of other social standings. Having met people from many different places he wants to continue an international education to keep broadening his perspective, but plans to do so by what he calls choosing a path "with a little trouble."

While expatriate student Bjoern is coping with the borders of class between his friends in Germany and his friends in Shanghai, the next student Arnaud is dealing with the messy negotiations of difference in the intimate sphere of the family and with his own in-between position.

14.3. Arnaud: "Sitting in-between, you can't be best at either one of them"

Arnaud is sixteen years old and enrolled at a French-medium school in Shanghai when I first meet him in June 2011. Arnaud has been introduced to me by Matthias, as the two know each other from jam sessions in the music room on the German-French school campus. After several text messages, Arnaud and I agree to meet at a Starbucks coffee shop downtown on Hengshan Road. When Arnaud, with his long black hair tied into a ponytail, jeans, sneakers and the obligatory headphones, shows up for the interview, I immediately like his polite and thought-through way of carefully studying and answering the interview questions.

His Chinese parents immigrated to Belgium for his father's studies and career. Arnaud was born in Belgium and is a Belgian national. After his birth his family moved to the Parisian outskirts. Here, he grew up until he turned nine years old and his family decided to move to Shanghai because of a career opportunity for his father and to be closer to a sick grandparent.

Arnaud, sitting opposite me and carefully sipping his orange juice at a little corner table in the Starbucks on Hengshan Road, recounts his everyday routines. He particularly enjoys talking about his band, theater, and current writing projects. When discussing his moving experiences and his growing up in France and Shanghai, he comments on one aspect of his migration story that he finds difficult to cope with: the influence of his first years in France and his French education on his relation to his parents, particularly his mother:

> Arnaud: My parents are Chinese Chinese. They don't have, they didn't have a
> French education. They are Chinese educat[ed]. [...] My dad, he
> went to a Belgian University. And he has a bit of European culture.
> But it really affects me how different me and my mom are in the
> head, in the mind. How maybe I am open-minded in some kinds of

talking, and she is not. And sometimes it can be the opposite. It makes me a bit sad, cause, I feel like maybe we would have more talking, with my parents, if I was Chinese. Maybe. It is mostly this. Because I don't only have a cultural difference with friends, or just everyone around, but also with my parents. And this really made me sad for some time. Just to know that I am different from my parents. I mean <L> everyone is different from their parents, but

Interviewer: Yeah, but I see.

Arnaud: But you have to have something from your parents. And I feel that by living in the French way, erm, sometimes I can't, I can't really stick to my parents. I gotta learn from [others], not from the parents. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Arnaud: And it really makes me sad sometimes. Cause I see. I got this French friend, […], he is a drummer […] And when I go to his place, I see how close he is to his mom. And how long they can have a discussion. About everything and nothing. And I can't have this. I mean. Cause. Of course I can, but it is not [the same].

Arnaud in a very impressive manner reflects upon his relations to his parents and expresses the emotional turmoil that comes along with conflicts and misunderstandings arising in the family that is marked by differences within. Anthropologist Michael Anderson (1999, 18) in his analysis of family life in bicultural marriages in Athens, Greece, calls these differences in "language use, bodiliness, [or] social protocol," "edges." Although his mother and father share the same cultural upbringing, Arnaud experiences such "edges" at home, and voices his fear of alienation from his parents – particularly his mother – whom he, despite their international experiences, describes as "Chinese Chinese." Arnaud labels his mother as "Chinese Chinese" in contrast to his own entangled position of cultural identity. I have not met Arnaud's parents, but their experiences as "reverse migrants" after their time in Belgium and France is likely to be akin to the findings of a study by Sin Yih Teo (2011) on the flow of skilled migration between Canada and the People's Republic of China. Teo examines how the cultural politics of identity unfold amongst Chinese immigrants in Canada in the context of increasing reverse migration and illustrates the subsequently evolving hybridized forms of cultural identification. However, Arnaud obviously sees a difference between his own and his parents hybridized forms of cultural identification. These differences, or "edges" in Anderson's (1999) terms, have made him "sad for some time."

Furthermore, Arnaud relates this strain on the family relations not only to cultural differences within the domestic home, but also to his feeling "in-between" in general. His comments demonstrate how difficult it is for him to position himself in terms of cultural identity as he fears not to be "good enough" to identify or be identified as "French" or "Chinese":

Arnaud: Because we always want to be best at something. And with this kind of sitting in-between, you can't. You can't be best at either one of them. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Arnaud: You can't be.

Interviewer: You can be the best at the in-between. <L>

Arnaud: Yeah, Right. Yeah, but.

Interviewer: Yeah, but it is maybe not satisfying sometimes?

Arnaud: Yeah, well. I wanna be better than the French guy. But he has this background; he has the parents that are French. Eh, you wanna be better than the Chinese one. Same.

Interviewer: Yeah, he has the Chinese school system and everything.

Arnaud: Yeah. So where am I?

In the interview Arnaud emphasizes his feeling that he, "sitting in-between," cannot succeed in either of the two worlds and often feels lost wondering, "Where am I?" He expresses his ambitions to be good or even best at the things he does and how he feels always one step behind his peers whose cultural identity and language is less entangled and more supported by their parents. When I try to suggest a more positive interpretation, he laughs, but cannot take this seriously. In contrast to the many students I interviewed, who stress their pride and the positive outcomes of growing up bilingually or in different cultural environments, Arnaud openly shares the difficulties of his way of growing up. Only in the end of our interview, he briefly focuses on the benefits of his culturally entangled life story and presents a more positive outlook.

The interview with Arnaud demonstrates how a shared space between ethnographer and the interviewed has been opened up to discuss Arnaud's narrative of growing up and his experiences of difference and borders due to his specific upbringing. During the interview Arnaud takes a perspective that aims to untangle and explain the various influences in his life, for instance the labeling he experiences due to his Asian phenotype and his French schooling, the difference between his and his parents' ways, or the difference between his and his friends' relations to parents. He voices how these experiences of borders make him fear alienation from his parents and a certain feeling of "sitting in-between." Arnaud has to cope with the constantly shifting borders in his life that seem not to allow him to find stable position of cultural identity that is confirmed by others, but lead him to speak from a position he regards as intermediate and unsatisfying.

The sixteen-year old student deals with his position in the in-between by finding creative outlets. When talking about his theater, literature, and band project, Arnaud is speaking with enthusiasm, his eyes shining bright and with pride in his success.

Touring, publishing, making music – Arnaud tries to open up spaces for himself to express his creativity. His high creative energy, being involved in school plays, bands, and writing short stories, seems to be a strategy to cope with the entanglements of his world. For his future he also dreams of a new space – creatively, culturally, and physically. Instead of staying in China or returning to France, he plans to move to Canada to study music recording and continue his search for belonging through creatively and artistically bridging his different experiences. The following Chinese-German raised student, Xia, is dealing with problems similar to those of Arnaud, but instead of choosing artistic outlets, Xia sees education and achievement as his main strategy to manage the boundaries he perceives in his life.

14.4. Xia: "I'd like to be like Einstein: citizen of the world"

When I attend classes at a German school from December 2010 onwards, I meet Xia on a regular basis. We occasionally chat. Eventually, I ask all students under-age in Xia's class for their parents' permission for interviews. One day at school Xia approaches me saying he might after all not to be able to participate in an interview as his parents think he does not fit the definition of students my research is interested in. Due to the expatriate community's familiarity with the idea of "Third Culture Kids," I had used this term to explain my research agenda on expatriate youth in a letter to parents. Interestingly, Xia's parents did not like to see their son as such a hybrid "TCK" and doubted he should participate.

Seventeen-year-old Xia is a Chinese national who was granted exceptional permission to attend a German school by the Shanghai municipal government. Born in China, Xia moved to Germany with his parents after kindergarten to start his school career in Germany. His father obtained his doctorate at a German university and started working for a German company. After four years and one move within Germany, his parents decided to return to Shanghai. Although having been trained in Chinese writing after school and on weekends, Xia experienced difficulties in the entrance test to the local Chinese schools in Shanghai, because the education system and its ways of testing were unfamiliar to him. His parents therefore applied for a special permit and Xia could attend the German-medium school. Here, Xia was an academically very strong student. However, his fellow students always regarded Xia as different.

When Xia approaches me with his (parents') doubts about fitting into my research project, I explain that the term can be debated and anyone interested can join. A few days later I am happy to see that his mother has signed the permission for the interview. When we meet for a first interview at the French café close to school, his

parents' initial objection to him participating are still on our minds, and we particularly discuss the politics of cultural identity and intergenerational conflicts.

In this first interview in spring 2011, the voice recorder, our coffee cups and my questionnaire between us, Xia shares, "my parents sometimes think I don't think Chinese enough."[179] He underlines his statement by giving the example of a discussion he had lately with his parents over dinner about the Chinese space program. At this dinner he contemplated on the usefulness of the program, which, he then suggested, might as well be seen as a waste of money and resources. His parents got angry, accusing him of not being proud of China. It is on the basis of this story and accusation that we discuss his negotiations with his parents and his feelings about belonging during our interview.

> Interviewer: So they practically accuse you a little bit of lacking patriotism?
>
> Xia: Practically. Well, my father, he is afraid. [He uses] a description of a plant. Actually, my grandfather wrote such a poem. There is a plant that glides on the water; it has no roots. And my father fears that I am just like that, and that I will later have problems, and that I somehow won't know where the roots are.
>
> Interviewer: And that is why he thinks, or tries, or suggests to you that China is where your roots are. But you are skeptic if that works?
>
> Xia: Well. I think the roots are actually where the people are that you like most. And I know my friends from school. The problem is that they are from different countries. [It is unclear] if I will see them again in the future.
>
> Interviewer: Hmm. So they are all actually swimming a little as well?
>
> Xia: <L> Or are swimming towards somewhere else. Yes. <L>.[180]

Aquatic plants as an image of rootlessness, of floating without a clear destination, symbolize the worries of Xia's parents about their son's future. Xia himself does not discard this image, but argues that his "roots are where the people are that you like most." He rejects the necessity of a fixed and essentialized feeling of belonging tied to place or nationality, and ties feelings of belonging to his friends. In contrast to Arnaud, Xia does not comment on the emotional effects the conflict with his parents evokes. I think, however, that Xia's parents fear is not only about lacking patriotism or fearing

---

[179] German original: Also meine Eltern denken, dass ich manchmal nicht Chinesisch genug denke.

[180] Geman original: [Interviewer: Dass heißt ein bisschen werfen sie dir quasi mangelnden Patriotismus vor. Ja?] Quasi. Also mein Vater hat zwar so, so Angst. So eine Beschreibung mit einer Pflanze. Das hat eigentlich mein Opa, so ein Gedicht, geschrieben. Und da ist eine Pflanze, die auf dem Wasser schwebt, keine Wurzel hat. Und mein Vater hat Angst, dass ich auch so bin und dann später dann damit Probleme habe und so. Und irgendwie nicht weiß, wo die Wurzeln sind, und dann, ja. [Interviewer: Und deswegen meint er halt, oder versucht, oder legt dir nahe, dass China sozusagen für dich deine Wurzeln sind. Aber du bist da ein bisschen skeptisch ob das so funktioniert?] Naja. Ich denke mal die Wurzel ist eigentlich da wo die Leute sind, die du am meisten magst. Und meine Freunde habe ich ja von der Schule. Problem ist dann, dass die immer… Dass immer, die viel aus den verschiedenen Staaten kommen. <x> Ob ich die in Zukunft wiedersehen werde oder nicht. [Interviewer: Hmm. Dass heisst die schwimmen ja eigentlich auch alle so ein bisschen?] Ja. <L> Oder schwimmen woanders hin oder. Ja. <L>.

their son's rootlessness, but might also be similar to Arnaud's worries of alienation. Xia in his self-reflective narrative particularly highlights the role that the difference between the world at home and the world at school might play in this conflict. He sees his conflict with his parents as mainly arising out of their different educational upbringing, for instance the encouragement at his school to question and think critically, which he applies in the discussion of the Chinese space program. His parents have difficulties to understand his way of arguing and interpret it as lacking patriotism.

During our interview in June 2012 – Xia is in a happy mood about just having finished school and having done brilliantly on his A-levels – he describes how he manages this experience of difference in his daily routine:

> Xia: At school I speak German the whole time and at home I speak Chinese the whole time. And at school I think in German and at home in Chinese. The change is quite… Sometimes it works well, sometimes not really. After the holidays, to switch from Chinese to German, sometimes that doesn't work out really well.[181]

When I inquire about if or how these different worlds require him to act accordingly, Xia explains that there are many different contexts and situations with different degrees of familiarity or unease.

> Xia: Many situations exist <x> and some situations are eventually foreign to me. I am quite familiar with what a Chinese family is like, or how it is at a German school. But I am not familiar with how it is like for the Germans at home, or for the Chinese at school.[182]

For Xia the various zones and differences he has to manage during his everyday life have become normality. Steve Vertovec (1997, 294) refers to such competences to improvise from various, sometimes crisscrossed cultural and linguistic systems as "milieu moving." Xia's competences of "milieu moving" also bring along specific challenges and he has to "navigate processes of identification" with different norms and practices and "learn how to manage tensions between conformity and individuality" (Sporton, Valentine, and Nielsen 2006, 214).

Danau Tanu (2011), showing that "TCK" literature has underrepresented these experiences of ruptures in the everyday routine, recalls her own upbringing as an Asian child in an international school abroad – which she experienced as a "highly westernised one" (ibid., 223) – as a zoned life requesting different practices. Akin to Xia's explanations of his everyday life, she describes her upbringing:

---

[181] In der Schule spreche ich die ganze Zeit deutsch und zu Hause die ganze Zeit chinesisch. Und dabei denke ich in der Schule auf deutsch und zu Hause auf chinesisch. Der Wechsel ist ziemlich. Manchmal klappt es gut, manchmal klappt es nicht so gut. […] Nach den Ferien von Chinesisch auf deutsch überwechseln, dass ist dann manchmal nicht so gut.

[182] German original: Es gibt viele Situationen <x> und manche Situationen die mir vielleicht fremd sind. Mir ist es ziemlich vertraut wie es in einer chinesischen Familie so ist, oder wie in einer deutschen Schule. Aber mir ist nicht so vertraut wie es bei den Deutschen zu Hause ist, oder bei den Chinesen in der Schule.

For me it was "Western" culture by day and "Asian" culture by night. I experienced a sense of cultural dissonance which in many ways was similar, though not identical, to that of second generation immigrants growing up in Western countries. (Tanu 2011, 223)

While such milieus are not as homogenous as Tanu's description lets them appear, students like Xia certainly experience ruptures when moving between them. Xia has to bridge different cultural practices in his everyday life – a practice Robert Pütz (2004, 13) calls "everyday transculturality." Xia often reflects upon his shifting cultural frames of references and his own positioning and acts accordingly. With these reflections Xia's practice is often turned into "strategic transculturality" that Robert Pütz (ibid., 28) has conceptualized as the competence of moving reflexively in the different symbolic systems.

When I am at school, I observe how Xia has difficulties to get along with some of the students. These students, Xia explains, are different from him, as they came from Germany to China, and not like him first from China to Germany. However, he says that he has much in common with other students whose parents have Chinese origins. Reflecting upon his relationship to his classmates, he puts forward that it is mainly with these students that he gets along well.

> Xia: Maybe because I only moved to Germany at the age of seven, I get along much better with the Chinese people at my school, well, those who have the same culture that I have. Better than with the Chinese who are only here and with the Germans.[183]

Xia's reflections allude to something I have come across overhearing conversations among a few students who referred to themselves as GBCs – German Born Chinese – in allusion to the much more common notion of ABCs – American Born Chinese. Wondering about this potential form of collective identity positions, I ask Xia if and why he feels more comfortable in the interactions with the Chinese-German teenagers.

> Xia: [I feel] more comfortable in the interactions, then [it is] also less disconcerting, and also because we share quite the same experience so that we look at some things from the same perspective. For example, we are put under much more pressure from early on. We are being spoilt in a different way. Spoilt by parents' attention. Different than maybe, I don't know, by getting gifts or something.[184]

One binding experience of these "GBC" students seems to be their parents' outlook on the importance of education and doing well in school. While the expatriate experience

---

[183] German original: Vielleicht gerade weil ich erst mit sieben nach Deutschland gezogen bin, […] versteh ich mich viel besser mit chinesischen Leuten an meiner Schule, also die, die die gleiche Kultur haben wie ich. Besser als, als mit den Chinesen die nur hier sind und mit den Deutschen halt.

[184] German original: [Ich fühle mich] wohler im Umgang, dann [gibt es] weniger Befremdliches, und ziemlich auch [weil wir] die gleiche Erfahrung gemacht [haben], so dass wir manche Sachen aus der gleichen Perspektive sehen. Zum Beispiel uns wird einfach, schon seit klein auf mehr unter Druck gesetzt. Auf andere Weise verwöhnt. Verwöhnt durch Aufmerksamkeit der Eltern. Anders als durch vielleicht, ich weiß nicht, Geschenke oder so was.

is a unifying framework and construction of an expatriate identity at the international schools, as I have shown in chapter nine, Xia's comment shows that this community can be divided and that students with Chinese family background are sometimes regarded as a distinct sub-group. Talking about these experiences shared among students with Chinese relatives, Xia comments in-between the lines on the difficulties he sometimes encountered with other students at his school. When I question him about these difficulties, he does not expand the issue. I opt to inquire further, and he explains:

> Interviewer: So you think that is because of the different, not culture, well, but roles…
>
> Xia: Perspectives.
>
> Interviewer: Perspective you'd say? Perspective on your own life so to say?
>
> Xia: I see that… I like it when I look at people from my perspective, but I would also like to look at things from their perspective.[185]

Xia experiences in his everyday life the different practices and views of students from various backgrounds, which he terms "perspectives." He voices his desire to (be able to) look at things from such different "perspectives." An ability he has to actually demonstrate on a daily basis when gliding through the different "milieus" at home and at school, but also a skill he displays when narrating and reflecting upon his everyday life. As his accounts of discussions with his parents over dinner and his reflections upon his position at school, illustrate, taking such different or even transcultural perspectives is not an effortless or frictionless practice:

> Xia: I personally think, well, my other Chinese friends have much better, actually integrated much better or something. They've been longer than me in…
>
> Interviewer: It is easier for them?
>
> Xia: Much easier! I [moved to Germany] only at the age of seven. And there I was a foreigner, too, and had to learn everything.
>
> Interviewer: So you mean you've always stayed a foreigner a little bit?
>
> Xia: Yes. And I also have a Chinese passport. That's a foreigner. My parents have often warned me. That is relational: Because I have a Chinese passport, I know that I am legally a foreigner. And maybe will be treated like that in Germany. And that's why I also feel like that. […] I think it's right for my parents to teach me that.[186]

---

[185] German original: Interviewer: Meinst du, dass es aufgrund der verschiedenen, nicht Kulturen, ja, aber Rollen… Xia: Perspektiven. Interviewer: Perspektive würdest du sagen? Perspektive so auf das eigene Leben sozusagen? Xia: Ich seh das. Ich finde das gut wenn ich Leute aus meiner Perspektive betrachte, aber ich würd auch gern [auf] Sachen aus deren Perspektive heraus schauen.

[186] German original: Also ich persönlich finde. Also meine anderen chinesischen Freunde haben sich so viel besser, eigentlich viel besser integriert oder so. Sie sind auch schon länger als ich… [Interviewer: Also denen fällt das leichter?] Viel leichter! Ich hab dann halt erst mit sieben. Und da war ich auch Ausländer und musste alles lernen. [Interviewer: Dass heißt du meinst du bist immer ein bisschen Ausländer geblieben?] Ja. Und ich hab auch einen chinesischen Pass. Das ist ein Ausländer. Meine Eltern haben

238

Only when reading this interview transcript I was startled by Xia's descriptions of being a "foreigner" – although he is a Chinese national currently living in China. It seems as if he has taken the expatriate community as point of reference, positioning himself as a minority. Furthermore, he is worried about his future experiences in Germany, where he plans to study, and fears possible exclusion and discrimination due to his name, appearance, and passport. Xia further elaborates upon this constraint of the passport:

> Xia: I would love to have a world in which one would say internationality is a human right. If you could live anywhere in the world and could freely develop there. But the world simply hasn't arrived there yet. And to get by [in this world] despite globalization, despite these barriers, I have to stay realistic. […] I then just have to live in this world.
>
> Interviewer: And in this world the passport plays a role?
>
> Xia: Yes, nationality plays a role. No matter how international you are […] I would consider myself as international. But the other people, those who see me for the first time. Employers. They see you as a Chinese.
>
> Interviewer: You don't have a passport that says "international."
>
> Xia: I'd like to be like Einstein: citizen of the world.
>
> Interviewer: <L>
>
> Xia: Yes. And I once thought that if I become really good, then I'll become one eventually. That's why I put so much effort into it. If I didn't achieve I'd have less chances here in China. Sure. It's just like that.[187]

Xia's reference to Einstein is important for two reasons: firstly, it symbolizes his ideal of high education, fame, success, intelligence, cleverness, genius, and approval; secondly, it alludes to Einstein's diasporic life on the move and Xia's desire of being a *weltbürger*, to be able to move around freely – something he understands as a goal the world should be moving towards. Xia experiences cultural identity not only as a position, or as performative, but also realizes how it is relational, depending on others and on citizenship. Xia voices his understanding that, despite his own flexible and creative outlook on cultural identity and belonging – "I consider myself as international"

---

mich darum auch oft ermahnt. Das ist dann halt gegenseitig. Dadurch dass ich einen chinesischen Pass habe, weiß ich, dass ich legal ein Ausländer bin. Und vielleicht auch in Deutschland so behandelt werde. Und deswegen fühl ich mich auch so. […] Ich finde es auch richtig, dass meine Eltern mir das so beigebracht haben.

[187] German original: Ich hätte gerne eine Welt in der man sagt Internationalität wäre ein Menschenrecht. Wenn man überall auf der Welt dann leben könnte und sich dort entfalten könnte. Aber die Welt ist einfach noch nicht so weit. Und […] um trotz der Globalisierung, trotz dieser Barrieren dann halt noch zurechtzukommen, muss ich auch realistisch sein. […] Ich muss dann halt in dieser Welt leben. [Interviewer: Und in dieser Welt spielt der Pass eine Rolle.] Ja, spielt Nationalität schon eine Rolle. Egal wie international du bist. […] Ich würde mich selbst ja als international sehen. Aber die anderen Leute, die dich zum ersten Mal sehen. Arbeitgeber. Die sehen dich als einen Chinesen an. [Interviewer: Du hast halt keinen Pass, der sagt „international."] Ich wär auch gern wie Einstein, Weltbürger. [Interviewer: <L>] Ja. Ich hab mir auch mal gedacht wenn ich richtig gut werde, dann werd ich das vielleicht. Deswegen geb ich mir auch so viel Mühe. Wär ich schlecht dann hätt ich hier in China weniger Chancen. Klar. Das ist einfach so.

–, he feels the weight and constraints of difference and being "othered." He hopes to be able to cross these borders through education and achievement.

Xia's experiences of growing up in Germany and Shanghai lead him to realize the difficulties of taking different perspectives and bridging differences. While this makes Xia aware of certain borders in his life, the next students' subjective experiences go in almost the opposite direction: boundaries cross and blur in Paul's subjective experiences of growing up on the move, making them and the many shifting points of identification seemingly impossible to locate.

14.5. Paul: "Home is wherever I am staying"

It is Saturday afternoon and I am supposed to meet Paul for the first time for a group interview with Matthias at a downtown café on Wulumuqi Road. Matthias, who I know from the German school, has introduced us via text messages a few days prior as I have told him I am interested in meeting students from other schools to gain a broader perspective on expatriate youths' lives. I am running two or three minutes late and Paul, who is already at the café, texts and then calls me. Shanghai's street noise, however, swallows the sound of my mobile phone and I only notice his call when I arrive at the café. Matthias is nowhere to be seen and I do not know what Paul looks like. Standing in the entrance of the coffee shop, wondering who this friend interested in my research could be, I try to call Paul back. The phone of an athletic teen standing outside the café rings and we introduce ourselves to each other. The weather is beautiful, but we decide to go inside, fearing the street noise might make a conversation, and especially a recording, impossible. We take a table close to the window. The air-condition is humming and music is playing in the background. Waiting for Matthias and trying to make conversation, I ask Paul how the two have met. He shares the story of how he had repeatedly bumped into a friend of Matthias at various nightlife activities and finally started hanging out with him and Matthias. They became friends, "jammed" together and eventually founded a music band. Their band, however, no longer exists at the time of the interview due to difficulties to arrange for practice sessions, as the students live one and a half hours apart by car or metro. While listening to Paul's accounts of their band, Matthias texts he is running late and we decide to begin recording without him. Matthias joins our conversation about thirty minutes later.

Paul's story entails many moves and growing up in a bi-national family. He is seventeen years old and grew up in Brazil and the United States and moved to Shanghai six years prior to the interview. He is a German national, born in Brazil to a

Brazilian mother and a German father. He helps me to understand his upbringing by clarifying his language skills:

> Paul: I speak Portuguese, I don't speak German. My mom is Brazilian.
>
> Interviewer: Your mom is Brazilian, your dad is German, but you grew up in America?
>
> Paul: And China. And Brazil. But I speak very little German. I can understand it. Okay. But I can't speak it really. I can say like: hello, thank you, please. <L>.

Paul's different positions of living in China, being born in Brazil and speaking Portuguese at home, having lived and being educated in US-American ways, but by passport definition being German are hard to grasp for me during our first encounter. Paul seems used to my confusion and also to being labeled differently depending on the point of reference – place of birth, country of upbringing, passport, or others. When we talk about his private Christian US-American school in Shanghai, for instance, he mentions that only two Europeans are currently enrolled – including himself. Just having heard, in perfect American accent, that he has never lived in Europe, I am irritated by him being labeled "European." His particularly flexible and ever-shifting way of positioning himself in terms of national or cultural identity clearly depend on the point of reference and seem to be responses to different labels others appoint to him. While his story of high mobility at first sight reminds of those accounts that Pollock and Van Reken base their concept of "Third Culture Kids" on, I find it difficult to see his flexible ways as claiming belonging "in relationship to others of similar background" (for the definition see Pollock and Van Reken [1999]2009, 19 or chapter 2.3 of this ethnography). During this first encounter, he seems to make very few claims of belonging at all. I already highlighted the ideas on home he expresses during our first encounter in depth in chapter 3.4, where he attributes his closer relationship to Shanghai mostly to the fact that it is his current place of living. Home seems a rather vague idea to Paul. When he describes his multi-local experiences, it is almost a non-attachment to places that comes to the fore. His response to the question of home is just a reluctant "wherever I am staying." This flexible idea of home also relates to his particularly flexible and ever-shifting way of positioning himself in terms of cultural identity depending on the point of reference. Maybe his shifting positions seem so fleeting and hard to grasp for me, because in contrast to the other students I only met Paul to inquire and communally reflect upon his experiences and did not have the chance to accompany him in his everyday routine. Maybe this feeling of flexibility also arises from the fact that at the time of this first interview Paul is just about to graduate and the end of his stay in Shanghai is approaching. His father has already moved on to

Thailand, his mother plans to follow after Paul's graduation ceremony and Paul is making plans to move to Germany for college:

> Paul: So I wanna go there. I wanna learn German. I also have a lot of family there. […] Plus I haven't lived in Europe yet. So, now I kinda wanna go there.

In August 2011, a few months after the interview, Paul's plans come true and he moves to a German university town and enrolls at a private English-medium university.

I meet Paul for a second time in Germany, just after Christmas 2011. As he has just bought a record player with his Christmas money, our meeting spontaneously turns into a shopping tour for vinyl records, which we both enjoy. We end up in a café where we discuss the day's purchases as well as his first months in Germany. After our first encounter and my impression of his shifting forms of positionings, I am curious to see how he is doing in Germany. While we are drinking our hot chai lattes, he expresses no worries about the move and stresses his ability to adapt anywhere – especially as his private English-medium university is providing another "bubble." Re-introducing the term "bubble," he describes his college campus using the same wording as for his social world in Shanghai during his first interview. He seems to have quickly adapted to the international environment. He found a job at the campus café, his rather basic German language skills and the fresh move not seeming to cause difficulties. He started to learn German and enjoys exploring the city outside the Campus. Generally, he conveys a calmness and effortlessness about his many moves and his recent move to Germany in particular. While he seems happy with his university life and learning German, I wonder if his lack of strong ties to places could sometimes be strenuous and unsettling for him. Enjoying the hot beverages after our shopping walk through the German December cold, he tells me he considers himself Brazilian, although he has only lived in Brazil until he was six years old. I am surprised by his new choice of claiming cultural identity. While I wonder if my presence forces some kind of statement of belonging, he lists his very pragmatic reasons for this choice by explaining why his other places of upbringing are unsuitable to define himself: He simply does not want to be American, and the way he looks he cannot be Chinese. I recall how during our first interview he stated he does not want to live in Brazil again and I ask him about his future plans. Not knowing where to move after finishing university in Germany, he expresses his wish to find a girlfriend who would hopefully set the place to live for the future. He feels he cannot make the decision.

Seventeen-year-old Paul's experiences include growing up on the move and in a bi-national family. His and his parents' nationalities, languages, and cultural practices differ both from his school and from his country of living. He does neither speak the

language his passport is issued in, nor has he until recently ever lived in his passport country. In one way his experiences of mobility, shifting borders, and differences are one of the most extreme among the expatriate youths I encountered. In another way his experiences are particularly difficult to understand from the transcultural perspective I suggested. The transcultural perspective the students and I took to make sense of the shifting experiences of difference and borders, here seems to be overstrained. The "trans" invited us to untangle these experiences, assisted us to gain a perspective that helped to open up a shared space to discuss these. It helped us to look at the borders to unravel the shifting influences, the new creations of subjective positions of cultural identity. However, the same "trans" now fails us as it tricked us into thinking we could untangle the experiences, meanwhile forgetting about the second syllable of the concept, the "culture." However, this second part, "culture" should have warned us that the everyday experiences are already an ever-changing set of practices, meanings in a on-going process, "plural and in motion" (Nadig 2004, 10) – an understanding of "culture" that in the discipline of anthropology has already been widespread before the rise of transcultural studies, and as for instance, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) have put forward by calling for a focus on the production of cultural difference rather than using "culture" as distinct entities. While, with the help of a transcultural perspective, I have described the experience and production of cultural difference in the four previous biographic accounts, as well as in chapter thirteen when investigating the "diaspora space" (Brah 1996) and the construction of difference of expatriates towards Chinese citizens, I have difficulties to capture Paul's experience. In Paul's narrative of cultural identity, where we find so many points of reference, it is impossible to understand the experience of borders without a more detailed ethnographic investigation into the "production of difference within [his] common, shared, and connected spaces" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 16). Transcultural perspectives with the focus on the shifting and transgression of boundaries require detailed ethnographic insights into the production of cultural difference in specific sites.

Paul himself, like me, seems to have difficulties to grasp the production of difference in his life. Instead of describing or contemplating on the differences that he experiences or bridges, like the other students, Paul simply describes what has helped him to emplace himself: the social worlds of "bubbles." His descriptions of moving between "bubbles," from Shanghai's "Jinqiao bubble" to the English-medium university campus reminds of the accounts of transnational practices of mobile professionals by David Ley who writes,

> Foreshortened time and space create a circumscribed lifeworld around work, bars, and sporting and expatriate clubs. [...] The outcome is a lifeworld that is the

opposite of the expansive and inclusive networks implied by ungrounded or deterritorialized networks. Instead, the social geography of the transnational elite may be highly localized, restricted to particular territories. As they are despatched internationally from city to city, the transnational capitalist class are island hopping from one expatriate enclave to another. (Ley 2004, 157)

This "island hopping" is a very local practice involving very concrete sites, as Ley describes, but as also my own chapters on spatial practices have demonstrated. Paul seems to be a master of this art of "island hopping," of finding a place in expatriate communities, as a way to cope with the "transcultural turbulences" (Brosius and Wenzlhuemer 2011) of his way of growing up.

14.6. Transcultural Perspectives underlying/on Students' Diverse Experiences

> At different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited. They become, not only what they have, at certain times, certainly been – mutually excluding categories, but also what they sometimes are – differential points along a sliding scale. (Hall 1990, 228)

The five students' portraits and their reflections upon their social worlds and their positions within them, show how heterogeneous growing up as an international school student in Shanghai can be. Various factors influence the transient time in Shanghai – whether it is the first time abroad or whether families are constantly moving, whether there is a need to negotiate difference within the family or between family and school, which is for example the case for children of Chinese-foreign marriages or Chinese reverse migrants. However, it is not the aim of this ethnography to create a typology, but to illustrate that underneath the students' diverse experiences and subjective narratives lies common ground that I conceptualize as the gaining of "transcultural perspectives." It is a perspective that reveals that mobility brings along the shifting of various points of references and boundaries, as Stuart Hall's quote above describes, along or across which expatriate students have to find their own positions of cultural identity.

Antonia, child of a Chinese-German marriage, formulated this experience of borders between being "Chinese" and/or "German" and chose to claim Shanghai as her major resource for her hybrid cultural identity. Bjoern, who grew up in a small village in Germany, particularly highlighted his awareness of class and class differences when contemplating about the influences of the move to Shanghai on his life. Arnaud, a French-educated, Belgium national whose Chinese parents moved to Europe to eventually return to Shanghai, in the shared space of the interviewer and the interviewed articulated his worries about feeling different from his parents. Chinese student Xia, enrolled at the German school, articulated his general awareness of borders between himself and his fellow students who are European nationals,

244

particularly in regards to the constraints of his Chinese passport and family background. He also reflected upon the difficulties of dealing with differences between school and home. Paul, child of a Brazilian-German marriage with many international moves, found it impossible to make claims of belonging to specific points of reference or to formulate a narrative of cultural identity. His perspective seemed to pay little attention to boundaries, or only to their absence in his life except the one marking his "international bubble."

The five biographic examples demonstrate that the teenagers were very interested in sharing and discussing their views with me, opening up a shared space in which they took a transcultural perspective, investigating the role of mobility, cultural practices and difference in their lives. These transcultural perspectives on their own lives at first sight stand in contradiction to their everyday spatial practices of demarcation and class-consciousness that I have, for instance, revealed in chapter eight on the housing practices and in chapter nine when discussing the community of international schools. However, these actually go hand in hand: the own mobility might evoke desire for stability on the one hand, and a desire to broaden one's point of view to manage the differences experienced, on the other. Dwelling on the moves does not erase, but maybe even evoke desires to dwell and create familiar spaces – despite having the next move in mind. Only on the basis of the previous chapters that zoomed in on the everyday life in Shanghai, however, this dialectic could become visible. While the concept of transcultural perspectives proved valuable to understand the underlying experiences of shifting borders and the emergence of subjective new forms of cultural identity positioning, it also turned out to be too shallow without a detailed ethnographic perspective that can bring the grounded experiences to the fore, an issue that came apparent in my analysis of Paul's narrative that seemed so fleeting. Groundedness through the analysis of everyday practices is necessary to understand the gaining of transcultural perspectives and their meanings. Students with similar family backgrounds and migration stories might share similar questions and negotiations about their positions in the world, but they still deal differently with their situations in everyday life.

The narratives of the self the expatriate youths offered in regards to cultural identity positionings during interviews were triggered by questions of home or inquiries about challenges, but were often also introduced by the teenagers themselves. Their narratives usually highlighted events that gave the impetus for change in their lives – characteristically, their moves from one country or city to the next. These events are what Giddens (1991, 112–114) calls "fateful moments." "Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were, at a

crossroads in his existence" (ibid.,113). The next part is concerned with such a crossroads in the expatriate youths' lives: their high school graduation and move out of Shanghai.

Part 6

MOVING ON

Figure 37: Home in Shanghai: Mia's Room Prepared for the Next Move. Photo by Mia

This last part, "Moving On," brings again the expatriate youths' experience of Shanghai as a transient space to the fore. The part consists of one final chapter that centers on the students from the German school and analyzes their ways to manage the impending move out of Shanghai.

15.   Farewell Rituals: Goodbyes and Graduation

> Peter: Well, it's strange because I don't even know anymore what it is like to live in Germany. And you have, as I said, these stable points that you are focused on and that you rely on. And you have gotten this routine. And all this you have to rebuild again. Because every human being needs some kind of routine, I think. And I also need that. <L> And now this is… Because I live in a hotel and I don't have my things. And I don't have my things anywhere else. <L> That means right now I'm in the middle of nowhere.[188]

Peter, whose room a few hours prior to the interview probably looked similar to the image (Figure 37) that Mia shared, describes his situation after days of packing as "in the middle of nowhere." Peter's belongings are now in a container to be shipped to Germany and he has moved into a hotel for the last remaining days in Shanghai. The photo shows Mia's room, likewise prepared for the move to Germany. Interestingly, she sent this image to me paired with the picture of her room still fully set up (see Figure 11 in chapter eight) as a response to my question of what home in Shanghai means. Evidently, home means both – the room and the move. This has been succinctly conceptualized by Ahmed et al.'s (2003) use of the metaphors of "uprootings/regroundings." I have already discussed the issue of home-making or "regrounding" in chapter eight and throughout the ethnography. This final chapter is now concerned with "uprootings," the move out of Shanghai.

For the majority of expatriate youths graduation coincides with leaving China. While some of the teenagers' families stay in Shanghai, others waited only for their children to complete schooling to then also move on. Consequently, for some students even their place of return – the family home – is shifting and as a result will make visits 'back home in Shanghai' impossible or difficult. Therefore, in comparison to youths whose parents stay on in a more or less stable hometown, graduation also is a closing ceremony for the "Shanghai-chapter" of their young lives, as student Olivia put it.

---

[188] German original: Ja, ist schon komisch. Weil ich weiß gar nicht mehr wie es ist in Deutschland zu leben. Und man hat, wie gesagt, seine festen Punkte worauf man sich drauf fixiert hat und wo man sich drauf verlässt. Und halt diese Routine bekommen hat. Und das muss man erstmal alles wieder aufbauen. Weil eine gewisse Routine braucht, glaube ich, jeder Mensch. Und ich brauch die auch. <L> Und die ist jetzt erstmal… Weil ich wohn im Hotel und ich hab meine Sachen nicht. Und ich hab nirgendwoanders meine Sachen. <L> Das heißt ich bin gerade irgendwie so mitten im nowhere.

I returned to Shanghai for this period of change for two weeks in May/June 2012 to accompany the students from the German school. It was my own last visit to Shanghai, and a final farewell for me, too. It was my goodbye to the city, my friends, and "my field" that was slowly dissolving, because the majority of the actors of my study were about to move on. During this very intense period of two weeks the students and I bonded over this common leitmotif of saying goodbye, and over the mutual theme of our situations revolving around the question: What next?

The morning after my arrival in Shanghai I go to the German school to find some of the students gathered for their final oral exams. They are nervously going through their notes, giving speeches to each other, explaining matters that might somehow be related to their exam topics and trying to calm each other at the same time. This madness repeats itself the following day for the other half of the students. I am happy to see all of them again and to catch up with the latest news, especially all the plans for the coming days: exams, the announcement of the final results, parties, dinners, and club visits, their festive commencement ceremony, the much anticipated graduation ball, the after-party, and a farewell barbecue at the shop. We go on final shopping tours at the fabric or glasses markets and simply hang out at the students' homes. In-between observing or even participating in all these joyful events, I meet ten students for individual, about one hour long follow-up interviews, where we discuss their future plans: their decisions to move away and their feelings about leaving Shanghai, their thoughts about finishing school, their anticipation and anxieties of moving on to university. These matters are presented in detail in the following three subsections.

15.1. Leaving Shanghai

Andrea and I are sitting outside on the narrow pavement in front of the same café we met for the first interview, just around the corner of her parents' apartment. It is the third interview and by now she knows the procedure. The street noise level occasionally requires us to shout at each other, but we enjoy our ginger lemon tea nonetheless. Andrea also orders some fries that I steal one after the other off her plate. We start talking about the stressful exam period, the celebrations surrounding graduation, and her plans for the summer and beyond. When I inquire how she feels about leaving Shanghai, it is apparent that she is still sorting her thoughts and emotions about moving.

> Andrea: It's okay. I mean, it just normal that you move somewhere else for your studies, that you somehow move on. And I've been here for seven years now.
>
> Interviewer: Seven years.

Andrea: Yes, quite long. And, I mean, it, erm, has been home, for seven years. But I am, my opinion is… [silence]. Okay, well I am of the opinion that… Well, yes, I will miss it. Very much. I will also cry, probably, when I'm sitting on the plane.[189]

Andrea is still trying to forge her narrative of moving on – caught between the normality of moving away from home for college and the sadness about leaving Shanghai forever.

When Mia and I discuss her feelings about saying farewell to Shanghai, sitting on her bed, drinking water, surrounded by a rather contemplative silence – very much unlike the street noise in the background during my conversation with Andrea – Mia also communicates a very similar view.

Mia: [Leaving feels] strange. […] I've lived most of my lifetime in Shanghai. […] I've been gone in between and so on, but I've been here for six years in total, and everywhere else I've only spent two or three years. And that's why this is really my home. It is… Here, I know my way around best, I know the people, the people know me. Here, even though I only speak very little Chinese, I manage. […] Yes, when I walk through the city, I know where I am, I know how to get where I want to go. […] Even if you've been here for a long time, it never gets boring. […] And sure on the one hand, I'm also looking [forward to new things.] On the other hand, nevertheless, I could stay on. I wouldn't have a problem with that. […] Actually, I don't want to leave.[190]

Mia's commentary on moving on illustrates the mixed feelings about the immanent changes. Leaving Shanghai means leaving the familiar behind. There will not be a family home in Shanghai to return to for Andrea and Mia, nor for Olivia who summarizes her sentiments about leaving for me in an interview at the French café:

Olivia: Well, the school in Shanghai is the one I went to the longest, ever. That's why I find it hard. Because I have so many memories, especially because I've spent my youth here. That's what you always like to remember. Yes, good friends, first love, bla bla bla – all that existed. Yes, I will have a lot of memories here. And it is difficult to suddenly … I mean, I can't decide upon leaving now, I have to. My dad has to

---

[189] German original: Auch okay. Ich mein, also es ist ja normal, dass man zum Studium dann woanders hingeht, dass man irgendwie weitergeht. Und ich war jetzt sieben Jahre hier. [Interviewer: Sieben Jahre.] Ja, schon lange. Und, ich mein, es ist ehm, Zuhause, gewesen, sieben Jahre. Aber ich bin, meine Meinung ist. [silence]. Okay, also ich bin halt der Meinung, dass, … Also ja ich werd es schon vermissen. Sehr. Ich werd auch weinen, wahrscheinlich, wenn ich dann so im Flieger sitz.

[190] German original: [Wegzugehen ist] komisch. […] Ich hab die längste Zeit meines Lebens in Shanghai gewohnt. […] Zwischendurch war ich ja weg und so, aber insgesamt war ich ja sechs Jahre hier, und überall anders war ich so zwei, drei. Und deswegen, hier ist wirklich mein zu Hause. Es ist… Hier kenne ich mich am Besten aus, hier kenne ich die Leute, hier kennen die Leute mich. Hier, selbst wenn ich Chinesisch nur bröckchenhaft spreche, ich komme zurecht. […] Wenn ich durch die Stadt laufe, ich weiß wo ich bin, ich weiß wie ich da hinkomme wo ich hin will. […] Selbst wenn man schon so lange hier ist, es wird einfach nicht langweilig. […] Und klar freue ich mich auch [auf Neues] einerseits. Aber andererseits, trotzdem, könnte ich auch noch bleiben, da hätte ich kein Problem mit. […] Also ich will eigentlich nicht weg.

move because of work. That's why I don't really have a choice. And, well, the farewell is difficult for me.[191]

Interestingly, even after graduation Olivia feels she has no choice of staying on in Shanghai and decides to move to Belgium along with her family. Some students' families for instance Antonia's, Xia's, Bjoern's, Charlie's and Kressi's are staying on. For some students, as in Giovanni's case, one parent will stay on for the job and the other return "home" with younger siblings. For the students whose families are about to leave Shanghai, graduation is not only a goodbye to their peers and the school but also to the house and the city. Plans of return for visits are rather uncertain.

> Mia: I have no idea when I will come back here. And I know that until then everything will have changed anyway. Well, I hope that I will make it some time in the next school year, because then there will still be people here that I know.[192]

15.2. Celebrating Twice: Graduation and Goodbye

The students put many resources and efforts into shaping their last weeks in Shanghai and their final days at the school. Graduation for them involves preparing several events and memorabilia. The major event here is the graduation ball – a traditional event organized by the students themselves. Preparations include finding ways to fund the event, choosing, and renting a suitable location, organizing a caterer and decorations, and creating the program for the evening. Furthermore, the class is busy writing, designing and getting printed their "Abibuch," [a special graduation yearbook], as well as preparing an after-party at another downtown location after the formal ball. The roughly thirty students graduating spend, according to estimates given by students, about RMB 300,000 (€33,000) for these celebrations – money earned through the ticket sale for the ball (RMB 400 (€44) each), the yearbooks (RMB 100 (€11) each), bake sales and different events hosted at the school during the last terms, and sponsoring by different foreign enterprises (RMB 160,000 (€17,600). All this is done to accompany the official commencement ceremony that is organized by the school.

---

[191] German original: Also [in] Shanghai ist die Schule wo ich am längsten drauf war, je. Deswegen, das fällt mir schon schwer. Weil ich hab hier total viele memories, vor allem weil ich meine Jugend hier verbracht hab. Da erinnert man sich ja immer gerne dran. Ja, gute Freunde, erste Liebe, bla bla bla - das gab's halt. Also doch, ich werde schon viele memories hier haben. Und es ist schon schwer, das alles so auf einmal... Ich meine ich kann es ja nicht entscheiden, dass ich hier jetzt weggehe, ich muss ja. Mein Papa muss ja umziehen wegen der Arbeit. Deswegen hab ich ja nicht wirklich eine Wahl. Und, also der Abschied fällt mir schon schwer.

[192] German original: Ich habe keine Ahnung wann ich wieder hierherkomme. Und ich weiß ja, bis dahin ist eh wieder alles anders. Also ich hoffe halt noch, dass ich es irgendwann im nächsten Schuljahr noch schaffe, weil dann sind noch Leute da die ich kenne.

Although organized and taking place at the school, the students also shape the commencement ceremony by contributing a few musical performances and a student speech. The importance of this official ceremony that values students' achievements and celebrates their graduation, becomes already apparent in Mia's anticipation a few days prior to the event:

> Mia: I am really looking forward to it. I am sure it will be really beautiful. I think I will be absolutely sad. When you just notice that, well, school is over now. Really! If you think back... It is the only thing you remember! The time before school – [...] well, I personally don't recall that. And even if, you were in pre-school before and in Kindergarten before that. So you had something every day. And the times before that – you really can't remember! That's why. Really strange, I think. Really weird.[193]

Mia ponders about the loss of the school routine as something that has accompanied her throughout her life. The end of this period is met with anticipation and joy as well as sadness. However, it is not only the end of school, but also the end of their time in Shanghai that the expatriate community celebrates with the ritual festivities.

Graduation ceremonies can be seen as a ritual, a rite of passage (Van Gennep [1960]1992) that in my case in Shanghai is part of a larger farewell ceremony. According to Van Gennep ([1960]1992, 11) who introduced the understanding of important, life-changing rituals as "rites of passages" with their general aim "to insure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another," such ritual processes undergo three different phases: the preliminal or separation phase, the liminal or transitional phase, and the postliminal or incorporation phase. Van Gennep, however, noted that not all rituals consist of all phases and that it is impossible to "achive as rigid a classification as the botanists have" (ibid.).

The commencement ceremony that I attended at the German school can be seen as an essential element of the first part of these rites of passage – the separation phase, as well as of a process of change of status from high school to university student and an opening up of the transitional phase – a phase that is celebrated after the graduation ceremony at the graduation dance and the students' after-party, for instance. Although the commencement ceremony at the German school underwent in a routined way that I – and seemingly everybody else attending – were familiar with and had somewhat anticipated, however, it is not my aim to give a full analysis of the

---

[193] German original: Ich freu mich richtig drauf. Das wir bestimmt richtig schön. Ich werde glaube ich total am Ende sein. Wenn man einfach merkt, so, ja, jetzt ist die Schule vorbei. Es ist wirklich so! Wenn man zurück denkt... Das ist das Einzige woran man sich erinnern kann. An die Zeit vor der Schule – […] also ich persönlich weiß es nicht mehr. [...] Und selbst wenn, davor war man in der Vorschule und davor im Kindergarten. Das heißt auch da hatte man täglich was. Und an die Zeit davor erinnert man sich ja wirklich nicht! Deswegen. Richtig seltsam, finde ich. Richtig komisch.

ritual.[194] Neither is this the theoretical focus for the graduation ball or the after-party. In the following I rather want to illustrate the overall mood of the festivities I attended, as well as the thoughts of the students and the school community to further underline the challenges and emotions and possibilities this moment of leaving Shanghai holds for the expatriate youth. Nevertheless, Van Gennep's notion of the rites of passages helps us to understand the importance of such festivities in guiding a transition from high school student to university student, from Shanghai to elsewhere.

The Commencement Ceremony

I am sitting next to Bjoern's brother and his family. The graduating students are seated in neat rows of chairs on the two sides of the stage. They are all dressed up for the occasion, the girls wearing dresses, the boys all in suits. Equipped with a camera and my field notebook I wait among parents, siblings, and students' friends for the event to start. We all read in the small program, which the school helpers have distributed on the long rows of mats that turn the steps in the piazza into seats. The evening commences with music and a welcome by the school principal. A small group of students from the elementary school lead us through the evening – their announcements leading to much amusement among the audience. The school's musical stars (various prize winners) play and sing inbetween the various speeches given. The German consul general talks about the high level of the exams, about the opportunities and challenges of being an expat and cites the current federal president of Germany, Joachim Gauck, calling for commitment to society. A representative for the German industry and commerce in Shanghai follows with a humerous but also political speech and – probably with an eye on his preceding speaker – thanks the German ministry of foreign affairs, hereby stressing the importance of their financial support, which is always contested. The two head teachers of the graduation class give a speech that evokes much laughter and is accompanied by photos of all students from class outings.

Then, after the obligatory musical intermissions, the school principal gives his full speech right before the handing out of the diplomas. Starting with political explanations and concerns about changes and less involvement and financing of German school abroad through the German government, the principal appeals to parents and German companies to make their needs for this support heard. After this rather political digression, he announces the average grades and is proud of the results that are, as he emphasizes, above German average. He then takes a short stroll along the memory

---

[194] Magolda (2003) describes for college commencement ceremonies in the US, how these formal celebrations follow a rather strict pattern.

lane of school events (trips, art and sport events) to stress the importance of the involvement in such social activities besides the school grades. Finally, he arrives to cite Goethe who according to him has said that one should give roots and wings to children ["Wurzeln und Flügel soll man den Kindern mitgeben"]. He elaborates on the different relation to different places the students have and that many will move to Germany or Switzerland or elsewhere due to their roots. However, he declares "one part of your roots is also our school" ["aber einen Teil eurer Wurzeln ist auch unsere Schule"]. He lists the names of a few students who have been in Shanghai since kindergarten to exemplify his claim. He then turns to the second part of Goethe's suggestion for educating children – the wings:

> Your wings are – and not only because of all the miles that you all have already passed up in the air – much stronger and more flexibly developed than in the cases of your future classmates at university. They will carry you. You will realize. You, as the graduates of a German school abroad […], are special. This should not be a reason to become arrogant – and you aren't. Public-spirited, cool, and nice young people exist everywhere. You will nonetheless attract attention. Because the experiences one brings along, the things you know and are familiar with, stick to you like a second skin. And something different is sticking to you than to most other youths – namely a certain familiarity with the world, a familiarity with things that are different and foreign to others. Due to your experiences in the world you are in some respects more independent, flexible, and open and therefore you will see and grasp more opportunities. However, one will maybe also have special expectations for you. I am sure, we are sure, you will be able to meet these. We are sure you will fly.[195]

This section that I tried to reconstruct from my frenetically scribbled notes, marks the end of the principal's speech and is met with enthusiastic applause. Interestingly, it mirrors the narrative of privilege and pressure that I came across in students' descriptions of international schooling and that has been highlighted in chapter 9.4.

After the school principal's speech that marks the separation phase of the ritual (Van Gennep [1960]1992), the diplomas are handed out to all students in alphabetical order. Applause greets the students when their name is called. Students step onto the center stage: Handshakes, diplomas, gifts, and a photo. After receiving the diplomas, a few parents gather on stage to sing a song (not as perfectly as their children) and finally

---

[195] German original: Die Flügel sind bei euch – und nicht nur wegen der vielen Flugmeilen die ihr alle schon zurückgelegt habt –, sind bei euch stärker und flexibler ausgeprägt als bei euren zukünftigen Kommilitonen an den Unis. Sie werden euch tragen. Ihr werdet das merken. Ihr seid als Absolventen einer deutschen Auslandsschule […] besonders. Das soll kein Grund sein überheblich zu werden – und das seid ihr auch nicht. Engagierte, coole und nette junge Leute gibt es überall. Ihr werdet trotzdem auffallen. Weil einen das was man an Erfahrungen mitbringt und was man kennt und was einem vertraut ist wie eine zweite Haut anhaftet. Und euch haftet anderes an als den meisten anderen Jugendlichen – nämlich eine gewisse Vertrautheit mit der Welt, Vertrautheit mit dem was anders ist und was anderen fremd ist. Weil ihr aufgrund eurer Erfahrungen in der Welt in mancher Hinsicht selbständiger, flexibler und offener seid, werdet ihr auch mehr Chancen sehen und wahrnehmen können. Man wird aber vielleicht auch besondere Erwartung an euch richten. Ich bin sicher, wir sind sicher, ihr werdet dem gerecht werden können. Wir sind sicher ihr werdet fliegen.

three female students (Mia and Antonia among these) give the last speech of the evening.

The three girls first start recalling their last years as students. In the obligatory humorous way, they refer to conflicts, discussions, as well as positive memories. Their classmates all step one after the other onto stage according to their arrival in Shanghai from kindergarten times until as recent as two years prior in 2010. After sharing these memories the student speech climaxes in giving thanks to parents, teachers, siblings, the school principal and the technician responsible that evening. "We all are only here because of our parents, and at this point we want to say thank you for that."[196] This line is met with laughter, applause, and euphoric cheering and shouting from the audience – that consists of family mainly. The high response to that line in particular shows that it is an important statement for many parents. It is a statement that smoothens out the confrontations and feelings of anger and guilt that I have described in the chapters on leaving for and arriving in Shanghai and the consequent emotional challenges (chapter five and six). In their student speech the graduates combine their farewell from being a student with the farewell from Shanghai. Contemplating on the uncertainties of the future and the difficulties of choosing a career path, their speech finally ends with a cheerful note: "But one thing we do understand. Namely, what we have to celebrate: To have been a student yesterday, to be almost an adult tomorrow, but especially that today we are young."[197] Applause follows the student speech.

This last line of the girls' address can be seen as a transition into what Van Gennep ([1960]1992) conceptualized as the second phase of a rite of passage – the liminal or transition phase. Victor Turner, who continued developping and inlusstrating Van Gennep's notion of liminality in the processes of rites of passages, describes the liminal phase as a condition where persons "slip through the network of classification" and are "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" ([1969]2008, 95). Likewise, in the student speech by the three girls, being young is understood as being free of the responsibilities of a high school student as well as of those of adulthood. Young here means celebrating without greater responsibilities and the last line is a call for the start of these celebrations, now that the youths hold their diplomas in their hands. Based among others on Van Gennep's ([1960]1992) and Victor Turner's ([1969]2008) understandings of liminality in the ritual process, Allan Sande (2002) describes this phase of partying for graduates in Norway

---

[196] German original: Wir alle sind nur wegen unserer Eltern hier und möchten uns an dieser Stelle dafür bedanken.

[197] German original: Aber eins verstehen wir. Ganz sicher. Nämlich, was wir feiern müssen: Gestern Schüler gewesen zu sein. Morgen fast erwachsen zu werden. Vor allem aber, dass wir heute jung sind.

as a phase that allows youths to behave in ways that are against the cultural norm and that break moral rules. Sande who particularly illustrates the role of alcohol and intoxication in these graduation celebrations, suggests that the youths here become detached from society to then after this liminal phase be ascribed the status of adults. Following the graduation ceremony, a dinner is hosted for everyone at the school premises. After eating at the buffet and conversing with parents, taking photos and receiving felicitations the students leave for Mural. This is the first unofficial party that everyone joins. It is also a reminiscing and farewell to their favorite party location: Mural on a Friday night (see chapter eleven for a detailed description of nights at Mural). Siblings and friends who used to live in Shanghai and – similar to me – came from Germany to be part of the celebrations all join. Parents and teachers are not part of this club visit. The next day's program, however, includes them: The graduation ball and the after-party.

The Graduation Ball and the After-Party

The next day I meet part of "the girls" at noon at a hairdresser that is based on the same compound that Olivia lives on. Olivia, Charlie, and Mia have appointments to get their hair done for the graduation ball. I take photos and watch them get styled. When in the end there is still time left for me – the only one without an appointment – I join the girls. Olivia and Charlie already return to Olivia's home, Mia waits for my hair to get done as well. I have to laugh at the towers of small braids and locks the stylist fixes on top of my head. Unlike the three girls, I do not have a particular request or plan and simply let the stylist cope with the situation in his way. Mia and I laugh a lot and then finally join the others at Olivia's house. The three girls and I put on make-up and we slip into our dresses. There is some borrowing of mascara and eye shadow going on and we are all getting excited for the evening. Olivia's parents are also home and very supportive. In the late afternoon their driver takes us to the location for the evening on the South Bund. We have to be early as the students have one more practice for a dance choreography they will be performing in the evening. I watch them practice, while I scribble a few notes in my field diary and take photos. By now I am shivering in my evening dress as the air conditioning has turned the still empty hall into a freezer. I am glad to see the first guests to arrive and we all gather upstairs at the roof top bar for a first drink. Here, the temperature of a Shanghai early summer evening feels comfortable and the view of the Pudong skyline and the ships passing by on the Bund leaves everyone in awe.

Figure 38: Impressions from the Graduation Ball: The View of the Bund. Photo by M. Sander

The sunset and the dressed up people invite practically everyone to take photos. I join in and take numerous images, which the students later are grateful to receive. There is also a professional photographer that the students hired for the night. The setting clearly distinguishes the event from graduation balls in Germany. While the latter mostly take place in gymnasiums or auditoriums, the chosen location in Shanghai is a high-class venue. A former warehouse at the docks, it shines with nostalgia and simple elegance that all the guests acknowledge. Many congratulate the students for their great choice. The guests reluctantly move inside and are seated at large round tables according to a seating order the students have discussed for months. I am seated along with older siblings, friends, and former students of the school. The graduates all sit at a long table in the center of the hall. The evening progresses with the buffet dinner, several talks, the student's dance, a few pranks – like a high heel shoe running contest with teachers. The graduates also show a self-made movie that stars all of them, talking about their classmates and future plans as well as saying thank you. I mingle and take photos.

Figure 39: Students Posing for the Camera at their Graduation Ball. Photo by M. Sander

After dinner and the talks, some of the guests start to dance ballroom dances. Around midnight, however, the students get busy to empty the location and invite everyone to now move to the after-party location: a lounge style bar in the heart of Shanghai's former French concession. Here the graduates rented a private party space for themselves and their guests. The ticket for the graduation ball came with a lace band wrapped around. If you now wear the small lace band with the Chinese characters that indicated your table earlier at the ball around your wrist, all the drinks at the bar are included as well. To this event interestingly only student friends, siblings, and several teachers come along. Parents are neither to be seen on the small dance floor nor at the bar.

Now, the intoxication and partying, which Sande (2002) describes for graduates in Norway as an important part of the rite of passage, is in full swing. Drinking and dancing with (now former) teachers create a generally euphoric atmosphere. Old barriers are torn down. The girls have all changed their long evening gowns into short cocktail dresses and many pairs of high heels have been replaced by ballet flats. I busy myself with taking pictures and after a while one student after another comes to ask me to take photos of them and their friends. I am happy to replace the photographer that has retired for the evening, but also use the time to chat with various students. Waiters bring small baskets of fries – one needs a solid base for drinking. The later the evening gets, the more students are found outside on a small lane behind the club, sitting on the floor, talking to their friends, enjoying what is supposed to be their night.

15.3. Moving on: Anticipation and Anxieties

During my last stay in Shanghai, students and I were also bonding over the shared feeling of an unknown future and the difficulties of choosing a career path. Mia's description of her struggle to make such a choice illustrates the feeling of the majority of the students I talked to:

> Mia: That was already a topic a year ago: 'And what are your plans after graduation?' 'Hmm.' That is so… At least I always had an answer, but it has changed a lot during the last year. […]

> Interviewer: And why did you actually leave the idea of studying design behind?

> Mia: I don't know. […] It was always like, […] actually I shouldn't mind, but there were always to possible answers: Some always said: 'Oh, great!' And the others always said: 'Hmm. Well, you can't really earn a lot with that' or something similar. It was not necessarily about money, but simply like, you just can't really… So many people do that [being a designer]. Well, there were always these kinds of reactions and somehow that had made me think again. And then, someday, I was sitting, well, that was during Chinese New Year holidays, just before the written exams… I was sitting downstairs with my mother and we were talking and then I said, 'Yes, actually I could also do something else.' A sheet of paper on the table I wrote down everything that I find interesting. There were ten different things on it, some actually going into very different directions. […] And then I thought, okay, I can have a look again at what I want to do. There are so many opportunities. […] Shouldn't underestimate that. And that's why I am still looking and then I will apply.[198]

---

[198] German original: Das war schon vor einem Jahr so: „Und was hast du für Pläne nach dem Abitur?" „Hmm." Das ist halt immer so… Ich hatte halt wenigstens immer eine Antwort, aber es hat sich halt innerhalb des letzten Jahres stark gewandelt. […] [Interviewer: Und wieso bist du dann von Design eigentlich abgekommen, so?] Ich weiß nicht. [...] Also es war immer so, [...] eigentlich sollte es mich nicht wirklich stören, aber es gab immer zwei mögliche Antworten: Die einen haben immer gesagt „Oh, super toll!" Und die anderen immer so: „Hmm. Ja, da kann man jetzt eher nicht so viel mit verdienen" oder so. [Es ging] noch nicht einmal unbedingt ums Geld, sondern einfach so, du kannst halt nicht so... Das machen so viele Leute. Ja, und dann waren da immer solche Reaktionen und irgendwie hat mich das dann noch mal ins Nachdenken gebracht. Und dann saß ich irgendwann, also in den Chinese Newyear

259

Mia ways up her interests, the opinions of friends and parents, as well as later job opportunities and possible income. Many explanations for youths' career choices and employment histories shifted their focus "towards poststructuralist accounts in which individuals' choices and their ability to judge and negotiate risk are seen as important in shaping their biographies" (Valentine 2003, 41). Despite this individualization, social networks as "product[s] of specific social and physical environments," as Valentine (ibid.) puts it, simply still play a major role in "providing information about employment opportunities […] and in developing social and cultural capital." This is, as Mia's account demonstrates, observable for expatriate teenagers in Shanghai as well. For many of the students the choice of a university program also comes along with the decision for a new location. Some of the students here set the priority on the acceptance at a university, while others chose a town and then look at the different options to study there. Olivia, for instance wants to move back to her parents' hometown in Belgium.

> Olivia: I've been abroad for some time now. And my parents have always hinted at, pointed out that they would like it if I came with them to Belgium to study there. And that I then would do the exact same thing that they did back then – to study in [name of the city]. Well, I still know a few people in Belgium. They are all going to [name of the city] as well, so I will also see them again there. And the girls, the friends from Shanghai, […] they also study close to where I will go. So I will get to know Belgium a little. Because, I mean, I was very young when I left Belgium. […] I would like to get to know Belgium a little, well, Europe in general. And that's why, yes, I want to move to Belgium.[199]

Olivia's quote not only reveals the influence of the parents on the choice of the future location, but also her own desire to reconnect with her past, her broader family and her national culture and mother tongue. It is these manifold desires and influences that the students now negotiate when leaving Shanghai and choosing the next step – and stop – in their lives. Based on their ethnographic work with young people in Finland, Lahelma and Gordon (2003, 381) put forward that "moving away from home is full of

---

Ferien war das, also kurz vor dem schriftlichen Abitur… Da saß ich so unten mit meiner Mutter und [wir] haben uns so unterhalten und dann meinte ich: „Ja, eigentlich kann ich auch was anderes machen." So Zettel rausgeholt und alles aufgeschrieben was mich interessiert. Da standen dann, glaube ich, irgendwie zehn Dinge, die teilweise echt in verschiedene Richtungen gingen. […] Ja. Und dann dachte ich, okay, dann kann ich ja noch einmal gucken was ich jetzt mache. Es gibt so viele Möglichkeiten. […] Sollte man nicht unterschätzen. Und deswegen bin ich jetzt immer noch am gucken und dann werd ich mich bewerben.

[199] German original: Ich bin jetzt ja schon eine Weile im Ausland. Und meine Eltern haben immer so, so kleine Anspielungen drauf gemacht, also immer so ein bisschen drauf hingedeutet, dass sie es toll finden würden wenn ich mit nach Belgien käme und da studieren würde. Und dass ich dann halt auch genau das mache was sie damals gemacht haben – also in [Name der Stadt] studieren. Und, ja, ich kenn ja auch noch ein paar Leute in Belgien. Die gehen halt auch alle nach [Name der Stadt], dass heißt die sehe ich da auch wieder. Und die Mädels, also die Freunde aus Shanghai, […] die studieren ja auch in der Nähe von da wo ich hingehe. Damit ich auch ein bisschen Belgien kenne. Weil ich meine ich war sehr jung wo ich weggezogen bin aus Belgien. […] Ich würd schon gern auch Belgien ein bisschen kennenlernen, also allgemein Europa. Und deswegen ja, also ich will schon nach Belgien gehen.

ambivalence for young people. Most of them talk about it with terms of hopes, but also with terms of fear." This is true for the young expatriates as well and the following sections will highlight their specific fears and hopes.

The Challenges of Everyday Practicalities

A few of the young people's accounts suggest fears that their future homes may lack the equipment for preparing food or doing laundry or that they themselves miss the necessary skills. Many of the students grew up with housekeeping staff at home and parents that demanded their children to focus on school rather than housework. In addition to worries about housekeeping chores, the students are also nervous about unfamiliar lifestyles, for example student life in Germany. Peter, for instance, uses our interview to bombard me with questions about living in a shared flat with other students in Germany.

> Peter: How is it to shop as a collective? Do you label your things? […] Does everyone clean all the rooms? Or does everyone individually clean their own rooms? […] What about dishes? Does everyone bring their own?[200]

Peter is not alone with his questions and concerns. When Xia and I are sitting in the French café next to his now former school to discuss his plans for the summer, he reports that he wants to get prepared for his studies. When I inquire what these preparations include, he explains:

> Xia: Searching for an apartment. And learning to cook.
>
> Interviewer: Learning to cook? <L>
>
> Xia: Actually I've been wanting to learn to cook for a while now. But I didn't manage to. I will try in the summer.
>
> Interviewer: And who will teach you?
>
> Xia: My mother. But I already thought: Well, I will get lunch at university. In the mornings and evenings, I will eat rice and erm, I don't know what else. Bread and sandwiches, because that seems easier than Chinese meals, where everything needs to be cooked. That is easier to prepare.
>
> Interviewer: Well, cheese, bread, stick it together – that is of course easier.
>
> Xia: The food could be tasty. Earlier I couldn't get used to cheese, but now I actually like it, if it is well prepared, has a good filling. Sandwiches.[201]

---

[200] German original Wie ist das in der WG einzukaufen? Markierst du da deine Sachen? […] Hat dann auch jeder die Zimmer gemacht? Oder macht das Zimmer jeder einzeln? […] Wie ist das denn mit dem Geschirr? Hat da jeder seins?

[201] German original: Wohnungssuche. Und Kochen lernen. [Interviewer: Kochen lernen? <L>] Eigentlich wollte ich schon lange kochen lernen. Aber ich hab das nicht geschafft. Im Sommer werd ich's mal versuchen. [Interviewer: Und wer wird dir das beibringen?] Meine Mutter. Aber ich hab mir schon gedacht: Also Mittagessen gibt es an der Uni. Morgens, abends, gibt es dann Reis und ehm. Ich weiß nicht was es dann sonst noch gibt. Mit Abendbrot und Sandwiches. Weil das kommt mir irgendwie einfacher vor als Chinesisches Essen, wo alles gekocht wird. Das ist einfacher vorzubereiten so. [Interviewer: Also Käse, Brot, patsch zusammen – das ist natürlich einfacher.] Das Essen könnte ganz lecker sein. Also früher

When I comment that learning how to prepare Chinese dishes might be nice as these might not be readily available in Germany, Xia shares his worries about missing China and Chinese food by relating to the experiences of friends:

> Xia: I am in touch with other people who graduated last year or the year prior from our school. Mostly Chinese people. Chinese connection. And one girl told me that after half a year she was homesick for China. She found that in China people are much more open than in Germany. And the other said she was homesick for Chinese Vegetables. In Germany there is only salad. In China there are so many different varieties of vegetables.[202]

His last story illustrates that Xia's concerns about not being able to take care of himself alone in Germany are not only about household practicalities but also about being able to feel comfortable. For the expatriate youths moving on (or maybe in some cases "back") parallels with larger anxieties about missing familiar things and fears of not being able to fit in.

The Fear of not Fitting In

> Antonia: And I also don't know how I will fit in in Germany, because I am not really German. I am also not really Chinese, but I am really not German. I think I will have a few problems. A few.[203]

Charlie shares Antonia's fears about not fitting in upon her move to Germany. When we sit in a noisy coffee shop over breakfast before our shopping trip to the glasses market, Charlie describes how for her this fear is particularly tied to experiences of racism and "othering" due to her Asian phenotype.

> Charlie: We always think that in Germany everyone stares at us. […] But it could be that we just simply imagine all that.
>
> Interviewer: Sure, you stand out. <x> I do believe that there is still a lot of racism in Germany.
>
> Charlie: But I think that are the uneducated people. It will be different at university. […] I am used to it. Kindergarten and elementary school and so on. Although not actually in kindergarten. The small children don't notice. For them everyone looks the same. […] At elementary school, like in fourth grade, it starts. With jokes and so on. Okay. But

---

konnte ich [mich] an Käse nicht gewöhnen, aber jetzt mag ich das eigentlich, wenn es gut zubereitet, gut belegt ist. Brötchen.

[202] German original: Ich hab ja auch Kontakt zu anderen Leuten, die letztes Jahr, vorletztes Jahr an der Schule absolviert haben. Meistens auch chinesische Leute. Chinese Connection. Und ein Mädchen hat schon gemeint, nach einem halben Jahr hatte sie schon Heimweh nach China. Sie meinte in China sind die Leute viel offener als in Deutschland. Und die Andere meinte Heimweh nach Chinesischen Gemüsen. In Deutschland gibt es nur Salat. In China gibt es so viele verschiedene Arten von Gemüsen.

[203] German original: Und ich weiß auch nicht wie ich in Deutschland reinpassen werde, weil ich bin auch nicht wirklich deutsch. Ich bin auch nicht wirklich chinesisch, aber ich bin wirklich nicht wirklich deutsch. Ich glaub ich werd ein bisschen Probleme haben. So ein bisschen.

262

I think everyone has gone through something similar. Almost everyone.[204]

Moving to Germany reminds Charlie of painful experiences of exclusion in her past. It is connected to complicated negotiations of home and cultural belonging that I explored in detail in chapter eight and fourteen. Simultaneously, Charlie's anxieties of not fitting in are also linked to fears about not being able to share the positive experiences of her time in Shanghai:

> Charlie: But I also heard that sometimes people at university are not really tolerant when you say you come from Shanghai. They think that you want to brag or something. That you want to get attention. Antonia, I believe, has experienced this. […] She described how great Shanghai is, maybe exaggerated a bit, but isn't it normal that you tell how beautiful the city is and so on? And then there are people who are jealous or something. That is unfortunate.[205]

Nonetheless, anticipations are coinciding with the many concerns.

Hopes and Anticipation

While for some students leaving Shanghai comes with a greater distance to family, a few teenagers look forward to reconnecting with family.

> Olivia: On the other hand, I am really happy. I like changes. I like to meet new people, new cultures, new cities, that's what I'm looking much forward to. I only know Belgium from holidays and having been there repeatedly for two months and also the first seven years of my life. I think I will get to know Belgium anew. Anyhow I'm very much looking forward to it. New people. I'm also moving closer to my family. I will see my grandparents more often, which makes them really happy, I think. They miss us a lot, I believe.[206]

Olivia's anticipation is about getting to know Belgium anew and to re-establish old ties and make new friends. Peter similarly hopes to find new friends in his future university

---

[204] German original: Wir denken immer in Deutschland schauen uns alle doof an. […] Aber kann sein, dass wir uns das alles einbilden. [Interviewer: Klar, ihr fallt halt auf. <x> Ich glaube schon, dass es immer noch sehr viel Rassismus in Deutschland gibt.] Aber das sind glaube ich die ungebildeten Leute. An der Uni wir das anders sein. […] Bin ich ja schon dran gewöhnt. Kindergarten und Grundschule und so. Obwohl Kindergarten eigentlich nicht. Die kleinen Kinder die checken das nicht. Für die sehen alle gleich aus. […] An der Grundschule, so vierte Klasse geht es dann los. Mit Witzen und so was. Okay. Aber ich denk jeder hat mal so was ähnliches durchgemacht. Fast jeder.

[205] Aber ich hab auch gehört, dass manchmal so Leute an Unis halt auch nicht so tolerant sind, dass wenn du sagst du kommst aus Shanghai, denken die halt, dass man sich wichtig tut oder so was. Dass man halt Aufmerksamkeit will. Antonia hat glaub ich die Erfahrung mal gemacht. […] Und sie hat halt erzählt wie toll Shanghai ist, vielleicht hat sie ein bisschen übertrieben, aber das ist doch normal, dass man erzählt wie schön die Stadt ist und so. Und dann gibt es Leute die sind halt so neidisch oder so. Das ist natürlich auch doof.

[206] German original: Andererseits freu ich mich sehr. Ich mag Veränderung. Ich mag es wenn ich neue Leute kennenlerne, neue Kulturen kennenlerne, neue Städte, deswegen, darauf freu ich mich sehr. Ich kenn Belgien vom Urlaub und immer mal wieder da zwei Monate zu sein und meine ersten sieben Lebensjahre. Ich glaube ich werde Belgien komplett neu kennenlernen. Also doch darauf freue ich mich sehr. Neue Leute. Ich ziehe auch wieder mehr zu meiner Familie. Also meine Großeltern werde ich jetzt mehr sehen, was sie glaube ich auch total freut. Also die vermissen uns glaube ich so sehr.

town. Sitting outside in the French Café, eating sandwiches, he answers my question about what he looks forward to most, very pragmatically:

> Peter: Well, for the short term [I am looking forward] to a fridge full of Edeka [German supermarket chain] items. For the fairly long term I also [look forward], as I said, to the city and what will come. Because there is a lot waiting for me. I hope to make friends in [name of the city] and to get accepted at university. That all this will somehow work out. And that's the biggest happiness I hope to find for now.[207]

Moving on also holds the possibilities to indulge in things that one missed in Shanghai – as Peter's mentioning of German groceries illustrates. It is also connected to the aim of ending what Van Gennep ([1960]1992) described as the liminal phase, and to become incorporated into a new social world that Peter associates with new friends and getting accepted at university. Peter is aware that this is a process and hopes that over the time "this will somehow work out."

Moving on is a mixture of reconnecting to old memories, places, and people and of opportunities to find new friends and to walk new paths – for the first time alone, with the help of friends and family. Antonia, also sees in the move a way to escape from the sometimes restricting expatriate bubble:

> Antonia: Somehow the time has come to get away, not only from school, also from home, from everything, from all the people. It is time somehow to go away. It feels really great.[208]

15.4. Concluding Thoughts on the Farewell and the Next Move

The students all see the move from Shanghai as a crucial point in their lives and as an ending to a certain phase. As the end of their time in Shanghai is related to their graduation from high school, they have to make decisions for their future lives and their career choices as well as their new places of living in particular. The young people meet this move with mixed feelings. While some youths have parents who stay on in Shanghai, others also experience their families moving on to other destinations and their whole social worlds spreading out globally.

The traditional celebrations of the Abitur offer a great opportunity for students to collectively deal with their transitions. Celebrating their achievements and the end of schooling therefore coincides with celebrating their farewell. My ethnographic material

---

[207] German original: Also, kurzfristig erstmal auf einen Kühlschrank der voll ist mit Edeka Artikeln. Aber langfristig eigentlich auch, wie gesagt, auf die Stadt, und eben auf was kommt. Weil das ist ja wirklich krass was vor einem liegt. Ich hoffe guten Anschluss zu kriegen in [name of the city]. Und einen Studienplatz, dass das alles halbwegs klappt. Und das ist eigentlich das größte Glück, was ich jetzt hoffe zu finden.

[208] German original: Es ist irgendwie, es wird Zeit, dass man wegkommt. Also, nicht nur [von der] Schule, auch von zu Hause, von allem, von den Leuten. Also, es ist Zeit irgendwie, wegzukommen. Es fühlt sich echt gut an.

264

made clear that the collective rituals held to honor graduating from secondary education are forged into simultaneous rituals of farewell that render moving on much easier than for individuals leaving prior to graduation. The graduation ceremonies, traditions, and parties hence evolve from a mixture of German school traditions and Shanghai-specific memories. It is not surprising that the students chose their all-time favorite club Mural, as well as a location with a great view on the Bund and a bar in the former French concession to commemorate their graduation as well as their goodbye to the city.

The move – for the majority of the students to Germany – is also met with a look at what is to come next. The new destinations are often still vague until the responses from universities come in and are awaited with anticipation and anxieties. University life for many means making a dream – for instance to study medicine – come true, but also evokes fears about feeling lost in the future location. Worries voiced by the young people were particularly concerned with everyday practicalities and reservations about being able to fit in.

The expatriate teenagers' plans to move sound rather definite, and ideas of a possible return to the parental home at some point were not articulated – although recent research has shown the increase in young people who move back and forth between own and parent's homes (for the "boomerang phenomenon" see for instance Molgat 2002, 135). This is, however, not surprising as for the majority the parental home is dissolving or on the move and not a fixed place. Ideas about returning to Shanghai are mentioned but are never concrete and never involve any specific plans, but only the idea of maybe receiving an expat post some day, too.

Conclusion: Passing Shanghai, Gaining Perspectives

This dissertation examined expatriate youths' everyday lives in Shanghai to determine how and in what ways young people deal with the moving experiences. I analyzed several stages of expatriate youths' experiences in Shanghai, from their retrospectives of leaving the former place of living, their arrival and acclamation to their new home in the city and their reflection of the move to the city, to their final goodbyes. Following this central narrative, the transit space of Shanghai unfolded successively, allowing us for insights into its various spaces and its meanings for expatriate students.

The introductory chapters one to four delineated and assessed the current state of research on expatriate communities and young migrants, as well as the theoretical and methodological framework of this ethnography. They furthermore highlighted the dissertation's three key research foci, which were: 1) the youths' own voices, 2) the youths' experiences of place and the city, and 3) the subjective narratives of hybrid forms of identity. It demonstrated how I see ethnographic fieldwork as an engagement with the world and myself as an active part of the research process, "researcher" and "researched" discussing their lives together and inevitably influencing each other.

Chapter five addressed the circumstances that led to the move to Shanghai from the children's retrospectives. Many of the teenagers recalled that they felt disregarded as an active part of the decision-making process to move and were often reluctant, or initially even against the idea, to move abroad. Students were caught between the desire to stay with their peers and the wish to be with their parents. They were actively weighing up their parents' and their own interests. While the students were excited by the possibilities to experience new things with the family that moving would bring them, they also feared the unpredictable experiences of moving to a new, unknown city. Many students therefore recalled having confronted their parents angrily, urging them to forgo the move. Other students said that their parents felt guilty for moving them out of their familiar environment, against their choice.

The next part, "Arriving," described students' everyday practices upon arrival in Shanghai and their agency in making Shanghai their new home and community. Chapter six, in connection to the discussion on leaving, delineated the emotional challenges of moving to Shanghai. Based on the students' commentary, it identified their "culture shock," their reaction to an unfamiliar urban environment, new sensories, and the lack of friends and extended family, problems within the family related to the move, as well as other new, negatively experienced, demands on the expatriate youths. The different experiences of youths all made clear that the time of leaving and arriving, the "uprootings" (Ahmed et al. 2003) were highly emotional.

266

Chapter seven presented different students' ways of making sense of their new urban environment – in terms of navigations, sensorial experiences, but also in terms of positioning oneself within the city. The chapter demonstrated that managing the city means managing everyday life and the experience of migration, for instance by learning how to navigate between spaces of everyday practices and consumption, by giving spaces a social meaning, or by dividing Shanghai into a familiar area and "the city."

Chapter eight was concerned with practices and notions of home. After providing a thick description of expatriate housing spaces – gated communities – it identified youths' small-scale home-making practices, such as room decorating or family dinner, as well as larger processes of locating "home(s)" in their transnational networks. It demonstrated that due to the expatriate teenagers' experiences of mobility, home was thought of as multiple and fluid, but at the same time tied to various places, items, and people. It became evident that making and (re)imagining homes, collecting belongings to produce a sense of belonging helped the teenagers to deal with feelings of loneliness and as ways to let the rhizomatic home "start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 9).

Chapter nine examined the spaces of international schools and their critical roles as important nodes of the expatriate communities in Shanghai. The schools were sites for the continuous everyday routine for expatriate youths, as well as the place for meeting new friends and for engaging in various leisure activities. The chapter identified how these schools underpinned certain narratives of what it means to be an expatriate and fostered the development of collective identities and a sense of community for many of the students and their families. Conversations with students also revealed that their perspective of being enrolled at an international school was linked to the dialectic of privilege and pressure.

The following part, "Emplacement," zoomed in on particular age-specific spatial and social practices and foregrounded the youths' efforts of creating their own spaces. Discussions on age identities in chapter ten and ethnographic evidence from nightlife practices in chapter eleven, underlined how the construction of collective age identities and related spaces were crucial for teenagers to gain meaning and agency in their migration experience.

Chapter twelve provided a further example of a teenage hangout spot close to a school campus – the shop – a space that they shared with local Chinese. The youths' practices at the shop developed in compromise with the economic interests of the shop-owners, and the teenagers own agency and interest to shape such a "open space" (Hassenpflug 2009, 31-33). For the youths the shop provided an everyday

space that, unlike the gated communities or the international schools where they spent most of their time, was not characterized by explicit behavioral expectations or rules.

Chapter thirteen investigated the teenagers' relations to China and Shanghai's local citizens. Based on discussions with the young expatriates on the issue of "integration," the chapter highlighted how the youths accepted or even strengthened the exclusion of "China" from their everyday spaces. It also showed how many of the expatriate youths experienced their bodily difference as whites, and how this promoted a preference for locations in Shanghai that are mainly occupied by whites. It then demonstrated how the teenagers lack of interactions with Chinese youth and the experience of special (often preferential) treatment by Chinese citizens lead to their feelings of being "guests" in China.

The next part, "Dwelling on the Move," centered on the expatriate youths' own reflections on their lives, and on the theoretical discussions of in-betweenness, transculturality, and identity. Chapter fourteen assessed five student portraits based on the youths' own narratives of the self. The five stories described the diversity of expatriate youth as well as the students' individual challenges and ways of coping with mobility. It contextualized these five narratives from the perspective of transcultural studies. It identified students' abilities to self-reflectively analyze their own lives and subjectivities and then conceptualized these abilities as transcultural perspectives. Finally, the chapter commented on the ethnographic project's influence on these reflections and the positive experience of opening a shared space where narratives of the self could be negotiated.

The final part, "Moving On," presented the last chapter fifteen that was concerned with the "fateful moment" (Giddens 1991, 112–114) of leaving Shanghai. It investigated the graduation festivities at a German school as a rite of passage (Van Gennep [1960]1992) that prepared the students for the farewell and the transition to new social positions. The collective celebrations helped the students to work through their emotions about leaving – an amalgam of sadness, anxieties, and anticipation of what was to come next. Together with the students I left Shanghai behind.

During this mutual journey through Shanghai, the experiences and narratives of the teenagers have often touched me. Their simultaneous ignorance, acceptance, and transgressions of boundaries irritated and their occasional lack of interest in Chinese society shocked me. Their attempts to cope with constant change and difference impressed me and their reflections upon their own lives enlightened me. This ethnography has brought seemingly contradicting but overlapping and intertwined

aspects of expatriate youths' lives to the fore, which I aim to summarize along the lines of three dynamics:

1. The tension between dependency on parents and own agency,
2. The interrelation between spatial boundaries, transgressions, and the claiming of age identities,
3. The dynamics of the transculturation of perspectives and the rigidity of cultural and class divisions in the everyday performances of expatriate identities.

These three dynamics correspond to the three research aims delineated in the introduction that constituted the point of departure for this study. Assessing these key points throughout this dissertation has led me to conclude the following several points regarding the characteristics and the varieties of teenage experiences of privileged migration involved in youths' mobility to and from Shanghai.

Youths' own Perspectives: Dependency and Agency

My first research aim was to understand the students' own perspectives on global mobility, to determine the significance of their own experiences with moving and living in Shanghai through their own words and testimonies. To conduct this research, I placed students' accounts at the center of my ethnography. These accounts illustrated a very age-specific experience of privileged migration. Although teenagers experienced their move to Shanghai in many ways similar to the adult community (as comparisons to studies on adult expatriate communities allow to say), there were also a range of different, age-specific experiences.

Firstly, unlike adults, the students were minors whose move depended (solely) on the decisions of their parents. As their memories of leaving showed, in chapter five, students' dependence on the family and their lack of choice was clear. Furthermore, their prescribed everyday school lives left little time and space for the expression of individual agency. Secondly, students developed a social space distinct from the adult community. Through their being regularly in a space – the international schools, for example – with peers of the same age and with similar experiences, collective forms of agency to deal with the move and the new environment were forged. The teenagers claimed and frequented a variety of social meeting places including Shanghai's nightclubs, or spaces that lay in-between different social worlds and authorities, such as the hangout place called the shop. Collectively exploring and shaping these shared spaces proved to be age-specific ways of dealing with the move in the realm of dependency from parents.

Spatial Practices and Emplaced Experiences

My second research aim was to analyze expatriate youths' everyday spatial practices and their (dis)engagement with the "local." Dynamic relations between spatial boundaries, transgressions, and the claiming of expatriate and age identities were brought sharply to the fore in my examination of students' everyday practices of social space. My ethnographic accounts demonstrated that youths in Shanghai experienced spatial and social constraints less than youths in Europe, particularly when dealing with access to restaurants, bars, and nightclubs (see 11.2). Nevertheless and despite this relative sense of freedom, Shanghai students experienced the everyday spaces they frequented as highly regulated. This feeling of regulation was due to the strict processes of demarcation that the expatriate community undertook in order to define itself, as exemplified by the spaces of the gated communities and the international schools (chapters eight and nine).

Students' practices were diverse and contradictory. Looking at "diaspora space" (Brah 1996) in Shanghai – the encounters and moments of entanglement between the privileged migrants and those who stayed put in Shanghai – it became clear that a strong local-expat divide was maintained, making the transgressions difficult for expatriate teenagers in general. Only few spaces, like the shop, provided a shared space for locals and expat youths. While this space set outside the glamorous image of the metropolis, it was mainly these imaginations revolving around a global city, which led to identifications with the city. Turning towards the city's transnational spaces and aiming to be part of Shanghai's cosmopolitan image, is in some ways, however, still a specific engagement with the contemporary situation in China's mega-city. My study shows that the relationship between expatriate youths and their physical environment shapes their everyday lives as much as the expatriate/national/class networks they belong to. Their interaction with the immediate physical environment is used to cope with the difficulties of the overall migration experience, but also to represent this experience as worthwhile and successful. The urban environment provided the backdrop for learning and claiming cosmopolitan identities that I have identified specifically as "expatriateness."

Performing Expatriateness: Globality versus Transcultural Perspectives

My third research aim was to acknowledge that expatriate youths live in a highly mobile and culturally complex environment and to identify teenagers' myriad ways to negotiate, forge, perform, and contest their forms of belonging and positions in their social worlds. To address this concern, I examined seemingly contradicting relations between everyday practices and performances of expatriate identities. These practices

and performances were based on, firstly, rigid cultural and class divisions and hopes for future benefits as well as, secondly, the emergence of translocal subjectivities and the dynamics of transculturation of perspectives.

Globality

The first aspect became apparent in the spatial divisions of the city in expat and non-expat places as for instance described in chapter six and brilliantly illustrated in the student mental map (Figure 8), but generally addressed throughout the ethnography. Despite these spatial segregation processes, expatriate youths claimed urban and cosmopolitan practices. My findings compare to those made by Hindman in her descriptions of expatriates' social practices in Nepal. Like my study, her investigations show that for the cosmopolitan elite "culture is important as a means of justifying their presence abroad" (2009, 250), but difference is only allowed in a prescribed safe "niche" and in a "commodifiable form" (ibid., 267). The urban environment only provides the backdrop for learning and claiming cosmopolitanism or expatriateness. The skills acquired through the bodily experiences of Shanghai bring status and competences, or how Binder (2005) calls it, "globality" upon the youths. This "globality" should be understood as a cultural resource in the Bourdieusian sense: as capital. Through the example of young backpackers, Binder showed how knowledge of contemporary processes of change and their associated discourses are turned into cultural capital and can be used advantageously (Binder 2005, 215). Applying her understanding of "globality" of travelling experiences as cultural capital that can be beneficial in the future, particularly with regard to careers, to the moving practices of expatriate teenagers, has brought similar views to the fore. Student quotes, for example, showed that growing up abroad and receiving an international education were linked to the idea of "globality" as cultural capital, an idea that echoed parents' ideas about the benefits of the move. The students' ways of imagining a future CV proved this particularly well. Similar to Binder's idea of "globality," Desforges (1998), who explores the way in which British middle class youths negotiate and build their identities through travel, claims that young people convert the cultural capital they gather from their independent travels into economic capital in the workplace upon their return. Desforges' article demonstrates that through their travel, youths, as Valentine has summarized, "participate in a process of othering and constructing first world representations of the third world, while simultaneously earning themselves a privileged position in the West" (Valentine 2003, 45). For the expatriate youths in Shanghai the international school education contributes to their view of being abroad as a beneficial requisite for their future. Nevertheless, the age-specific context has to be kept in mind, where parents

play a major role in planning their children's lives and making decisions in their child's "best interest" (see Ackers and Stalford 2004; Hutchins 2011), as exemplified in youths' retrospectives on leaving in chapter five. Some attributions to the idea of "globality" drawn by Binder's study on backpackers, such as the counter draft to everyday life and a special time for development and self-fulfillment, are therefore not part of the expatriate youth's self-understanding. Youths consider being abroad as everyday life. The conceptualization of "globality" as the awareness of a series of cultural resources that fit into globalized ways of living and subsequently serve as an important identity resource, however, applies to expatriate youths in Shanghai. The school helps to provide, foster, and turn the youths' global experiences into "globality" as part of their educational ambitions and community markers and values. An international school fosters an international community that can see itself as open-minded, diverse, and cosmopolitan without specifically including the local neighborhood, Shanghai, or China. The latter are only used as stages upon which students experience difference and contribute to their "globality." While expatriate youths and their families create their own communities, often revolving around the schools, they demarcate themselves from Shanghai "locals" as well as from those back "home" – both are perceived as lacking international experience. Similar to Brosius' (2010) investigation of the everyday lives of India's middle class, this study conceptualizes cosmopolitanism as "a practice of status-creation" (2010, 26); the students and their families use the educational environment and their surrounding network to mediate their expatriateness. The performance of a collective expatriate identity is thus not only tied to aspiring and learning cosmopolitan values, but is simultaneously connected to practices of demarcation from peers perceived as less mobile, globally connected, and educated. As transculturation means a process of giving space for difference (Hoerder, Hébert, and Schmitt 2005), and not leaving difference outside the walls, putting it in a "niche" or staging it at as the "other," to me many "expatriates' places" in Shanghai are not spaces that particularly foster this process of transculturation.

Transcultural Perspectives

Because of these demarcation processes I was reluctant to apply the term "transcultural" to the accumulation of experiences that I identified as "globality" in chapter nine. "Transculturation is the process of individuals and societies changing themselves by integrating diverse cultural life-ways into dynamic new ones" (Hoerder, Hébert, and Schmitt 2005, 13). This understanding of expatriate youths' moving practices as a process of giving space for difference, seems not really fitting when thinking of the strong demarcation processes that were discussed in the chapters

272

seven, eight, nine and thirteen. When spending increasingly more time with youths and listening to their subjective experiences of their transient stays in Shanghai, I came across many reflections that were concerned with culturally complex entanglements, experiences, and challenges that forced students to position themselves in a world with clear cultural divisions. When listening to these subjective experiences of hybrid identities or in-between positions, processes of transculturation suddenly complicated the processes of demarcation I had witnessed. The examined processes of identity positioning and the meaning of the stay for different expatriate teenagers were highlighted in the part "Dwelling on the Move" as well as in the fluid, translocal, and multiple conceptions of home and belonging in the part "Arriving." I showed that the generation of expatriate teenagers I worked with was much more required to negotiate difference than older expatriates were. This was due to their age-specific experiences. In contrast to their parents, some children lacked a deep understanding of their "home culture," as some of the students had only been born in their "home country" and left it at a very early age; others only knew "their" country from the occasional holiday spent there with family. Furthermore, many of the youths came from mixed marriages or were the second generation of migrants who had become mobile again and "returned" to China for a certain period. Many of the expatriate teenagers I met were therefore requested to bridge differences between parents, or school and parents on a daily basis, from an early age.

Being in China evoked reflections on social practices and shared values. Some students, like Karina, who after her stay choose to major in Chinese at college, or those like Antonia, Charlie, Don or Arnaud, who continuously reflect upon their own "Chineseness," the specifity of China mattered. This was true for the identity positionings of expat teens with Chinese background in particular. However, the move's impact on relationship networks triggered all students to reflect on the significance of their identity – some reflected on cultural or educational influences (see among many others for example the contemplations of the teenagers Antonia, Paul, Xia or Arnaud in chapter fourteen), others reflected most heavily on their class (see teenager Bjoern's commentary in chapter 14.2). Investigating Australian transnational professionals in Asia, Melissa Butcher succinctly described this process of reflection:

> Transnational movement subsequently engenders a process of identity re-evaluation as mobility, and inevitably contact with difference, disrupt the familiar cultural frames of reference that underpin identities, including established relationship networks. (Butcher 2009, 1354)

My ethnography therefore, corresponding to the practices of demarcations, recognizes the students' emerging abilities to deal with changes and difference as a development of a transcultural perspective. Their transcultural perspective enabled them to reflect

upon the culturally complex environment and its meanings for and influences on their own position and narrative of the self. As Butcher said:

> The ability to move between relationship networks indicates the development of more mobile subjectivities as a strategy to re-find points of comfort in new cultural contexts." (Butcher 2009, 1354)

For many students, this also results into very mobile and diverse social practices that correspond to a strategic, self-reflective position – whether at an American or German school, an expatriate nightlife location, or a mixed-marriage family life.

Subjectivities

The youths considered passing Shanghai as gaining new perspectives. It remains open to see if these transcultural perspectives will manifest themselves over time in rigid forms, becoming a "Third Culture Kid" or an "expatriate"; positions that claim "globality" for themselves, as Hindman described of expatriates in Nepal: "Actors collaborate to codify difference in a way that distances it from the self, making essentialized identity something that only others have" (Hindman 2009, 250). Do expatriates and their offspring in Shanghai claim to represent the global exclusively? Will they choose to essentialize the "other" and the "local" (no matter where) and position themselves as the (future) global elite, the ones with connections, and "globality" as capital? Or, instead of creating a stable identity reference based on this kind of "TCK nationalism" or "expatriateness," will they be able to keep or develop flexible and creative ways for incorporating difference, such as their transcultural perspective? The highly diverse group of expatriate youths will walk on different paths from now on.

Future Studies

While many questions remain open even after intensive fieldwork, there are three points of interest that will be crucial for further research.

Now that I have traced the "here-and-now" (Bucholtz 2002, 532) and have witnessed various forms of coping mechanisms and narratives of the self, the students' future paths could be explored. One question left open for future studies on expatriate youths and their mobile lifestyles thus demands a longitudinal approach to trace the impact of growing up on the move on their future careers and lifestyle choices. The social situation's influence on educational and career trajectories have long been caught in a conundrum of structure versus agency (Milner 2004, 15–17). It will be a future endeavor to see how my informants exercise their privileged upbringing and what kind of rigid or mobile subjectivities they will choose to keep as identity references.

Secondly, the question "How does China matter?" remains partly unanswered and also constitutes a significant concern for further research on the topic of expatriate youths. To address this concern I suggest conducting comparative research on expatriate youths' experiences in other locations. Although Chinese or Shanghainese particularities have been pointed out in the present study, it is not possible to determine the extent to which the "host" country has influenced the age-specific experience of privileged migrations. While the practices of demarcation and boundary drawing, for instance, seem to be very similar for the adult expatriate communities whether in Jakarta (Fechter 2007a; Fechter 2007b), Dubai (Walsh 2006a; Walsh 2006b; Walsh 2008; Walsh 2011), Singapore (Beaverstock 2002; Beaverstock 2011) Hong Kong (Yeoh and Willis 2005; K. Willis and Yeoh 2008), Sao Paulo (Dobeneck 2010), or Saudi Arabia (Glasze 2006), the youths' experiences might differ greatly in respect to the schools they attend and their mixing of "local" and expatriate youths and their influences to rather underpin privileged expatriate identities. Shanghai's municipal government restricts Chinese nationals from enrolling at foreign schools. Because of this it is safe to say that the demarcation between expatriate and "local" youths is particularly strong and the spaces to interact are particularly limited in Shanghai.

Thirdly, another future concern would bring together experiences of privileged and less privileged forms of youth migration in order to further understand strategies of children to cope with family migration generally. This should be done in order to highlight the strengths and capabilities of young migrants from less privileged backgrounds that are often being marginalized because of their migration experiences. Comparing these circumstances and the agency children and teenagers can develop in dealing with their moving, will provide insights into policies and services they currently find supportive. Insights from these comparisons could be used beneficially in providing adequate support at schools or community centers and opening up a shared space that gives room for self-reflection and the emergence of transcultural perspectives.

An Afterword: Post-Shanghai Tales from College Life

I met several of the expatriate youths after their move to Germany on various occasions. With the exception of two boys who decided to carry out their military service, and Kressi and Bjoern who opted to stay on in Shanghai for a Chinese language course, all the expatriate youths enrolled at colleges outside China. The majority decided to pursue studies in engineering, business, or medicine.

We met in four different cities for birthday parties, sightseeing trips, or conversations over lunch or coffee. I witnessed holiday feelings and the joy to explore a familiar, yet foreign country, reunions where we all would toast to Shanghai, as well as the struggles of moving to a new place, most of them on their own. Two of these brief encounters over coffee, with Andrea and Antonia, highlight the first joys and challenges of the move:

I meet Andrea only a week after her return to Germany. We agreed to meet at a central city square at four p.m. and she pops up right next to me a minute later, wearing a fedora shaped straw-hat, her black frame glasses with the bamboo ear pieces, a grey sports jacket over a white t-shirt with an image of the Beatles and a long necklace with a cross dangling over John Lennon's head, jeans, flat sandals showing her bright red toe nails. We hug, and I immediately think of the yearbook text that commented on her dislike of physical contact and hugging people. We stroll through the old town as she shares her confusions about Germany. Andrea always has a way of telling things to make others laugh. In her funny way she reports about her incapability to put an address on an envelope in the proper German way and how she had to ask friends for help. Her first round to the post office to send off four university applications was also accompanied by much confusion. She had no idea how much posting the applications would cost and when inquiring further, she was even more confused about the different ways to send them. She was also surprised how expensive posting some letters could be. Besides these enigmas, she shares how delighted she was to find out how cheap cheese and sausages are at the Aldi supermarket around the corner of the place she is staying in. [If you compare these prices to those in the imported food stores in Shanghai, you probably only pay a third of it.] Her enthusiasm about cheese and sausages reminds me of how Charlie and a friend in Shanghai were talking about the delights of buying Kinder Penguin [chocolate and cream bar] and other candy en masse when returning to Germany over the summer, or of Peter looking forward to a fridge full of German supermarket products (see 16.3). Meanwhile, Andrea further shares her bewilderment about life in Germany, particularly about "all the strange people on the streets." To illustrate her point, she describes an encounter with a

stranger who crept up on to her from behind to tell her she smelled nicely. She shudders and confides to me that since this encounter a few days ago, she always carries pepper spray in her purse. For Andrea being out on the street in Germany feels insecure. She also comments on how safe one was out in Shanghai.

We find a small bistro, eat Falafel, and drink Club Mate [a new kind of beverage I had already told her about in Shanghai when we jokingly discussed "hipster drinks"]. She likes both. We talk about people from Shanghai, recalling numerous stories. We laugh a lot. Andrea wants to hear everything from the nights out with the boys that she was not part of herself. She even enjoys hearing the stories that I already told her on other occasions and encourages me to tell them again. My stories turn more and more into manifest narratives. Gossip and fieldwork always seem linked. I am curious about her first week in Germany, and Andrea, recalling her experiences of private schooling in Germany until fifth grade, talks about her encounter with old classmates in the last days. She is annoyed about one of these teenagers ignorantly telling her "Shanghai has no trees." She does not seem to like these youths and remembers how they were already "kind of snobby" back then.

Jacqueline Knörr (2005, 64) in her study on expat youth returning from Africa to Germany, has observed similar processes of demarcation towards local Germans. She traces the youths' accounts of being different in Germany to the loss of superiority, a superiority that was linked to being white in Africa. Knörr explains that upon their return they "forget about being white and take on a different identity based on 'being' or 'having been an expatriate', or, more fashionably, on being a 'Third Culture Kid' and – later on – an 'Adult Third Culture Kid'"(ibid.). Attitudes towards "locals" abroad and "locals" in one's "home" country are therefore quite similar strategies of differentiation and superiority. "Coming to Germany, being white suddenly does not mean anything at all," Knörr (2005, 61) comments. Returning can be tied to status-loss. Andrea, however, has just "returned" and is still curious but amazed about her peers that grew up in Germany.

> Many children and youths experience themselves as different because they have mixed more with children from around the world and because they are used to a different group of people. Whereas they often only had little social contact with their local environment, they were often exposed to different lifestyles of different (other) expatriate individuals and communities. (Knörr 2005, 66)

Although moving on to a college town by herself, Andrea came back jointly with her family. Knörr's study here suggests that "[i]t is usually easier for those who come to Germany with their parents – and all the more so for those who have siblings to share their experiences with" (Knörr 2005, 59). Other students' families stayed on in Shanghai.

Antonia, for instance, moved to Germany on her own to begin her studies in medicine. I meet her in November 2012, a few weeks after the start of the semester and her move to Germany. When I pick up Antonia for lunch at her new place, she does not ask me to come in, as, she apologizes, her room looks too chaotic. She is studying constantly and has no time to clean up. Besides, she admits, she has not gotten used to doing such things yet, as her *ayi* always took care of housework. When after lunch we sit over hot beverages at a Starbucks, she shares, that in general she thinks she moved out too early [she just turned eighteen]. "Staying one year longer with my family wouldn't have been a bad idea." She feels a bit overwhelmed with living on her own and sometimes a bit lonely. I suggest that a shared flat with other students might be a good idea. Concerning her studies, in contrast, she seems very happy, although she complains a bit about having to learn so much by heart, and thinks her fellow students are much better at it. This is also why she has to leave soon to go back to her textbooks. There will be a test next week. Antonia tells me about all the many people she has already met and how she just invites people to come along, if there is something going on. I think of her kind ways to include me to her nightlife activities upon our first encounter two years earlier in Shanghai. Her fellow students, she recounts, are more interested in forming small groups. Here, she also mentions how she often wants to make a comparison to Shanghai or mention life in China, but then shuts up as she fears people might get annoyed by that constant reference to her former place of living. Antonia is also much interested in my own plans and the progress of my work. She suggests I could do a long time study, to see where they end up. When I say that I am not sure about a career in research, she voices her concern: "If not, will we simply be forgotten?"

APPENDIX

Bibliography

Ackers, Louise, and Helen Stalford. 2004. "From 'Best Interests' to Participatory Rights: Children's Involvement in Family Migration Decisions." In *A Community for Children? Children, Citizenship and Internal Migration in the EU*, 97–123. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Adamek, Sascha. 2011. *Die facebook-Falle*. München: Heyne.

Ahmed, Sara, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller. 2003. "Introduction: Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration." In *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller, 1–19. Oxford: Berg.

Amit, Vered, ed. 2007. *Going First Class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement*. New York: Berghaan Books.

Anderson, Michael. 1999. "Children In-between: Constructing Identities in the Bicultural Family." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*: 13–26.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society* 7 (2) (June 1): 295–310. doi:10.1177/026327690007002017.

———. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Barth, Fredrik, ed. [1969]1998. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Long Grove: Waveland Press.

Basu, Paul, and Simon Coleman. 2008. "Introduction: Migrant Worlds, Material Cultures." *Mobilities* 3 (3) (November): 313–330. doi:10.1080/17450100802376753.

Baudler, Bernhard A. 1996. "'Nobody will ever know what takes place in initiation ceremonies.' Das Schweigen der Jüngeren und die Macht der Älteren: Beispiele zur Erwachsenenzentriertheit in der Ethnologie." In *Jung und wild: zur kulturellen Konstruktion von Kindheit und Jugend*, ed. Dorle Dracklé, 14:118–151. Hamburger Beiträge zur öffentlichen Wissenschaft. Berlin: Reimer.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1983. *Simulations*. New York: Semiotexte.

Baumann, Gerd, and Thijl Sunier. 2002. "Die Schule im gesellschaftlichen Raum." In *Staat - Schule - Ethnizität. Politische Sozialisation von Immigrantenkindern in vier europäischen Ländern*, ed. Werner Schiffauer, Gerd Baumann, Riva Kastoryano, and Steven Vertovec, 10:23–36. Interkulturelle Bildungsforschung. Münster: Waxmann.

Beaverstock, Jonathan V. 2002. "Transnational Elites in Global Cities: British Expatriates in Singapore's Financial District." *Geoforum* 33: 525–538.

———. 2011. "Servicing British Expatriate 'Talent' in Singapore: Exploring Ordinary Transnationalism and the Role of the 'Expatriate' Club." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (5) (May): 709–728. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.559714.

Bennett, Andy. 2000. *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

———. 2007. "As Young as You Feel: Youth as a Discursive Construct." In *Youth Cultures Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson, 26:23–36. Routledge Advances in Sociology. New York: Routledge.

Berg, Wolfgang, and Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh, ed. 2010a. *Exploring Transculturalism*. Wiesbaden: VS Research.

Berg, Wolfgang, and Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh. 2010b. "Editors' Introduction: Exploring Transculturalism." In *Exploring Transculturalism*, ed. Wolfgang Berg and Aoileann Ní Éigeartaigh, 7–17. Wiesbaden: VS Research.

———. [1996]2012. "Culture's In-Between." In *Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 53–60. London: Sage.

———. [1994]2009. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Binder, Jana. 2005. *Globality: Eine Ethnographie über Backpacker*. Forum europäische Ethnologie. Münster: Lit.

Blos, Peter. [1962]1966. *On Adolescence: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*. New York: Free Press.

———. 1970. *The Young Adolescent: Clinical Studies*. New York: Free Press.

Blunt, Alison, and Robyn M. Dowling. 2006. *Home*. London: Routledge.

Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte. 2002. *Auswandern: Destination Neuseeland. Eine ethnographische Migrationsstudie*. Berlin: Mana-Verlag.

Bonnett, Alastair. 2004. *The Idea of the West. Culture, Politics and History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction - a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

———. 1986. "The Forms Of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood Press.

Brah, Avtar. 1996. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.

Brettell, Caroline, ed. 1993. *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.

Brosius, Christiane. 2010. *India's Middle Class : New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity*. London: Routledge.

———. 2011. "Love in the Age of Valentine and Pink Underwear: Media and Politics of Intimacy in South Asia." In *Transcultural Turbulences: Towards a Multi-Sited Reading of Image Flows*, 27–66. Heidelberg: Springer.

Brosius, Christiane, and Roland Wenzlhuemer, ed. 2011. *Transcultural Turbulences: Towards a Multi-Sited Reading of Image Flows*. Transcultural Research - Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context. Heidelberg: Springer.

Bucholtz, Mary. 2002. "Youth and Cultural Practice." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 525–52.

Burns, Maureen A. 2011. "Documenting Mobility." In *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, Nina Sichel, Faith Eidse, and Elaine Neill Orr, 356–370. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Butcher, Melissa. 2009. "Ties That Bind: The Strategic Use of Transnational Relationships in Demarcating Identity and Managing Difference." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35 (8) (September): 1353–1371. doi:10.1080/13691830903123153.

———. 2012. "Distinctly Delhi: Affect and Exclusion in a Crowded City." In *Urban Theory Beyond the West : a World of Cities*, ed. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne, 175–194. London: Routledge.

Butler, Tim. 2003. "Living in the Bubble: Gentrification and Its 'Others' in North London." *Urban Studies* 40 (12) (November): 2469–2486. doi:10.1080/0042098032000136165.

Carmel, Simon. 2011. "Social Access in the Workplace: Are Ethnographers Gossips?" *Work, Employment & Society* 25 (3): 551–560.

Castells, Manuel. [1996]2000. *The Rise of the Network Society*. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Oxford: Blackwell.

Chambers, Iain. 1994. *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. London: Routledge.

Chatterton, Paul, and Robert Hollands. 2003. *Urban Nightscapes: Youth Cultures, Pleasure Spaces and Corporate Power*. London: Routledge.

Chen, J. 2005. "City Gears up Development of Metro." *Shanghai Daily News*, December 27, quoted in: Donald and Gammack (2007, 151).

Cheng, Stephanie. 2007. "Teenage Drinking." *Cityweekend. Parents & Kids*.

"China Bans Under-age Drinking." 2006. *China Daily*, January 6. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/06/content_510002.htm.

Chua, Amy. 2011. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*. New York: Penguin Press.

Clifton, Grace. 2004. "Thematic Review: Making the Case for the BRAT (British Regiment Attached Traveller)." *British Educational Research Journal* 30 (3): 457–462.

Cohen, Erik. 1977. "Expatriate Communities." *Current Sociology* 24: 5–90.

Coleman, Simon, and Peter Collins. 2006. "Introduction: 'Being...Where?' Performing Fields on Shifting Grounds." In *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, ed. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, 1–21. Oxford: Berg.

Coles, Anne, and Anne-Meike Fechter, ed. 2008. *Gender and Family Among Transnational Professionals*. New York: Routledge.

Conradson, David, and Alan Latham. 2005. "Transnational Urbanism: Attending to Everyday Practices and Mobilities." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31 (2) (March): 227–233. doi:10.1080/1369183042000339891.

Conradson, David, and Deirdre Mckay. 2007. "Translocal Subjectivities: Mobility, Connection, Emotion." *Mobilities* 2 (2): 167–174.

Crouch, David. 2005. "Flirting with Space: Tourism Geographies as Sensuous/Expressive Practice." In *Seductions of Place: Geographical Perspectives on Globalization and Touristed Landscapes*, ed. Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew, 23–35. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Dalsgaard, Steffen. 2008. "Facework on Facebook: The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life and Its Role in the US Elections." *Anthropology Today* 24 (6): 8–12.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Demant, Jakob, and Jeanette Østergaard. 2007. "Partying as Everyday Life: Investigations of Teenagers' Leisure Life." *Journal of Youth Studies* 10 (5) (November): 517–537. doi:10.1080/13676260701594828.

"Denizen - for Third Culture Kids." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://www.denizenmag.com/.

Desforges, Luke. 1998. "'Checking Out the Planet': Global Representations/Local Identities and Youth Travel." In *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, ed. Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, 175–192. London: Routledge.

Dikötter, Frank. 1992. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dobeneck, Florian. 2010. *Mobile Eliten. Deutsche Entsandte und ihre Familien in São Paulo*. Marburg: Tectum.

Dobson, Madeleine E. 2009. "Unpacking Children in Migration Research." *Children's Geographies* 7 (3) (August): 355–360.

Donald, Stephanie Hemelryk. 2000. "Seeing White - Female Whiteness and the Purity of Children in Australian, Chinese, and British Visual Culture." *Social Semiotics* 10 (2): 157–171.

Donald, Stephanie Hemelryk, and John G. Gammack. 2007. *Tourism and the Branded City: Film and Identity on the Pacific Rim*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Dyer, Richard. [1997]2008. *White*. London: Routledge.

Englund, Harri. 2002. "Ethnography After Globalism: Migration and Emplacement in Malawi." *American Ethnologist* 29 (2): 261–286.

Erikson, Erik H. 1968. *Identity, Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton.

Falzon, Mark-Anthony. 2009. "Introduction. Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research." In *Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*, ed. Mark-Anthony Falzon. Farnham: Ashgate.

Farrer, James. 2002. *Opening up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. 2008. "From 'Passports' to 'Joint Ventures': Intermarriage Between Chinese Nationals and Western Expatriates Residing in Shanghai." *Asian Studies Review* 32 (1): 7 – 29.

———. 2010. "'New Shanghailanders' or 'New Shanghainese': Western Expatriates' Narratives of Emplacement in Shanghai." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (8) (September): 1211–1228. doi:10.1080/13691831003687675.

———. 2011. "Global Nightscapes in Shanghai as Ethnosexual Contact Zones." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (5): 747–764.

Farrer, James, and Andrew David Field. 2012. "From Interzone to Transzone: Race and Sex in the Contact Zones of Shanghai's Global Nightlife." *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* (31). http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue31/farrer-field.htm.

Fechter, Anne-Meike. 2007a. *Transnational Lives: Expatriates in Indonesia*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

———. 2007b. "Living in a Bubble: Expatriates' Transnational Spaces." In *Going First Class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement*, ed. Vered Amit, 33–52. New York: Berghaan Books.

Fechter, Anne-Meike, and Katie Walsh. 2010. "Examining 'Expatriate' Continuities: Postcolonial Approaches to Mobile Professionals." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (8) (September): 1197–1210. doi:10.1080/13691831003687667.

Fechter, Anne-Meike, and Katie Walsh, ed. 2012. *The New Expatriates Postcolonial Approaches to Mobile Professionals.* Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Field, Andrew. 2008. "From D.D's to Y.Y. to Park 97 to Muse: Dance Club Spaces and the Construction of Class in Shanghai, 1997-2007." *China: An International Journal* 6: 18–43.

Fong, Vanessa L. 2007. "Morality, Cosmopolitanism, or Academic Attainment? Discourses on 'Quality' and Urban Chinese-Only-Children's Claims to Ideal Personhood." *City and Society* 19 (1): 86–113.

Franke, Amelie. 2008. "A Transcultural Home? An investigation into Notions of Home and Belonging among Third Culture Kids." In *Transkulturelle Praktiken: empirische Studien zu Innovationsprozessen.* St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag.

Frantz, Klaus. 2006. "Private Gated Neighbourhoods: a Progressive Trend in US Urban Development." In *Private Cities: Global and Local Perspectives*, ed. Georg Glasze, Chris Webster, and Klaus Frantz, 64–75. London: Routledge.

Van Gennep, Arnold. [1960]1992. *The Rites of Passage. A Classic Study of Cultural Celebrations.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gille, Zsuzsa, and Séan Ó Riain. 2002. "Global Ethnography." *Annual Review of Sociology* Volume 28: 271–295. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.140945.

Gillespie, Marie. 1999. "Fernsehen im multiethnischen Kontext." In *Widerspenstige Kulturen*, ed. Karl Hörning and Rainer Winter. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Giroir, Guillaume. 2006. "The Purple Jade Villas (Beijing). A Golden Ghetto in Red China." In *Private Cities: Global and Local Perspectives*, ed. Georg Glasze, Chris Webster, and Klaus Frantz, 142–152. London: Routledge.

Glasze, Georg. 2006. "Segregation and Seclusion: The Case of Compounds for Western Expatriates in Saudi Arabia." *GeoJournal* 66: 63–88. doi:10.1007/s10708-006-9018-z.

Glasze, Georg, Chris Webster, and Klaus Frantz, ed. 2006. *Private Cities: Global and Local Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Goffman, Erving. 1966. *Behavior in Public Places Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings.* New York: Free Press.

Goldstein, Daniel M. 2002. "Desconfianza and Problems of Representation in Urban Ethnography." *Anthropological Quarterly* 75 (3): 485 – 517.

Greenholtz, Joe, and Jean Kim. 2009. "The Cultural Hybridity of Lena: A Multi-method Case Study of a Third Culture Kid." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 33 (5) (September): 391–398. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.05.004.

Greenspan, Anna. 2008a. "China Vs. America? Learning Strategies in the 21st Century." *The Globalist.* http://www.theglobalist.com/storyid.aspx?storyid=5264.

———. 2008b. "China Vs. America? Learning Strategies in the 21st Century (Part 2)." *The Globalist.* http://www.theglobalist.com/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=5265.

———. 2011a. "Tiger Moms: The Benefits of Eating Bitterness. Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother Review." Miller-McCune. http://www.miller-mccune.com/culture/tiger-moms-the-benefits-of-eating-bitterness-28029/.

———. 2011b. "Local Experiences: Anna Greenspan Interviews Emily Meyer on Her Experiences with the Local Education System." *That's Shanghai Magazine*. http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/368/local-experiences.

Griese, Hartmut M. 2004. "'Ich bin ein Wirrwarr von Kulturen - "Zwiebel" und "Chamäleon"?' Rezension zu: David E. Pollock, Ruth van Reken und Georg Pflüger: Third Culture Kids. Aufwachsen in mehreren Kulturen." *socialnet*. http://socialnet.de/rezensionen/1446.php.

Grimshaw, Trevor, and Coreen Sears. 2008. "'Where Am I from?' 'Where Do I Belong?': The Negotiation and Maintenance of Identity by International School Students." *Journal of Research in International Education* 7: 259–278.

Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo. 1997. "The Emergence of a Transnational Social Formation and the Mirage of Return Migration Among Dominican Transmigrants." *Identities* 4 (2): 281–322.

Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. 1992. "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1): 6–23.

———. 1997. "'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, 1–46. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gusfield, Joseph R. 1987. "Passage to Play: Rituals of Drinking Time in American Society." In *Constructive Drinking. Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, ed. Mary Douglas, 73–90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hage, Ghassan. 2005. "A Not so Multi-sited Ethnography of a Not so Imagined Community." *Anthropological Theory* 5 (4) (December 1): 463–475. doi:10.1177/1463499605059232.

Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford, 222–237. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

———. 1994. *Rassismus und kulturelle Identität*. Hamburg: Argument Verlag.

———. [1996]2012. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1–17. London: Sage.

———. 1996. "New Ethnicities." In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 441–449. London: Routledge.

Hall, Stuart, ed. 1997. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. London: Sage.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1980. *Exploring the City*. New York: Columbia University Press.

———. [1996]2001. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge.

———. [1996]2001. "The Cultural Role of World Cities." In *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*, 127–139. London: Routledge.

———. 2006. "Studying Down, Up, Sideways, Through, Backwards, Forwards, Away and at Home: Reflections on the Field Worries of an Expansive Discipline." In *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, ed. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins, 23–41. Oxford: Berg.

Hartmann, Michael. 2000. "Class-specific Habitus and the Social Reproduction of the Business Elite in Germany and France." *The Sociological Review* 48 (2): 241–261.

Hassenpflug, Dieter. 2009. *Der urbane Code Chinas*. Basel: Birkhäuser Bauverlag.

Hatfield, Madeleine E. 2010. "Children Moving 'Home'? Everyday Experiences of Return Migration in Highly Skilled Households." *Childhood* 17 (2) (August 5): 243–257. doi:10.1177/0907568210365747.

Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New Accents. London: Methuen.

Hill, Mike. 1997. *Whiteness: a Critical Reader*. New York: New York University Press.

Hindman, Heather. 2009a. "Shopping in the Bazaar/Bizarre Shopping: Culture and the Accidental Elitism of Expatriates in Kathmandu, Nepal." *Journal of Popular Culture* 42 (4): 663–679.

———. 2009b. "Cosmopolitan Codifications: Elites, Expatriates, and Difference in Kathmandu, Nepal." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 16 (3): 249–270. doi:10.1080/10702890902861255.

Hirschfeld, Lawrence A. 2002. "Why Don't Anthropologists Like Children?" *American Anthropologist* 104: 611–627.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. [1983]2003. *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hodkinson, Paul. 2007. "Youth Cultures: A Critical Outline of Key Debates." In *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson and Wolfgang Deicke, 26:1–21. Routledge Advances in Sociology. New York: Routledge.

Hoerder, Dirk, Yvonne Hébert, and Irina Schmitt, ed. 2005. *Negotiating Transcultural Lives: Belongings and Social Capital Among Youth in Comparative Perspective*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress.

Hollands, R. 2002. "Divisions in the Dark: Youth Cultures, Transitions and Segmented Consumption Spaces in the Night-time Economy." *Journal of Youth Studies* 5 (2): 153–171.

Howes, David. [2005]2006. "Introduction: Empires of the Senses." In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, ed. David Howes, 1–17. Sensory Formations Series. Oxford: Berg.

———. 2007. *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Huang, Youqin, and Setha M. Low. 2008. "Is Gating Always Exclusionary? A Comparative Analysis of Gated Communities in American and Chinese Cities." In *Urban China in Transition*, ed. John R. Logan, 182–202. Malden: Blackwell.

Hutchins, Teresa. 2011. "'They Told Us in a Curry Shop': Child–Adult Relations in the Context of Family Migration Decision-Making." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (8) (September): 1219–1235. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.590926.

"Interkom." 2010. *Community Center Shanghai. Guide: Welcome (back) to Shanghai*.

International Center for Alcohol Policies. 2010. "Minimum Age Limits Worldwide." *Website of the International Center for Alcohol Policies*. http://www.icap.org/Table/MinimumAgeLimitsWorldwide.

"International Schools in Shanghai - LittleStar Magazine." 2012. Accessed August 15. http://www.internationalschool.info/listing/international-schools-in-shanghai.

"InterNations: Expatriate Community for Expats Worldwide." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://www.internations.org/.

Jackson, Peter, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer. 2004. "Introduction: The Spaces of Transnationality." In *Transnational Spaces*, ed. Peter Jackson, Philip Crang, and Claire Dwyer, 1–23. London: Routledge.

James, Allison, and Adrian James. 2008. *Key Concepts in Childhood Studies*. London: Sage.

Jeffries, Elena D. 2004. "Experiences of Trust with Parents. A Qualitative Investigation of African American Latino, and Asian American Boys from Low-Income Families." In *Adolescent Boys: Exploring Diverse Cultures in Boyhood*, ed. Niobe Way and Judy Y. Chu, 107–128. New York: New York University Press.

Johnson, M. Dujon. 2011. *Race & Racism in the Chinas: Chinese Racial Attitudes Toward Africans and African-Americans*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse.

Kato, Yuki. 2009. "Doing Consumption and Sitting Cars: Adolescent Bodies in Suburban Commercial Spaces." *Children's Geographies* 7 (1) (February): 51–66. doi:10.1080/14733280802630908.

Kirkpatrick, David. 2011. *Der Facebook-Effekt*. München: Hanser.

Kneidinger, Bernadette. 2010. *Facebook und Co: Eine soziologische Analyse von Interaktionsformen in Online Social Networks*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / GWV Fachverlage.

Knörr, Jacqueline. 2005. "When German Children Come 'Home.' Experiences of (Re)-Migration to Germany - and Some Remarks About the 'TCK'-Issue." In *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, ed. Jacqueline Knörr, 51–76. Culture and Social Practice. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Knörr, Jacqueline, and Angela Nunes. 2005. "Introduction." In *Childhood and Migration: From Experience to Agency*, ed. Jacqueline Knörr, 9–21. Culture and Social Practice. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Koch, Gertraud. 2008. *Transkulturelle Praktiken: Empirische Studien Zu Innovationsprozessen*. St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag.

Lagerkvist, Amanda. 2007. "Gazing at Pudong – 'With a Drink in Your Hand'. Time Travel, Mediation, and Multisensuous Immersion in the Future City of Shanghai." *The Senses & Society* 2: 155–172.

Lahelma, Elina, and Tuula Gordon. 2003. "Home as a Physical, Social and Mental Space: Young People's Reflections on Leaving Home." *Journal of Youth Studies* 6 (4) (December): 377–390. doi:10.1080/1367626032000162104.

Lamb, Sarah. 2002. "Intimacy in a Transnational Era: The Remaking of Aging Among Indian Americans." *Diaspora* 11 (3): 299–330.

Leavitt, John. 1996. "Meaning and Feeling in the Anthropology of Emotions." *American Ethnologist* 23 (3): 514–539.

Ley, David. 2004. "Transnational Spaces and Everyday Lives." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29 (2): 151–164.

Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lindner, Rolf. 1981. "Die Angst des Forschers vor dem Feld. Überlegungen zur teilnehmenden Beobachtung als Interaktionsprozeß." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 77: 51–66.

Lu, Hanchao. 1999. *Beyond the Neon Lights: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Luhrmann, Tanya Marie. 1996. *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

MacDougall, David. 2006. *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Madianou, Mirca, and Daniel Miller. 2012. *Migration and New Media: Transnational Families and Polymedia*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Magolda, Peter Mark. 2003. "Saying Good-Bye: An Anthropological Examination of a Commencement Ritual." *Journal of College Student Development* 44 (6): 779–796. doi:10.1353/csd.2003.0073.

Maines, David R., Noreen M. Sugrue, and Michael A. Katovich. 1983. "The Sociological Import of G. H. Mead's Theory of the Past." *American Sociological Review* 48 (2): 161–173.

Malbon, Ben. 1998. "The Club. Clubbing: Consumption, Identity and the Spatial Practices of Every-night Life." In *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, ed. Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine, 266–286. Routledge.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. [1929]1968. *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-western Melanesia*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———. 1970. "Introduction." In *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, ed. Fernando Ortiz, vii–xiv. New York: Vintage Books.

Marcus, George E.. 1983a. "'Elite' as a Concept, Theory, and Research Tradition." In *Elites: Ethnographic Issues*, ed. George E Marcus, 7–27. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

———, ed. 1983b. *Elites: Ethnographic Issues*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

———. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95–117.

Massey, Doreen. 1995. "Making Spaces, or, Geography Is Political Too." *Soundings* 1: 193–208.

———. 1998. "The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures." In *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, 121–129. London: Routledge.

Mattley, Christine. 2002. "The Temporality of Emotion: Constructing Past Emotions." *Symbolic Interaction* 25 (3) (August): 363–378. doi:10.1525/si.2002.25.3.363.

McDermott, Josephine. 2010. "Another Round: Shanghai Reopens 110ft Bar Fabled for Colonial Decadence." *The Telegraph*, October. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/8036306/Another-round-Shanghai-reopens-110ft-bar-fabled-for-colonial-decadence.html.

McRobbie, Angela, and Jenny Garber. [1975]1997. "Girls and Subcultures." In *The Subcultures Reader*, ed. Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton, 112–120. London: Routledge.

Mead, Margaret. [1928]1929. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation*. 4th printing. New York: Morrow.

———. [1930]1963. *Growing up in New Guinea: a Comparative Study of Primitive Education*. 5th ed. New York: New American Library.

———. [1939]1948. *From the South Seas: Studies of Adolescence And Sex in Primitive Societies*. New York: Morrow.

Miller, Daniel, ed. 2001. *Home Possessions : Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*. Oxford: Berg.

———. 2011. *Tales from Facebook*. New York: Wiley.

Miller, Daniel, Peter Jackson, Michael Rowlands, Nigel Thrift, and Beverly Holbrook. 1998. *Shopping, Place, and Identity*. London: Routledge.

Milner, Murray. 2004. *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids. American Teenagers, Schools, and the Culture of Consumption*. New York: Routledge.

Möckel-Rieke, Hannah. 1998. "Introduction: Media and Cultural Memory." *Amerikastudien* 43 (1): 5–17.

Molgat, Marc. 2002. "Leaving Home in Quebec: Theoretical and Social Implications of (im) Mobility Among Youth." *Journal of Youth Studies* 5 (2): 135–152.

Moore, Fiona. 2008. "The German School in London, UK. Fostering the Next Generation of National Cosmopolitans?" In *Gender and Family Among Transnational Professionals*, ed. Anne Coles and Anne-Meike Fechter, 85–101. New York: Routledge.

Moser, Johannes. 2000. "Kulturanthropologische Jugendforschung." In *Jugendkulturen. Recherchen in Frankfurt am Main und London*, ed. Johannes Moser, 66:11–57. Kulturanthropologie-Notizen. Frankfurt am Main: Institut für Kulturanthropologie und Europäische Ethnologie.

"Mural Bar and Restaurant | Shanghai." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://www.muralbar.com/mural_site.html.

Nadig, Maya. 2004. "Transculturality in Progress. Theoretical and Methodological Aspects Drawn from Cultural Studies and Psychoanalysis." In *Transculturality - Epistemology, Ethics, and Politics*, ed. Jörg Sandkühler and Hong-Bin Lim, 57:9–21. Philosophie und Geschichte der Wissenschaften. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag.

Nash, Dennison. 1970. *A Community in Limbo. An Anthropological Study of an American Community Abroad*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Nava, Mica. 2002. "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference." *Theory, Culture & Society* 19 (1-2): 81–99. doi:10.1177/026327640201900104.

Neumann-Braun, Klaus, and Ulla Autenrieth. 2011a. "Zur Einleitung: Soziale Beziehungen im Web 2.0 und deren Visualisierung." In *Freundschaft und Gemeinschaft im Social Web: bildbezogenes Handeln und Peergroup-Kommunikation auf Facebook & Co*, ed. Klaus Neumann-Braun, 2:9–30. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

———, ed. 2011b. *Freundschaft und Gemeinschaft im Social Web: bildbezogenes Handeln und Peergroup-Kommunikation auf Facebook & Co*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Northcote, Jeremy. 2006. "Nightclubbing and the Search for Identity: Making the Transition from Childhood to Adulthood in an Urban Milieu." *Journal of Youth Studies* 9 (1) (February): 1–16. doi:10.1080/13676260500523580.

Orellana, Marjorie Faulstich, Barrie Thorne, Anna Chee, and Wan Shun Eva Lam. 2001. "Transnational Childhoods: The Participation of Children in Processes of Family Migration." *Social Problems* 48 (4) (November): 572–591. doi:10.1525/sp.2001.48.4.572.

Ortiz, Fernando. 1970. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*. New York: Vintage Books.

Pascoe, Robin. 2006. *Raising Global Nomads. Parenting Abroad in an On-Demand World*. Vancouver: Expatriate Press.

Peterson, Bill E., and Laila T. Plamondon. 2009. "Third Culture Kids and the Consequences of International Sojourns on Authoritarianism, Acculturative Balance, and Positive Affect." *Journal of Research in Personality* 43 (5) (October): 755–763. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2009.04.014.

Peterson, Erick. 2011. "Shanghai's Tormented Teens." *Global Times*, October 27. http://www.globaltimes.cn/NEWS/tabid/99/ID/681167/Shanghais-tormented-teens.aspx.

Petridou, Elia. 2001. "The Taste of Home." In *Home Possessions: Material Culture Behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller, 87–104. Oxford: Berg.

Pink, Sarah. 2011. "Images, Senses and Applications: Engaging Visual Anthropology." *Visual Anthropology* 24 (5): 437–454.

Pittman, Lisa, and Diana Smit. 2012. *Expat Teens Talk*. Summertime Publishing.

Ploch, Beatrice. 1995. "Eignen sich Mental Maps zur Erforschung des Stadtraumes? Möglichkeiten der Methode." *Kea. Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 8 Stadtdschungel: 23–41.

Pollock, David C., and Ruth E. Van Reken. [1999]2009. *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*. Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Pratt, Geraldine. 1992. "Commentary: Spatial Metaphors and Speaking Positions." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10 (3): 241-244.

Pries, Ludger, ed. 2001. *New Transnational Social Spaces: International Migration and Transnational Companies in the Early Twenty-first Century*. Routledge Research in Transnationalism. London: Routledge.

Pütz, Robert. 2004. *Transkulturalität als Praxis: Unternehmer türkischer Herkunft in Berlin*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Rapport, Nigel. 2000. "The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique: Processual Ethnography for a World in Motion." In *Constructing the Field : Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*, ed. Vered Amit, 71–95. London: Routledge.

Rapport, Nigel, and Andrew Dawson, ed. 1998. *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement*. Oxford: Berg.

Richter, Nina. 2011. *Third Culture Kids: Transkulturelle Kindheits- und Jungenderfahrungen*. Marburg: Tectum.

Robertson, George, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, and Tim Putnam, ed. 1994. *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*. London: Routledge.

Robinson, Jennifer. 2010. "Cities in a World of Cities: The Comparative Gesture." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35(1): 1-23. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00982.x

Rouse, Roger. 1992. "Making Sense of Settlement: Class Formation, Cultural Struggle and Transnationalism Among Mexican Migrants in the United States." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645: 25–52.

Sande, Allan. 2002. "Intoxication and Rite of Passage to Adulthood in Norway." *Contemporary Drug Problems* 29: 277–303.

Schoon, Sonia. 2007. *Shanghai XXL : Alltag und Identitätsfindung im Spannungsfeld extremer Urbanisierung*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Selmer, Jan, and Hon Lam. 2004. "'Third-culture Kids' Future Business Expatriates?" *Personnel Review* 33 (4): 430–445.

Séror, Jérémie. 2005. "Computers and Qualitative Data Analysis: Paper, Pens, and Highlighters Vs. Screen, Mouse, and Keyboard." *TESOL Quaterly* 39 (2) (June): 321–328.

Shore, Cris. 2002. "Introduction: Towards an Anthropology of Elites." In *Elite Cultures : Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Cris Shore and Stephen Nugent, 1–21. London: Routledge.

Shore, Cris, and Stephen Nugent, ed. 2002. *Elite Cultures : Anthropological Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Simmel, Georg. 1903. "Die Grosstädte und das Geistesleben." In *Die Grossstadt. Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Städteausstellung*, ed. Th. Petermann, 9:185–206. Jahrbuch der Gehe-Stiftung Dresden. http://socio.ch/sim/sta03.htm.

Skelton, Tracey. 2001. "Girls in the Club: Researching Working Class Girls' Lives." *Ethics, Place & Environment* 4 (2) (June): 167–173. doi:10.1080/13668790125371.

Sklair, Leslie. [2001]2003. *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Smetana, Judith G. 2010. *Adolescents, Families, and Social Development: How Teens Construct their Worlds*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Smith, Robert C. 2001. "Comparing Local-level Swedish and Mexican Transnational Life: An Essay in Historical Retrieval." In *New Transnational Social Spaces: International Migration and Transnational Companies in the Early Twenty-first Century*, ed. Ludger Pries. Routledge Research in Transnationalism. London: Routledge.

Sparling, Georgia. 2010. "Where to Live in Shanghai: Neighbourhoods and Housing Options." *Shanghai Family*, August.

Sporton, Deborah, Gill Valentine, and Katrine B. Nielsen. 2006. "Post Conflict Identities: Affiliations and Practices of Somali Asylum Seeker Children." *Children's Geographies* 4 (2): 203–217. doi:10.1080/ 14733280600807062.

Tanu, Danau. 2011. "Vignettes from Another Perspective: When Cultural Hierarchies Matter at an International School." In *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*, ed. Gene H. Bell-Villada, Nina Sichel, Faith Eidse, and Elaine Neill Orr, 220–231. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

"TCK Academy's: The First TCK Expert Interview Series." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://tckacademy.com/class/interviews/.

"TCKID: A Home for Third Culture Kids and Adults (TCKs)." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://tckid.com/.

"TCKWorld: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids (TCKs)." 2013. Accessed March 18. http://www.tckworld.com/.

Teo, Sin Yih. 2011. "'The Moon Back Home Is Brighter'?: Return Migration and the Cultural Politics of Belonging." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37 (5) (May): 805–820. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2011.559720.

"The Naked Gun - Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia." 2013. Accessed February 20. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Naked_Gun.

Torresan, Angela. 2007. "How Privileged Are They? Middle-Class Brazilian Immigrants in Lisbon." In *Going First Class? New Approaches to Privileged Travel and Movement*, ed. Vered Amit, 103–125. New York: Berghaan Books.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1974. *Topophilia: a Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Turner, Simon. 2008. "Studying the Tensions of Transnational Engagement: From the Nuclear Family to the World-Wide Web." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34 (7) (September): 1049–1056. doi:10.1080/13691830802230323.

Turner, Victor. [1969]2008. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Brunswick: Aldine Transaction.

UNICEF. 2013. "Knowledges Pages." Accessed January 15. http://www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge-pages/Migration-and-children, last accessed on January 15th 2013.

Valentine, Gill. 2003. "Boundary Crossings: Transitions from Childhood to Adulthood." *Children's Geographies* 1: 37–52.

Vanderstede, Wouter. 2011. "'Chilling' and 'Hopping' in the 'Teenage Space Network': Explorations in Teenagers' Geographies in the City of Mechelen." *Children's Geographies* 9 (2) (May): 167–184. doi:10.1080/14733285.2011.562379.

Vertovec, Steven. 1997. "Three Meanings of 'Diaspora,' Exemplified Among South Asian Religions." *Diaspora* 6: 277–300.

———. 2004. "Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 970–1001.

Walmsley, Emily. 2005. "Race, Place and Taste. Making Identities Through Sensory Experience in Ecuador." In *The Senses. Special Issue of Etnofoor;* 18,1:43–60. The Senses. Münster: LIT.

Walsh, Katie. 2006a. "British Expatriate Belongings: Mobile Homes and Transnational Homing." *Home Cultures* 3 (2): 123–144.

———. 2006b. "'Dad Says I'm Tied to a Shooting Star!' Grounding (Research on) British Expatriate Belonging." *Area* 38 (3): 268–278.

———. 2008. "Travelling Together? Work, Intimacy and Home Amongst British Expatriate Couples in Dubai." In *Gender and Family Among Transnational Professionals*, 63 – 84. Routledge International Studies of Women and Place 8. New York: Routledge.

———. 2010. "Book Review: Transnational Lives: Expatriates in Indonesia, by Anne-Meike Fechter." *Cultural Geographies* 17 (1): 139–140.

———. 2011. "Migrant Masculinities and Domestic Space: British Home-making Practices in Dubai." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (4): 516–529.

Walters, Kate A., and Faith P. Auton-Cuff. 2009. "A Story to Tell: The Identity Development of Women Growing up as Third Culture Kids." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 12 (7) (November): 755–772. doi:10.1080/13674670903029153.

Warneken, Jürgen, and Andreas Wittel. 1997. "Die neue Angst vor dem Feld. Ethnographisches Research Up am Beispiel der Unternehmensforschung." *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 93: 1–16.

Waters, Johanna L. 2005. "Transnational Family Strategies and Education in the Contemporary Chinese Diaspora." *Global Networks* 5 (4): 359–377.

———. 2007. "'Roundabout Routes and Sanctuary Schools': The Role of Situated Educational Practices and Habitus in the Creation of Transnational Professionals." *Global Networks* 7 (4): 477–497.

Way, Niobe. 2004. "Intimacy, Desire, and Distrust in the Friendships of Adolescent Boys." In *Adolescent Boys: Exploring Diverse Cultures in Boyhood*, ed. Niobe Way and Judy Y. Chu, 167–196. New York: New York University Press.

Webster, Chris, Fulong Wu, and Yanjing Zhao. 2006. "China's Modern Gated Cities." In *Private Cities: Global and Local Perspectives*, ed. Georg Glasze, Chris Webster, and Klaus Frantz, 153–169. London: Routledge.

Weißköppel, Cordula. 2001. *Ausländer und Kartoffeldeutsche: Identitätsperformanz im Alltag einer ethnisch gemischten Realschulklasse*. Juventa-Materialien. Weinheim: Juventa.

Welsch, Wolfgang. 1995. "Transkulturalität. Zur veränderten Verfaßtheit heutiger Kulturen." Ed. Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. *Migration und kultureller Wandel, Schwerpunktthema der Zeitschrift für Kulturaustausch* 45: 39–44.

———. 1999. "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*: 194–213.

Wertsch, Mary Edwards. [1991]2006. *Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood Inside the Fortress*. St. Louis: Brightwell Publishing.

Wessendorf, Susanne. 2007. "Who Do You Hang Out With? Peer Group Association and Cultural Assertion among Second-Generation Italians in Switzerland." In *Jugend, Zugehörigkeit und Migration Subjektpositionierung im Kontext von Jugendkultur, Ethnizitäts- und Geschlechterkonstruktionen*, ed. Christine Riegel and Thomas Geisen, 111–127. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Westlake, EJ. 2008. "Friend Me If You Facebook: Generation y and Performative Surveillance." *The Drama Review* 52 (4): 21–40.

Wildner, Kathrin. 1995. "'Picturing the City': Themen und Methoden der Stadtethnologie." *Kea. Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 8 Stadtdschungel: 1–21.

Willis, Katie, and Brenda Yeoh. 2002. "Gendering Transnational Communities: a Comparison of Singaporean and British Migrants in China." *Geoforum* 33: 553–565.

Willis, Katie, Brenda Yeoh, and S.M.A.K. Fakhri. 2002. "Transnational Elites." *Geoforum* 33: 505–507.

Willis, Katie, and Brenda Yeoh. 2008. "'Coming to China Changed My Life': Gender Roles and Relations Among Single British Migrants." In *Gender and Family Among Transnational Professionals*, ed. Anne Coles and Anne-Meike Fechter, 211 – 232. New York: Routledge.

Willis, Paul E. 1990. *Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Wu, Fulong. 2006. *Packaging a New Way of (Sub-)Urban Life: Gated Communities and Chinese New Urbanism.* Cardiff: Cardiff University Paper.

Wulff, Helena. 1995. "Introduction: Introducing Youth Culture in Its Own Right: The State of the Art and New Possibilities." In *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Vered Amit-Talai and Helena Wulff, 1–18. London: Routledge.

Yamato, Yoko, and Mark Bray. 2006. "Economic Development and the Market Place for Education: Dynamics of the International Schools Sector in Shanghai, China." *Journal of Research in International Education* 5: 57–82. doi:10.1177/1475240906061864.

Yeoh, Brenda S. A., and Katie Willis. 2005. "Singaporean and British Transmigrants in China and the Cultural Politics of 'Contact Zones'." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31: 269–285. doi:10.1080/1369183042000339927.

Zukin, Sharon. 2005. "Whose Culture? Whose City?" In *The Urban Sociology Reader*, 281–289. The Routledge Urban Reader Series. London: Routledge.

Table of Figures

Transcription Rules

I:	= Interviewer
\<L\>	= Laughing
\<L\> word or phrase said while laughing\</L\>	= Laughing while speaking
\<x\>	= Inaudible
ALL CAPS	= Strong emphasis by speaker

Punctuation rules were largely ignored in the transcriptions, and instead full stops and commas were set according to the rhythm of speech.

Student Directory: Who Is Who?

Alex, with his eighteen years, is the oldest boy in the German class. I interviewed Alex together with Don and Bjoern. Alex enjoyed the interview situation, apparently relating it to a journalistic interview that he associated with fame or importance. Alex was born in Germany, before he moved on to Brussels with his family. After a few years at a German school in Brussels, his parents made the decision to move on to Shanghai due to his father's career. Alex thus came to Shanghai at the age of almost seventeen. Although always respectful towards me, and mostly using the German polite form "Sie" when addressing me, I was a little intimidated by him, as I had seen him quite confrontational. Nevertheless, we had interesting conversations on several nights out, and Alex was particularly helpful in explaining the group dynamics to me. Alex, together with his best friend Don (the girls would comment on this relationship as "bromance") was always very involved in nightlife activities, often being the initiator for the Friday nights out. The boys hang out at his place quite regularly. Alex was the only boy I witnessed having casual relationships with girls he met in the nightclubs.

Allen is an eleven-year-old US-American whom I interviewed at his British school in November 2010. He had just arrived in Shanghai after his father had been transferred to China three months earlier. Before his move to Shanghai, his family had spent over a year in Mexico, leaving early, however, due to what Allen labels as "security reasons." Allen, in his school uniform (sports coat, shirt, and a tie), came across to me like an adult. This appearance was underlined by the way he phrased every thought carefully. When we waited for two more students (Jacob and Tamara) to appear for the group interview, he simply opened his book and quietly waited reading. Although sharing his thoughts on moving to Shanghai in a very reflected and careful way, his position seemed to be copying his parents' mantra of a positive attitude and of the benefits of growing up transnationally. He made clear he thinks it is important to focus on the positive aspects and refused to discuss uncertainties, difficulties, or homesickness, stressing that he trusts his parents and their decision-making. However, he recalled that he had gotten sick in Mexico and attributed this to the radical changes of environment and the host of new impressions. Allen in his analytic and calm way, embedded in what I have often experienced as a typical US-American attitude of looking at the positive aspects, was someone I kept wondering about. I have contemplated much about what really lies behind this positive attitude and if his strategy of positive outlook and trust works. Unfortunately, I have not been able to stay in touch with Allen.

Andrea, aged sixteen at our first encounter, is a quirky, creative student who likes to make people laugh. During fieldwork, she had a particular reputation for partying and dancing Shanghai's nights away together with Antonia. Andrea was born in Asia, but was too young to actively remember her first years abroad. Starting school in Germany, she and her family left Germany again due to her father's career and moved to Shanghai when she was twelve years old. She remembered the move and the first years at her new school as quite difficult. I interviewed Andrea three times individually, in June and September 2011 and June 2012 at a café in Shanghai's former French Concession. I first met Andrea on a Friday night out. Andrea, the only one of "the girls" attending a different class, was one of the few students who lived downtown. While it took some time until Andrea and I got to know each other, we got along great towards the end of my stay and afterwards in Germany. Andrea chose to study communication studies in Germany and we have met several times after her move back from Shanghai.

Antonia, sixteen when I first met her at the German school, was born in Germany, but grew up in Shanghai. She is one of the few expat students who had been at the same school all her life. Her father is German, her mother a successful Chinese businesswomen who studied in Germany. When talking about her relations to the city and experience of China, Antonia stressed her difference to other expatriate children who only pass a few years in China. Antonia speaks both German and Chinese at home and likes to claim being 'Shanghainese'. She is a determined, smart young woman, who likes to be in control of things, has high expectations of herself and generally highly values intelligence and analytical minds. Consequently, she can sometimes be very rough and direct in her judgment of others and herself. She is generous, independent and does not shy away from arguments. During fieldwork, the other students sometimes called here Antonio, as they considered some of her behavior as masculine. Antonia was a key figure in my research, not only as an informant and friend, but also as a gatekeeper. It was her invitation to join nightlife activities that led to closer contacts with many others at the German school that I worked at. Her way to include me and openly state that 'Marie is one of us' definitely had its influence in my acceptance as researcher and friend in her peer group and class. I have visited Antonia a few times after her move to Germany and we are still in touch. She is now studying to become a doctor.

Arnaud, sixteen years old, was enrolled at a French-medium school in Shanghai when we met. His Chinese-born parents immigrated to Belgium for his father's studies and career. Arnaud was born in Belgium and is a Belgian national. After his birth his family moved to the Parisian outskirts. When he was nine years old, his family decided to move to Shanghai because of a career opportunity for his father, as well as to be closer to his sick grandfather. I received Arnaud's phone number from Matthias, as the two knew each other from jam sessions in the music room on the German-French school campus. After several text messages, Arnaud and I agreed to meet at a Starbucks café downtown, where he showed up with his long black hair tied into a ponytail, jeans, sneakers, and the obligatory head phones. After carefully studying the interview questionnaire, he answered the questions in a similar thought–through way. I had short conversations with him after that, when running into him at the school and we exchanged a few messages via facebook. I particularly enjoyed the interview with Arnaud as he was very self-reflective and openly shared the difficulties of negotiating his position as an Asian-looking French-Chinese raised teenager, often feeling he cannot succeed in either of the two worlds and fearing alienation from his parents, particularly his mother. His high creative energy, being involved in school plays, bands, and writing short stories, seemed to be a strategy to cope with the cultural entanglements of his world. After his graduation Arnaud moved to Canada, to study music recording. We are still in touch via the web.

Bjoern, is a German student, and was sixteen years old at the time of the first interview. I met Bjoern because he was in one of the classes at the German school that I was granted to sit in. At first I particularly noticed his Bavarian accent, which was rather uncommon among the German students in Shanghai who had found a common ground in standard German. While our origins within Germany differed, our taste in music did not. Reggae music turned out to be our connection. We enjoyed the same Reggae artists and exchanging music while in Shanghai established a tie between us. Even after my departure Bjoern would send me YouTube links or names of bands he enjoyed listening to. I always wrote to him when I had visited a concert of a band he knew. It was this connection through popular culture that led to detailed discussions on other issues as well. Bjoern had just come to Shanghai in the summer of 2010. He had never lived outside the small village that he grew up in and expressed that initially he was against the move to Shanghai. Nonetheless, Bjoern quickly established friendships with his classmates. Bjoern in particular seemed to be the link between the

girls and the boys in the class. Maybe it was therefore not surprising that Bjoern was one of the boys I felt most comfortable talking to and thus became, next to Matthias, one of my key male informants.

Britta is a seventeen year old girl from Norway, and a student at a British, English–medium school. I met Britta because she took part in a group discussion with two fellow students at her high school, which had been organized by the school principal's assistant. Britta had just arrived in Shanghai a couple of months prior to the group interview. This was her first stay abroad and she had come to Shanghai with her parents and younger sister due to her father's job. Britta found the adjustment particularly challenging in terms of academics. She followed an IB curriculum. Switching to English-medium education and a new school system had caused her grades to drop. This worried her particularly as two years before graduation these grades would determine which college she could enter. Consequently, she was considering returning to Norway after the first term to stay with relatives or the family of her best friend in order to obtain a high school diploma with a stronger academic record. Unfortunately, I was not able to stay in touch with Britta.

Charlie was sixteen years old when I first met her. Her parents were both born in China and met in Germany during their studies at university. They became German nationals and Charlie was born and grew up in Germany. At the age of twelve she and her family moved to Shanghai for her fathers' career. Charlie can be described as friendly, helpful, sunny, but getting angry quickly about any small injustices. Charlie took part in a group discussion with Olivia and Andrea, but I also interviewed her twice individually in September 2011 and in June 2012. During fieldwork, I felt that she often underestimated her abilities and was often worrying about her high school diploma (Abitur) and whether her grades would suffice to study medicine. Charlie and I always got along great and also went on shopping trips together – for instance to Shanghai's glasses market. Charlie moved to Germany after her graduation while her parents and her younger sister stayed on in Shanghai. She now studies medicine and we have met several times since her move.

Don was aged sixteen when I first met him during class at the German school in December 2010. A few weeks later I interviewed him together with Bjoern and Alex. Don was born in Germany to Chinese-born parents and moved to Shanghai at about the age of twelve. Although I did not conduct any individual interviews with Don, we met regularly at school and nights out. Don and Alex were close friends and often seemed inseparable. Don was particularly interested in electronic music and was an active member of the peer group that students mostly referred to as "the boys."

Emily, aged twelve when I met her, was born in her "home" country Malaysia, but left when she was still too young to keep any memories of growing up there. Emily had lived in Malaysia, Beijing, Thailand, and Shanghai. She arrived in Shanghai one and a half years prior to the interview and attended a British English-medium middle school. I interviewed her with fellow students in a group discussion in November 2010.

Freda was fifteen years old when I interviewed her together with Keith and Vijay. She was from Norway, where she had lived all her life until the move to Shanghai with her parents and sister in 2010, just a few months prior to the group discussion. She was enrolled at a British school. Freda is Britta's younger sister.

Giovanni, seventeen years old, was a rather quiet but always sunny character at the German school. We hardly ever spoke in the beginning and all I knew about him was that he was Swiss – his main characteristic when other students at the German school

referred to him. Although I had met him at school and during the peer group nights out – he would regularly join Bjoern, Alex, Don, Peter, and Marco – it was only during my first follow-up stay in September 2011 that we conducted an interview and I got to hear his Shanghai story. Giovanni, born in Switzerland spent his elementary school years in Istanbul, where his dad was on an assignment. After returning to Switzerland for a few years, his family moved to Shanghai in his ninth grade, a decision his father had to make within a few days. At the time of the interview Giovanni and his two brothers had been living in Shanghai for three years and Giovanni had started his last year before graduation. We also met for a follow-up interview just after his graduation in June 2012. Giovanni currently plans to study economics after completing his compulsory training at the Swiss army.

Jacob, aged nine, was the youngest student I interviewed. He took part in a group discussion in November 2010 at an international British school, one and a half years after his family's move to Shanghai. Jacob had lived in Malaysia, Beijing, Thailand and Shanghai. Jacob is Emily's younger brother.

Karina, seventeen years of age, half-Czech, half-German came to Shanghai six months before the first interview in early 2011. Karina was born in Prague where she lived until her fifth birthday. Her family then moved to Germany for three years, followed by a three year stay in the north of China, then moved back to her home town Prague. In 2010 her family moved to China for a second time, this time to Shanghai. I became acquainted with Karina at the German school. Karina, fluent in German and Czech and eloquent in English and French, enjoyed studying Chinese, which she had started immediately upon her arrival in Shanghai. However, despite her bicultural family and all her former experiences of moving, Karina experienced her family's relocation to Shanghai as a tremendous hardship, away from family and friends in Prague. When I first met Karina, her position in class was still that of a newcomer. Karina and her classmate Lara used to be seatmates at that time and I first interviewed them together, both feeling alienated from the other girls in class who had all been in Shanghai longer than them. Karina sensed the school environment as highly competitive and missed the kind of group support she had witnessed at her former international school in Prague. Individual interviews with Karina followed and over the time a closer relationship between Karina and me developed. Karina would share her problems caused by the move to Shanghai as well as her holiday adventures over coffee. I learned about the mobbing she had to go through in class, in particular from a few boys, and how this had lead to an emotional outburst and the involvement of teachers at school. Although the situation improved and she became friends with students from the other eleventh grade class, Karina never really became part of any of the peer groups in her class. Whether cause or consequence, Karina disliked the joint nightlife activities all the other girls in her class would organize and therefore did not join in any. During a follow-up interview a year after her arrival in September 2011, Karina still felt homesick for her extended family and friends in Prague. Karina and I stayed in touch via email and facebook throughout her last year in Shanghai when I had already returned to Germany. When we met again in June 2012 she was excited to move on to Germany for her studies, hoping to rejoin old friends. She had very much withdrawn from school life, however, and did not find the time for another interview.

Kazuo, sixteen years old, Japanese, came to Shanghai one and a half years prior to the group interview in November 2010. He had lived in Japan and Thailand before. It was the first time for him to be enrolled at an English-medium school, which he considered a great challenge for him in the beginning. His English had remains of a Japanese accent and he only answered interview questions in a very shy manner.

Keith was fourteen years old when he took part in a group discussion in November 2010 at a British school together with Freda and Vijay. Keith came from Singapore and had already moved to Shanghai at the age of three due to his parents work. He speaks Chinese fluently.

Kressi, fifteen when we first met at the German school I was allowed to work at, had moved to Shanghai at an early age. She was born in Germany to Vietnamese parents with Cantonese roots and seemed to have family all over the world. Kressi had skipped a grade together with Mia and was one of the youngest in the class. I regularly spent time with Kressi, as she gradually became part of "the girls" group over the school year. I also interviewed her twice together with Mia in February and September 2011, and one time individually in June 2012. Interested in fashion and arts, it was her and her friend who put together the film for the award ceremony in Berlin where the German school received a prize for its outstanding arts department. Kressi decided to stay on in Shanghai together with Bjoern, whom she started dating a year prior to graduation, to take one semester of Chinese at Jiaotong University. She plans to move to Germany to study something related to event management, PR, arts or fashion.

Lara, sixteen years old, half Dutch, half German, had grown up in Germany until her parents announced the move to Shanghai in the summer of 2010. I met Lara at the German school and conducted one group interview with her and Karina, the two new girls in the class. A strong soccer player, Lara became captain of the girl school team, which she enjoyed. However, Lara had difficulties in getting along with the girls in her grade who seemed not to be tuned to the same wavelength. I quite often accompanied her during nightlife activities, where she mainly joined "the boys" peer group that her then boyfriend Peter belonged to. On several occasions Lara and I therefore were the only females in the group exploring Shanghai's clubs, leading to a friendly connection between us. Although comfortable talking at clubs or during school breaks, Lara never found time to agree on a second interview. Lara was very active on facebook and managed to continuously stay in touch with her old friends. When difficulties in adjusting to the academic environment at the end of the school year led to her voluntarily repeating the eleventh grade, however, Lara found new girl friends in Shanghai. In June 2012 she seemed to have finally made herself comfortable in Shanghai.

Marco, seventeen years old, is half-Brazilian, half-German. He grew up in Germany, spending his summers in Brazil until he moved to Shanghai one and a half years prior to the interview. Marco was enrolled at the German school, and I met him at Friday night activities, introduced by the students I spend time with during class. We conducted one long interview together with his classmate and friend Peter. After that we held occasional small chats on school outings or during nightlife activities. Marco and his family were one of the few families living in downtown Shanghai, in the former French concession area. Although this made travels to school quite long, he enjoyed the proximity to bars and cafés. Due to the distance to school he joined an international capoeira group rather than extracurricular activities at the school.

Matthias. I met Matthias at the German School in spring 2011. With his long hair and clothing relating to metal youth culture he looked quite different from most other students, which led to his nickname Metalmatze. His in-ear headphones always dangling from the collar of his black T-shirts, he was one of the rather quiet characters in school. Only when we started talking about the several bands he was playing in, and the jam sessions he enjoyed with French students, or how he was making some extra money as a drum teacher, he started to open up and we started discussing his Shanghai experience. Matthias turned out to be a crucial link to students from other

international schools and introduced me to several of his friends. Matthias had moved to Shanghai at the age of twelve and now at the age of eighteen was about to return to Germany. We frequently talked about his immediate future plans: After plans to travel Australia had been put aside, and Matthias had to look for a career path, he decided to join the army for one year. His parents and sister stayed on in Shanghai and he moved back to his grandparents' house. Joining the German army, however, he would mostly be away at the barracks. We stayed in touch via facebook and I visited his new home in Germany, where he proudly showed me around his new own flat, located close to his grandparents. For a follow-up interview Matthias also visited me for an afternoon in Heidelberg. Here we discussed how moving back to Germany felt. At this time he was particularly grateful about his army experience, making his return easier by giving him a new routine. Matthias also reconnected with old elementary schools friends in his former hometown. Matthias and I both returned to Shanghai for the graduation ceremony of his former classmates. He and his family helped me to book a room in a guesthouse on their housing compound and thus made my last follow–up stay in June 2012 easier. Matthias stayed on in the army and is currently thinking about his future plans.

Mia, age fifteen when I met her, was one of the youngest students in the eleventh grade of the German school that I worked with. Born in Germany, she grew up in Singapore, and then moved to Berlin, followed by her first stay in Shanghai. After a few years in Shanghai her family relocated to Hong Kong for one year, to then return to Shanghai again. Mia remembered this return as particularly difficult as everyone expected her to be familiar with Shanghai. However, her social environment had quite changed over her year of absence, as friends had moved on and new friendships had been forged and altered. Back in Shanghai again, a year later Mia skipped one grade together with her close friend Kressi. This was when I met Mia, friendly and open, but always seemingly under pressure from her high expectations. Diligent, ambitious, and well-organized, she was always the right one to ask about class schedules or dates for school events. Mia only occasionally joined nightlife activities, as at the age of fifteen her parents would not allow her to go out too often. With her best friend Kressi she shared interests in fashion, arts, and design. Mia was active in the school theater group and was commonly admired for her abilities with words – I found out why when we stayed in touch via email upon my return to Germany. These emails were always a pleasure to read. Besides our frequent interaction at school, dinners with "the girls" or occasional nightlife activities, I talked to Mia about her Shanghai experience in two group interviews with Kressi in February and September 2011, as well as in an individual interview in June 2012. She and her family returned to Germany after her graduation and Mia started college, living on her own. Unsatisfied with her choice of studies, however, she returned to her family's place and conducted an internship. When chatting online she emphasized how she missed Shanghai and her community there. Mia is currently thinking about alternative study programs and choosing a career.

Olivia, aged sixteen when I met her, is from Belgium. She had lived several years in Germany before her family moved to Shanghai in 2007. Due to her upbringing in Germany and her German-medium education she speaks the language at a native-speaker level. In Shanghai she also attended a German-medium school. Additionally, she had Flemish classes once a week after school to be trained to write in her mother tongue. Olivia was part of "the girls" group and I consequently spent many days and nights with her and her friends. I interviewed her once together with Antonia and Charlie in early 2011 and conducted a further follow-up interview with her individually in June 2012. Olivia was always friendly and supportive to my project. She knew many students from other schools and also tried to help me arrange interviews with students she knew from the French school. At school, everyone admired Olivia for her great looks. She was active on facebook, and we often exchanged messages during my time

away from Shanghai and are still in touch today. After graduation she started studying in her parents' hometown in Belgium.

Paul was seventeen years old when we first met. He was born in Brazil and has a Brazilian mother and a German father. He is fluent in English and Portuguese, his German, however, is only basic. Paul grew up in Brazil and the United States and moved to Shanghai six years prior to the interview in May 2011. At that time he was just about to graduate from a private Christian US-American school and making plans to move to Germany for college. His father had already moved on to Thailand and his mother planned to follow after Paul's graduate ceremony. Paul was introduced to me by Matthias from the German school. The two had met through a common friend, whom Paul happened to bump into on a regular basis in different bars or nightclubs. They became friends and founded a band that both Matthias and Paul became part of. When Matthias drew a mental map of Shanghai for me, I was curious about the appearance of other international schools on his map. Addressing this issue he told me about different friends from other schools that he would hang out or 'jam' with. Consequently, through the binding powers of music, cross-international school friendships developed. Interested in meeting students from other schools I asked for an interview with Matthias and his friends. Paul, interested in my research, agreed and volunteered to meet up for an interview at a coffee shop downtown. In August 2011, Paul moved to a German university town and enrolled at a private English-medium university. His grandparents and twenty-year-older half-sister are also living in Germany, however, not in the same area. After the interview in Shanghai, I only met Paul again one more time in Germany, just after Christmas 2011. We had stayed in touch via facebook and exchanged phone numbers to meet up. Our meeting spontaneously turned into a record shopping tour, which we both enjoyed, and ended in a café where we discussed his arrival and emplacement in Germany and his future plans. He currently still pursues his bachelor degree.

Peter, eighteen years old when we met, is a tall boy with a big fringe that always seems to cover half his face. He was a student at the German school, in the same grade, but in a different class than the one I was allowed to accompany. However, he and his friend Marco spent a lot of time with the students from 'my' class. Being part of "the boys," Peter went out frequently and it was therefore not surprising that we got to know each other during nightlife activities. I first interviewed him together with Marco in May 2011 in a café downtown. For Peter, born in northern Germany, the move to Shanghai was his first and only move abroad. By the time of the interview he had lived in the city for almost four years. I met Peter again for an individual interview in June 2012, just a few days before he left for Germany right after his graduation. Peter, always dressed quite individually, hardly seen without headphones or a beanie on, was interested in young German street wear labels and we sometimes talked about new labels and styles we had discovered. He was also always interested in my research and student life in Germany and liked to discuss German politics. Although we had gotten along fine throughout my fieldwork, I was surprised that Peter became an important gatekeeper in my research during my last follow-up stay in June 2012 when he invited me to several activities. At that time he seemed to have a particular strong position among "the boys." Peter is now back in the city he considers his hometown in Germany and shares a flat with Alex. He works a student job part time, hoping to enroll at the city's university soon. We have met several times since his move back.

Xia, seventeen years of age, is a Chinese national. He was granted special permission by the Shanghai municipal government to attend the German school. Born in China, Xia after kindergarten moved with his parents to Germany, where his father obtained a PhD. Xia therefore started his school career in Germany. After four years and one move within Germany, his parents decided to return to Shanghai. Although having

been trained in Chinese writing after school and on weekends, Xia had difficulties in the entrance test to the local Chinese schools in Shanghai, because the education system and its ways of testing were unfamiliar to him. His parents therefore applied for a special permit and Xia was allowed to attend the German-medium school. Here, Xia was an academically strong student. However, his fellow students always regarded Xia as different. I conducted an individual interview with Xia in spring 2011 and after that met him on a regular basis at school, where we would occasionally chat. As I asked for parents' permission for interviews concerning all students under age, I was startled to see that Xia first thought not to be able to participate in such an interview as his parents thought he would not fit the definition of students my research would be interested in. Due to the familiarity of the expatriate community with the term "Third Culture Kids," I had used this term to explain my research agenda on expatriate youth. Interestingly, Xia's parents did not like to see their son as such a hybrid "TCK," but as Chinese. I was glad when my explanation to Xia that the term can be debated and anyone interested can join led to his parents' agreement. Consequently, I discussed the politics of cultural identity and intergenerational conflicts around this issue with Xia, who was very self-reflective upon the matter. It was the conversation with Xia that introduced me to the difficulties arising for students who have to negotiate between the world at home and the world at school. I conducted a second interview with Xia in June 2012. After graduation Xia moved to Germany to study engineering.

Vijay was fourteen when he took part in a group discussion at a British school together with Freda and Keith. He is from India and moved to Shanghai six months prior to the interview.

Tamara was twelve years old when I hosted a group discussion with her and two other students (Jacob and Allen) at an international British school. After her first move to China at the age of two, she had been moving back and forth between China and Singapore – her passport country – over the last years. Tamara was very active in the discussion with the two boys. Unfortunately, I was not able to keep in touch with her.