



Figure 20. The Shop: Students Walking through the Small Alley, June 2011.
Photo by M. Sander.

PART IV

Living

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.*¹

This part of the book 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 toward creating their own spaces, as I understand these to be crucial for teenagers to gain meaning and agency in their migration experience. I draw on Howes' (2007) concept of emplacement to further understand how the expatriate youth cultures in Shanghai unfold in specific, everyday places and emerge in-between the dynamics of "uprootings and regroundings" (Ahmed et al. 2003). Howes stresses the importance of sensory experiences in everyday life and regards these as "a field of cultural elaboration" and "an arena for structuring social roles and interactions" (Howes 2007, xi). For my purposes, I interpret Howes' concept of emplacement as a means of grasping the physical experience of places, of being in and engaging with the "here and now." I include in this interpretation the idea that how one experiences places simultaneously shapes one's environment. This approach is in line with Howe's argument that the process of emplacement is the counterpart to displacement, "the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment" (Howes [2005] 2006, 7).

In the chapters that follow, I first discuss students' conceptions of age identities (in Chapter 1) and then move on to their related spatial practices. The next two chapters in this part provide two specific examples of youths' agency in creating their own spaces: going out (Chapter 2, on nightlife spaces) and hanging out at "the shop" (Chapter 3), a space on a small street close to school. These two spaces are in stark contrast to the gated communities and the schools presented in Part III, which contribute to the youths' everyday experience of Shanghai being divided into "the city" and "expat spaces" (see Part III, Chapter 1). The schools and gated communi-

1 German original: MIA: *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.*

ties are characterized by what sociologist Zeiher (2003) has called “insularisation,” a term which refers to the increasing number of places particularly designed for children who move almost entirely between those places. While the expatriate teenagers also feel they are mostly being shuttled between gated communities and international school compounds, they choose and claim the two spaces presented here as their own. The analysis of these two spaces and the related construction of age identities also address the students’ overall perceptions and representations of the city of Shanghai. Chapter 4 closes this part of the book with an examination of the teenagers’ relations to Shanghai and its local citizens.

CHAPTER 1

"My Time is Now:" The Role of Age

The focus on children's futures and adults' investment in this can also 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 about moving in Part II, Chapter 1 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 in the migration process by investigating the reflections and the teenagers' age-related identity performances and ties them to current academic debates on youth that were addressed earlier, in the Introduction.

1.1 Wrong time to move, right time to be there

I am sitting outside, in a rather undisturbed corner of the schoolyard, 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 sunshine is bright and warm. While the three of us enjoy these first moments of spring, 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? Every day 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.*²

2 German original: KARINA: *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 unterschrieben? 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,*

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 bad time. Lara explains:

LARA: *It is more difficult. I just experienced that. At my age it just sucks. You have your friends, your boyfriend, whatever.*³

Transnational mobility challenges not only relations to places, but also 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 as 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 their mid- or late-teens. They emphasize that moving in the final years before graduation gives them less time to adjust to the new environment, since grades often already count for the final diploma—a major issue that Britta from Norway also repeatedly stressed during my interview with her at the British school.

While most teenagers think of adolescence as the wrong time to move, however, they may also see it as 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, who are in the process of exploring their age identities. Chapter 2 therefore provides detailed descriptions of these nightlife practices.

But regardless of their exciting nightlife options, like Karina, most of my informants perceive and convey adolescence as a difficult time to move. Moreover, they differentiate being a teenager from being a child and argue that the losses experienced by younger children are less severe and that their integration at a new school is easier. The students I interviewed seem to be familiar with—and even reiterate—the notion that children are simply part of a family, without any social ties of their own. This goes hand in hand with concepts that see children as not yet fully-developed human beings. Such approaches have lately been criticized and re-conceptualized in anthropology and related disciplines (Bucholtz 2002; Hutchins 2011, see

nach China. Sondern ich hab meinen Vater einfach angeschrien. Weil ich das scheiße fand.

3 German original: LARA: *Ist halt schwerer so. Ich hab's ja jetzt gemerkt. Mit meinem Alter ist einfach doof. Hat seine Freunde, Freund, wie auch immer.*

also the Introduction). Hutchins (2011), for instance, studying the experiences of children moving to Australia, stresses how their personal social ties impact the move. I believe that the older teenagers emphasize their distinction from the younger children, as for instance Lara and Karina do when talking about the difficulties of moving, in order to stress the importance of their own social lives and ties and to counteract being perceived as having none.

The two seemingly contradicting discourses presented here—that 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 the specific age identities of someone who is gradually outgrowing the realm of the family.

1.2 Future benefits and the art project "My time is now"

As shown in earlier parts of the book, experiences abroad are often considered to be beneficial capital for the future: the hardship of moving at an early age will pay off when the children grow up and enter professional life. This focus on development for future benefit 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 often see this development as a staging ground for integration into the adult community. Conceptualizations of this kind frame young people's own cultural practices solely in relation to adult concerns. Bucholtz has consequently called for a shift, not only terminologically but also theoretically, from the anthropology of adolescence to the anthropology of 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 echoed by Allison and Adrian James, 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" (2008, 64–65). The source of this focus on children's and adolescents' futures James and James see in society's interest in securing people's contributions in the years to come:

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 (ibid., 64).

Alex, for instance, in a group discussion with Bjorn and Don, explains his view of grown-up life:

ALEX: *I am not in this world to work. I want to have fun.*

DON AND BJORN: <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 something. Phh. I don't know. He looks happy, but I couldn't do it. No way.⁴*

Alex criticizes the pressure to conform and work in 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) that he is supposed to prioritize in his life now. It is a rejection of the pressure he experiences in a future-driven environment and his own future-driven social status as a teenager.

While I, in the future-oriented status of a PhD candidate (routinely facing questions such as "What do you want to do afterwards?"), might have been particularly sensitive to the pressures of planning and working hard for the future, the expatriate youths seldom verbalized this pressure directly. Reading between the lines, however, their worries over what to study or which career to pursue hinted at the future-orientedness that underlies expatriate youth's experiences in Shanghai. While pondering the loaded question of what lies ahead (for my subjects and myself), I came across an art project by the German student Andrea entitled "My time is now." (Figure 21a).

The art project consists of several photographs showing children and teenagers holding up or standing in front of a sign that displays line after

4 German original: ALEX: *Ich bin halt irgendwie nicht auf der Welt um zu arbeiten. Ich will Spaß haben.* DON UND BJORN: <L> *Joa.* INTERVIEWER: <L> ALEX: *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.*



Figure 21. Sign and T-Shirt from Student Art Project "My Time is Now." Photos by Andrea.

line the text "My time 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 or enjoying themselves. To secure the anonymity of students, however, I only include images from Andrea's project that do not reveal faces (Figure 21b and c).⁵

In the context of preparing for future moves, education, and jobs, the message: "My time is now" seems 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

5 For that reason, the images displaying smiling students capture a more positive atmosphere than those included in this chapter.

these images for several months back in Germany, that I arranged an interview with Andrea to discuss her art project. During our interview, we sit in a sidewalk cafe, the voice-recorder between us. I ask her to explain the project and its context of production.

ANDREA: *It's a tradition at our school to do such a project every year. And last year [the theme] was "time." [...] And then art classes are requested to create a project according to the theme. An artwork, a painting, it had to have something to do with photography.*⁶

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, linking "time" to the experience of school was Andrea's idea.

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" [referring to the school slogan] and so on. Because it's not really German to represent yourself like that, I thought my teachers might pick up on that. And erm <L>, everything was really pretty cheesy. And then I used Google 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.*⁷

6 German original: ANDREA: *Das ist ja an unserer Schule so eine Tradition, dass man jedes Jahr so ein Projekt macht. Und letztes Jahr war [das Thema] „Zeit.“ [...] Und dann wird man halt [...] im Kunstunterricht dazu aufgefordert ein Projekt dazu zu gestalten. Ein Kunstwerk, also ein Bild, also mit Fotografie sollte es etwas zu tun haben.*

7 German original: ANDREA: *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*

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, my interview with Andrea pointed in a different direction. Her approach to the project had been more that of a designer working at a marketing agency, with customers—the teachers and the school—clearly in mind when choosing the theme and producing the images. However, the success of her images within the school also shows in what 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 win a state-sponsored award for the school's arts program (see Part III, Chapter 3, where I comment on the movie that her schoolmate Kressi shot for the awards ceremony). Andrea's photography project rendered the future-orientedness in the students' lives visible to educators and the school community.

1.3 Rejecting "old people"—claiming spaces

While the expatriate students like to emphasize their own social ties—for instance when talking about the experience of moving to Shanghai, as Kari-na's and Lara's narratives in the beginning of this chapter demonstrate—one should not be tempted to read their acknowledgement of these ties as evidence of their wanting to be "adults." Their practices of distinguishing themselves from younger children are not aimed at their being seen as "adults," but rather as "youths." This becomes clear in their disapproval of "old people" and their practices, an attitude which I came across several times during fieldwork encounters and interviews, as the following excerpt of a discussion with 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 older!*

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 entsprechend 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.

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 it 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 at 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.⁸*

The two girls' annoyance, which in this case centers on "old men at the bar," stems from their perception that "old people" occupy or interfere with spaces that they have claimed as their own. I argue that they make this claim to distinguish themselves from adults and simultaneously find ways to counteract the lingering pressure to focus on their future. In short, the students identify nightclubs as a space of youth. The following chapter further investigates the role of nightlife in youths' constructions of age-identities as well as in their emplacement in Shanghai.

8 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 fünfzigjährige 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, Zwanzigjährige.*

CHAPTER 2**Nightlife: Going Out**

This chapter shows how Shanghai's nightscapes are a crucial platform for the identity negotiations of expatriate youths. While not all students participate in nightlife activities,⁹ clubbing practices are nevertheless pivotal because they are central to teenagers' involvement with the city; they are also an important form of coming to terms with the move to Shanghai. Here, teenagers claim new spaces collectively, and without the inclusion of their families. In exploring these practices, this chapter first analyzes Shanghai's nightlife spaces in general to examine the conditions it presents to the teenage patrons. Considering that, in Shanghai, there are—*de facto*—no age-based restrictions to clubs or bars, I first examine the resulting heated debates on teenage nightlife practices in the expatriate community, as well as students' accounts of negotiating parental concern in the second section. The next section gives a detailed description of teenagers' habits when they go out, based on participant observations as well as interviews. Based on the Friday night routine at a club called Mural, it analyzes how going out is a break from the school routine, a means to play with and affirm their age, gender, cosmopolitan, and urban identities, and a way to strengthen friendships. The fourth and final section concludes the analysis of the role of nightlife spaces in teenage expatriates' experiences of their stay in Shanghai.

2.1 Shanghai's nightlife spaces

When entering bars or clubs in Shanghai, I often feel like many of them 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 international beer brands. The music played, although varying between locations in Shanghai, is typical of mainstream party locations in Europe. People's attire depends on the

9 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.

locations' dress codes, which are implicitly or openly stated: the men often wear dress shirts and the women display more skin and make-up than during the day. Everyone seems to be engaged in practices familiar 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 international dance club scene.¹⁰ My own immediate familiarity with all these sensory impressions and patterns confirms James Farrer's (2011) conceptualization of Shanghai's bars and clubs as belonging to a "global nightscape." The idea is based on Appadurai's (1990, 296) understanding of the global cultural economy and its "dimensions of global cultural flow." In Farrer's (2011, 748) words, the concept refers primarily to "the ways in which these local urban nightscapes are sites of transnational flows." Additionally, these global nightscapes—to use Farrer's description which is based on Chatterton and Hollands's (2003) findings—are "constructed through globalising cultural 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).

There are locations in Shanghai, such as Karaoke bars, clubs with big seating areas and small dance floors, beverages which must be ordered by the bottle, and those where people play Chinese drinking games based on dice rolling, which offer unfamiliar experiences to the foreign visitor. The expatriate youths, however, mostly choose clubs that are very international in terms of sounds, drinks, and practices. If they go to 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 pattern of nightlife aimed toward a global audience; these locations are easy for me and the students alike to navigate.

Nightlife in Shanghai, however, is only easy to navigate to those who 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 p.m. Consequently, the majority of clubs are only affordable to the upper-middle classes of Shang-

10 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.

hai.¹¹ Despite—or maybe even because of—this stratification, I argue that, given the spaces' orientation toward profit, all the clubs and bars we visited fit into Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands's (2003) definition of "mainstream." In their book *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 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, and not only in its nightlife spaces. In preparation for the World Expo in 2010, the city underwent a degree of polishing, which also stimulated gentrification projects in areas such as the former French concession.

As competitive and future-oriented as Shanghai presented itself to be in hosting the expo, it simultaneously shines brightly with nostalgia, particularly at night. High-end restaurants, 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 their 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 during 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 with a colonial past in expatriate spaces. Media scholar 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 Westerners' practices of consumption in Shanghai, in particular in the famous Bund area, which is lined with buildings from the city's colonial past.

11 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.

Zooming 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 multisensory practice “time travel” (*ibid.*, 161). The incorporation of the past in present urban planning serves Shanghai’s anticipated reemergence as the most important international city in China. 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 the active involvement of foreign travelers (*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 [and], at the same time, highly morally questionable (Lagerkvist 2007, 168).

Lagerkvist’s argument about the roles 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 shows, the high school students do not openly engage in establishing connections to Shanghai’s semi-colonial past, certain nightlife locations on the Bund or in the former French concession inevitably open a connection to the city’s history. 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, on a second, less obvious level, also very “Shanghainese,” carrying connotations of—and sometimes continuity with—the city’s semi-colonial past.

2.2 Open doors and open 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 restricted (Hollands 2002; Chatterton and Hollands 2003). Knowledge about dress codes, financial means, and sometimes memberships or personal connections to get on a guest list, might be required to

enter. Access to these spaces is often also regulated on the basis of age. Restrictions can arise indirectly—having independent transportation or the financial means to afford a night out—and directly—through policies such as age-control (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 a lack of personal funds and independent transportation, as well as laws and policies, restricts many youths' access to nightlife spaces, I will now consider more closely how these aspects come into play in Shanghai.

Students in Shanghai stress that restrictions are comparably fewer in China than they are elsewhere. Lacking funds is less of a problem, too. Many common items and services that would cost the same or more in Germany are affordable for the students in Shanghai, given their parents' income—and despite those items being relatively expensive by the local economy's standards. As I described in Part II, Chapter 1 "Making sense of the city," access to transportation is also comparably easy. Returning home late in Shanghai—even after the subways system closes at eleven p.m.—proves easy, because 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 here 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 [nightlife] in Germany. I've never gone out in Germany. And I don't know what to pay attention to. I've heard things like the last buses leave 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 the safety, you can just walk somewhere. You could get lost and wouldn't be robbed.*

PETER: *Yes, in any case you don't need to be afraid here.*¹²

Most crucial, however, is that age-based restrictions on bar and club entry are almost non-existent. Although the Chinese government introduced the legal drinking age of eighteen in 2006 (*China Daily* 2006; International Center for Alcohol Policies 2010), I have never witnessed ID control at any club or bar in Shanghai. In fact, there are no restrictions at all if you can

12 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.*

afford the entrance fees. Teenagers are allowed to enter these bars and clubs and even gain unlimited access to alcohol at their so-called “open bars.”

Without policy-based spatial restrictions on the basis of age, and with access to independent mobility and money, the only limitations in the experience of Shanghai’s nightscapes that these youths face are those imposed by their parents. Most parents do not allow their children to participate in all activities and, for my research subjects, participation in nightlife is a subject of ongoing negotiation with their 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.*¹³

Another reason for restricting nightlife activity is the parental demand to focus on school performance, as Alex, in a group discussion with Bjorn 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 school. And on the weekend 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.*¹⁴

As Alex’s story shows, negotiations between the youths and their parents around nightlife can be conflictual and lead to tension. Some students report that they try to avoid these confrontations by lying to their par-

13 German original: KRESSI: *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.*

14 German original: ALEX: *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> ALEX: *Also wirklich. Sie 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.**

ents. During a group discussion, the three girls Charlie, Olivia, and Antonia discuss their ways of occasionally finding ways to work around parental objections to having a night 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.¹⁵*

While some students come up with strategies to overcome parental 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 [your] parents say?*

PAUL: *Well, my parents didn't know. We snuck out. And eventually they started letting me go out.*

15 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 übernachtete dann bei denen.“ Das ist ja eigentlich auch die halbe Wahrheit. Weil erst mal geh ich immer zu Freunden, meistens vorher und später übernachtete 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 übernachtete, 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 what might be considered moral panic on the other.

The easy access to clubs and bars, health concerns, and fear of possible alcohol addiction, 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 articles and talks given to the community are targeted at parents. 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 the fall of 2010. The evening event, well-attended by parents, hosted a social worker and a speaker from the British Consulate. They 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 about clarifying rumors that an entire family could be deported from Chinese territory if one of their children was caught in possession of drugs.

Measures aiming to counteract alcohol abuse among teenagers have also been taken. In 2010, a telephone help-line service targeted at expatriates called Shanghai Lifeline, was in 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, which was advertised as a program that "provides a positive alternative to the rise of drug and alcohol abuse and accessibility to high risk activities to international teens in Shanghai" (*Community Center Shanghai. Guide: Welcome (back) to Shanghai* 2010, 14). Parents, as I learned in a personal conversation with an employee of the Shanghai Lifeline project, also managed to influence certain restaurants in the Jinqiao expatriate residential areas to refrain from providing alcohol to minors by threatening to blacklist these locations—mostly western-style family restaurants—within the expatriate community. Some of the international schools have reacted to the open bars and the heated debate among Shanghai's expatriates by introducing regular drug testing.

While these discussions very likely take place in other countries and environments as well, these negotiations seem particularly present for

expatriate families in Shanghai because parents are the only de facto regulating authorities. An article entitled “Shanghai’s Tormented Teens,” *Global Times China*, an online newspaper, reviewed a talk by a Shanghai-based doctor, Tim Kelly, on understanding teenagers. Kelly noted that “often families find that whatever were vulnerable points before coming to Shanghai, like arguments about curfews and homework, become exacerbated here” (Peterson 2011).

From the teenagers’ perspectives, however, nightlife is an ideal way to forge ties with their peers. I observed that students who are not allowed (or willing) to accompany their peers to nightlife activities are pitied by their classmates and sometimes have difficulty positioning themselves within their class or certain peer groups. It is also noteworthy that, in this context, my relationships with the teenagers whom I regularly joined for nightlife activities became closer than those of the other students I interviewed and resulted in further invitations to participate in activities.

2.3 Practices and transformations: the Friday night routine

The last two subchapters described Shanghai’s nightscapes as global, mainstream, and having links to Shanghai’s past, as well as the absence of age-based restrictions to clubs and alcohol and the resulting negotiations between parents and teenagers. In this section, I highlight one specific place that is popular among the groups from the German school: a club called Mural. The club was by far the one students frequented most, which is why a detailed description and analysis of how the teenagers’ nightlife practices and the meanings embedded in them were acted out in this specific location offer important insights. I discuss seven aspects that are relevant for understanding the teenagers’ typical nights out at Mural: 1. The social aesthetics of the club, 2. Friday night as a marker between school routines and the weekend, 3. How the club and its open bar allow teenagers to play with age identities, 4. The gendered ways of going out, 5. Nightlife practices as a group activity, 6. Nightlife spaces as stages for cosmopolitan performances, and 7. Going out as an urban experience.

MURAL: THE CLUB AND ITS SOCIAL AESTHETICS

Mural, with its open bar, is the students’ club of choice for a typical Friday night out.¹⁶ Their regular visits to Mural, the repetition of certain practices there, and the students’ familiarity with the physical surround-

16 While other bars, such as Tera 57 (a fair priced cocktail bar that sometimes lets guests put on music) and Windows (a 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.

ings contribute to the formation of what David MacDougall (2006) refers to as a “shared aesthetic space” among the teenagers. Drawing again on MacDougall’s concept of “social aesthetics,” which describes “the creation of an aesthetic space or sensory structure” (ibid., 105), I depict here the material environment as well as practices that shape the experience of a night at Mural. MacDougall does not understand “aesthetics” in the traditional sense, that is as notions about beauty or art, but as a “wider range of culturally patterned sensory experience” (ibid., 98). He sees the social aesthetic field as the 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 believe certain social aesthetics of a nightclub can be experienced similarly. Ben Malbon (1998), similarly to but independent from MacDougall’s social aesthetics, describes how a shared space is created in nightclubs not only through sensory experiences (lighting, music, physical proximity to others), 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 thinks that clubbers actively shape their 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 aesthetic, with its patterns and emotional effects, does a Friday night at Mural hold for expatriate youths?

Mural lies in the heart of the city, just off Hengshan Road, a popular bar and boutique street that was already central during the time of the former French concession, and underwent large-scale renovation in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. The bar is conveniently located near a subway station and is close to restaurants and some local shops. In the evenings, street vendors selling cigarettes greet you outside as you enter the building and proceed down the stairs to the basement. The club itself is spacious, features a long bar, a section with tables and chairs, another area with couches and low tables, and an elevated dance floor. There are no windows and the lighting is unobtrusive, with tea lights on the tables adding to the atmosphere. Mural’s owners present the bar on their website using images of the location sitting empty, with tastefully-arranged furniture and enveloped in a warm light. 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 relics, 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).

My personal impression of the club was quite different. While the cave-like atmosphere is strongly supported by its basement location, the theme “5000 years of history” is easily forgotten when the place is packed to its limits on a Friday night. Interestingly, the “mix of Chinese tradition and western new age” is attempted not only through decorations such as wooden tablets adorned with old Chinese text, but also through Sanskrit words and depictions of sutras on the stone walls. These decorations, however, seem to regularly disappear behind clubgoers. Students could not recall these wall decorations in detail when I asked about them, despite 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 only on Fridays, however, that the two groups of friends, “the girls” and “the boys” (see Part I, Chapter 3), choose Mural as their standard location (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Mural’s Cave-like Atmosphere. Photo by M. Sander.

Every Friday night, Mural hosts an open bar. Its website 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 to male clubgoers is comparable. The open bar means that the cover charge of RMB 100 (€11) covers all drinks, from soft drinks and beer, to cocktails and liquor. At the bar, you are served the first three kinds of drinks, while guests are given two different kinds of shots at a special table set up next to the entrance and the cloakroom. “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 the bar, dance floor, and the 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 the people, music, the couches, and the special setting of the open bar on Friday nights. As their favorite club, Mural produces, through its location, decor, drinks, and guests’ practices of dressing and socializing, a specific landscape that the students perceive as particularly “relaxed.”

LETTING LOOSE: FROM SCHOOL-WEEK TO WEEKEND

Drawing on sociologist Joseph Gusfield’s (1987) symbolic interactionist analysis of typical 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 practices of going out, dancing, and consuming alcohol as markers between the school-week and the weekend for these teenagers, who often conceptualize nightlife in the same way:

LARA: *I party every Friday. That is a privilege. It is a must after the week. I couldn't do without it. That would be too boring.*¹⁷

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 put forth the idea of partying as a reward for working hard in school.

The Friday night routine usually starts with a shared taxi ride to the downtown area—I 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 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 the group for the first time on a night out in January 2011, meeting them at Mural after

17 German original: LARA: *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.*

having texted Antonia who invited me, I feel a little bit out of place and have trouble determining which topics and practices are appropriate. My early field notes from this night out later remind me of these beginnings: "The girls were also dressed accordingly: high heels, tight leggings, short skirts or leopard-print dresses ... I felt a bit clumsy in my jeans and sneakers next to those sixteen-year-old beauties, all dressed up for their night out" (fieldnotes, January 2011).¹⁸

I naively thought that jeans and sneakers would be appropriate for a rather casual place like Mural. But while the club does not demand a certain dress code, the girls enjoy the ritual of dressing up. They even document this ritual on Facebook by posting photos of themselves with eyelash curlers, before their bathroom mirrors. Through different clothes and drinks, the weekend is thus conjured up and the school world, which poses particular social relationships for the teens, is transformed into the entirely different sphere of weekend nightlife.

ACTING MATURE: FROM TEEN TO CLUB GUEST

During their Friday nights at Mural, some students like to stay on the couches, drinking, smoking, chatting, and listening to music, while others enjoy themselves on 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 round of shots at the small bar 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 what his own consumption will be or has been," the open bar allows the teenagers to provide their friends with drinks and to show they care for their group without having to ask their friends for money or put a strain on their allowance (Figure 23).

Thus the attractiveness of the open bar does not necessarily lie in the possibility of binge drinking or getting drunk cheaply, but rather in the way it allows the teenagers to foster ties with their friends. When they bring each other drinks, teenagers strengthen the overall interaction within the group and feel that they have provided for each other. Without having to worry about spending too much, each person can get something for everyone, and feel he or she has contributed equally.

By enabling teenagers to "buy" drinks for others, the open bar at Mural also provides the youths with a space to practice "typical" adult patron behaviors that they might associate with nightlife spaces. This testing and practicing of "appropriate" ways to behave in bars and clubs is similar to sociologist Yuki Kato's (2009) observations of teenagers' practices in American suburban malls. By exploring the two different practices of "sitting cars" (how a group of teenagers she studied referred to hanging out in

18 I wrote most of my field notes in German; this is a translation.



Figure 23. Friday Night: Gathering with Drinks around the Table. Photo by M. Sander.

parking lots) and “browsing,” which is described as “a way of interacting with the merchandise, as one contemplates a purchase, either by looking at or testing the product” (ibid., 58), Kato 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).

While engaging with nightlife spaces, expatriate teenagers in Shanghai—like the young people in the suburban malls Kato analyzes—“share physical space with adults and explore their positionalities vis-à-vis the norms associated with the space.” The teenagers I joined in their clubbing activities therefore often behave in ways that they associate with mature adults. In her description of the teenage customers in the shopping mall under study, Kato points out that accepting and performing the role of a cus-

tomer—or, in this case, as a club or bar guest—“requires one’s tacit knowledge of behavioral norms associated with being in the commercial space” (Kato 2009, 57).

Similarly, regarding these negotiations of norms and practices in light of the liminal social space of youth, Jeremy Northcote (2006), who investigated eighteen to twenty-four-year-old youths clubbing 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.¹⁹ Discussing nightlife activities with the two boys Paul and Matthias, then seventeen and eighteen years old, confirms how teenagers themselves see going out as tied to age-identities. They describe participation in nightlife spaces 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.*

INTERVIEWER: <L>

PAUL: *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.*

19 Valentine (2003) considers these self-made rituals and the perspective of youths themselves as central for scholars who want to understand the transitional process into 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).

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 is reminiscent of a test of courage, a form of claiming new space, or in Northcote's (2006, 14) words again, a "self-made quasi [rite] of passage." Nightclubs seem like a space for the brave or the "cool" to conquer. Such conquests mean 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" 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 as lacking "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 participating in nightlife.

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 in cool nightlife practices by drinking and smoking cigarettes or marijuana. The girls meet before going to the club, to get ready together by putting on make-up and changing clothes. The boys, on the other hand, get ready by consuming alcohol. Both practices are regularly documented by taking pictures and can be seen as integral parts of the night out. These gendered practices can also explain, at least partly, the two groups' different preferences of locations: the girls particularly enjoy going to upscale clubs (where a dress code requires more extravagant attire) while 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 lives of the teenagers I met. After having occasionally witnessed the reluctance of "the boys" to have a night out with "the girls," I ask sixteen-year-old Bjorn—a mediator of sorts between the two groups—to explain.

BJORN: *If we were out as boys, different things happened than if Antonia and Charlie and all the others 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 done. But here it is enough if two people watch, who don't know that you do those things regularly, and it makes its rounds at school, because we are such a small community.²⁰*

Bjorn 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—or later judges—them. While at first sight the teenagers eagerly and flawlessly adapt to the common (adult) practices in the club, their ways of forming their own nightlife routines and, sometimes, ways of avoiding the expected “mature” performance become visible after a closer look. The students, for instance, like to go outside and sit on the stairs in front of the club. The security team at the entrance never makes any objections when beer is brought 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,” at the beginning of my fieldwork found rather annoying. During my last stay in June 2012, however, “the girls” objected less and some of them had meanwhile tried smoking marijuana on one or two occasions. However, consuming drugs is a highly 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 them at a nearby McDonalds. Occasionally, “the boys” spontaneously buy marijuana at some of the street barbecue stalls that are set up after dusk in the lively areas of Shanghai.

TEAMING UP: NIGHTLIFE AS A PEER GROUP ACTIVITY

“I flee to the teenage group; they are my protective herd now,” I hastily write in 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 sit-

20 German original: BJORN: *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.*

ting in their usual couch section. It is one of those moments that are commonly described in ethnographic writing as “eye-opening.” Although now almost a clichéd and overly stylized aspect of the genre, such moments nevertheless demonstrate how the ethnographer feels when achieving a new level of insight. To me, this moment of dropping down on the couch next to the teenage students is reminiscent of such accounts: all of a sudden, I experience the peer group in a new way, as something protective.

Interested in the importance of the group for these teenagers’ nightlife practices, I discuss the issue with Bjorn during our interview in June 2012. He shares that if one of his close friends and group members cannot afford to go 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. As noted earlier, those who do not partake regularly are in a more difficult position at school and find it harder to become part of a group. The peer group also forms a basis for interaction in class during the week.²¹ Establishing and belonging to a social circle of friends is a process for youths all over the world. However, in an environment of constant coming and going, the task of finding friends who can communally experience the stay in Shanghai can be difficult. Bjorn recalls the beginning of his time in Shanghai almost two years earlier:

BJORN: *It was difficult to find out which friends suited me best. In the beginning, I was hanging out with entirely different people because they had taken me in first. And the friends whom I have now, the ones I've spent the last one and a half years with, weren't even interested in the beginning.*²²

Bjorn’s comment shows how the teenage students constantly negotiate their relations, trying to find friends that “suit them best.” Nightlife plays a crucial role in this process.

21 For a complex study of peer groups at American high schools see Murray Milner’s monograph *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids* (2004). For the role of the peer group in migration experiences see Susanne 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 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).

22 German original: BJORN: *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.*

The two peer groups I worked with, in addition to mutual interests and being in the same classes at school, 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 one's own peer group remains intact. Students' first romantic and sexual encounters emerge—although not solely—in these circles, as the connection between the peer groups and their acquaintances offer a basis for familiarity and trust. It is likely for this reason that several couples formed within the two peer groups and their extended network over the two years that I worked with them.

FLIRTING (WITH COSMOPOLITANISM)

Approaching girls or boys outside the network is seen as positive, but I rarely witnessed such interactions. Paul explains this pattern 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.*

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 quality. However, it seemed to hint at the 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, or white-men-hunters. These expatriate women, mostly so-called "trailing spouses," whom I interviewed during my first fieldwork among Shanghai's expatriate community, perceived Chinese women and their possible encounters with expatriate men (their husbands) as threatening their marriage and lifestyle. Looking into these dynamics in the nightclubs, James Farrer (2011) 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). 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).²³ However, they also normalize certain forms of sexual sociability (Farrer and Field 2012).

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).

Farrer's (2011) argument that nightlife spaces in Shanghai serve as ethnosexual contact zones between locals and expatriates, simultaneously enabling encounters across racial and 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 their first romantic and sexual experience are part of their nightlife practices, these behaviors mostly remain within their social network, or at least within the network of international school students, as Paul's comment shows. Within these networks, however, romantic relationships across ethnic and racial divides are normal. The lack of flirting

23 For a positive reading of such cross-ethnic sexual 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 female 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, rather than racism, in the first decades of the 20th century, "however politically imperative" (*ibid.*, 85), demonstrates the complexity and the relevance of gender-specific experiences and practices of vernacular cosmopolitanism.

with “local” Chinese in the clubs is most likely due to age, as “local” teenagers are usually nowhere to be seen in clubs and bars.

However, the desire to meet people—and preferably of diverse backgrounds—outside the group 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).

International encounters are a popular theme for nightlife stories told in school during the following week, whether the story-teller met “crazy Australians,” “cool Canadians,” or generally anyone who was from elsewhere. These retellings stress the cosmopolitan possibilities of Shanghai’s nightscapes. The encounters themselves, however, were—in my impression—fewer than the stories make them seem. The teenagers often stay in their group and nightlife remains a peer group experience. What is more, it is also a strong selling point for Shanghai, because it offers answers to the desire for urban and cosmopolitan identities. By conquering the spaces of Shanghai’s nightscapes, the teenagers not only repeatedly aspire to, negotiate, and confirm their youth and independence, along with their friendships and gender performances, but also express their “lifestyle performance and distinction” (Chatterton and Hollands 2003, 69) as being both cosmopolitan and urban. These cosmopolitan aspirations, or “flirting with difference” as Nava calls it (2002, 94), go hand in hand with a desire to be involved in the “urban imaginary,” a “flirting with [the] space” (Crouch 2005, 23) that is Shanghai.

CLAIMING THE CITY: FROM SUBURBAN TO URBAN IDENTITIES

Interestingly, in the interview passage quoted earlier in this chapter, Paul describes the city as influencing his life, saying, “Shanghai is a bit of a distraction.”

His comment reminds me of Sharon Zukin’s point, that we not only claim spaces as our own, but that we are “claimed in turn by them” (2005, 284). This shows a strong identification with the city and conjures up Ulf Hannerz’s ([1996] 2001) description of the city as spectacle. Nightlife is a part of this “Shanghai spectacle” that the international teenagers do not merely gaze at, but—at least to the extent that they are comfortable—participate in: “the 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) also points out that "world cities" such as Shanghai are connected to other cities and their peripheries. According to Hannerz, privileged migrants (such as the expatriates under study) are particularly involved in 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 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 therefore strengthen or challenge the ideas and norms associated with a certain nightlife space, the location's distinctiveness, and their own positions in these.

Returning to Paul's statement above, I wish to point out that he seems to equate Shanghai with nightlife practices. It is important to remember, that after spending the week in the family housing compounds and on the school campus (see Part III), the clubs in the former French concession, Jing'an district, and the Bund become getaways while also providing the basis for 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 with Shanghai to nightlife activities. Nightlife therefore plays a key role in the migration process of expat youths by enabling them to identify Shanghai as “their” city.

Furthermore, Paul’s statement (“Shanghai is a bit of a distraction”) through stressing the city’s lure, 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 the “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 for really lovely food. 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.*²⁴

This juxtaposition of “exclusive” urban nightlife in Shanghai to “Dorfkneipen” 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 back home are not allowed to enjoy these spaces as freely. Instead, they have to organize house parties.

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.*²⁵

24 German original: ANDREA: *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.*

25 German original: ANTONIA: *Also da gibt es Kontrollen, da gibt es dann mehr Hauspartys. Auch weil es so teuer ist. Und in China so billig. Deswegen gehen wir jedes Wochenende feiern.*

French school student Arnaud also comments on the difference between house parties and club visits, contemplating the various behaviors that go 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 it's much more difficult to <x> in a bar or in a nightclub. You got home parties and I think it gets much more, like, fucked-up, I think.*

INTERVIEWER: <L>

ARNAUD: *Because you try to stay at least a bit sober when you are in a public place. To not to mess up everyone.*

INTERVIEWER: *Okay.*

ARNAUD: *And I think it's different in a house party.*

This comparison to peers back home and their house parties,²⁶ 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 more cultivated behavior—an idea that underlines my descriptions of routine club visits as a means of practicing “mature” behavior.

After a few hours at Mural, usually when the open bar closes at 2 a.m., my young informants either enjoy the cab ride home or go 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 maintains guest lists and strict dress codes), Park 97 (an upscale location in the heart of the French concession), Bar Rouge (another upscale venue on the Bund), or M2 (a mid-range club with a higher percentage of Chinese locals) are possible choices. The night out usually ends with a stop at McDonald’s on the way back home to the outskirts of Shanghai and the expatriate enclave.

26 For insights into teenagers’ house parties, see Demant and Østergaard’s (2007) article “Partying as Everyday Life: Investigations of Teenagers’ Leisure Life,” which explores the meaning behind such practices among Danish youths. By conceptualizing partying and alcohol consumption as a rite of passage on the one hand, but situating these events in everyday life on the other, their analysis suggests that, at such house 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 experimenting with intoxication, but “symbolises commitment to both the party and to the specific group of friends” (ibid., 517). Like the nightlife activities of the teenage subjects in this study, partying at home is, for Danish youths, also a way of reaffirming friendships. Therefore, Demant and Østergaard argue that partying is an integral part the everyday lives of adolescents. It helps them to extend their networks of friends, as well as to continuously reaffirm existing mutual attachments.

2.4 Staging youth culture: concluding thoughts on nightlife practices

While the social aesthetics of Shanghai's internationalized nightclub scene prescribes a certain way of dressing, specific practices, and financial means, the clubs do not enforce a minimum age rule. Expatriate teenagers thus negotiate access to these spaces, which would be off limits in most of their "home" countries, with their parents alone. 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, expatriate adolescents use Shanghai's bars and clubs primarily to manifest their age, gender, cosmopolitan, and urban identities, as well as to strengthen their friendships. Furthermore, nights out provide the counterpart to an otherwise structured school life with its associated pressure. As Northcote (2006) suggests, youths' nightlife practices can be seen as small, self-made rites of passage. In other words, nightlife offers a space for transformation through repeat practices in a space that is also shared with adults. These manifold transformations in nightlife spaces, however, are not only concerned with being mature or entering adulthood, but also with enjoying and preserving their youth. 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 the students' first romantic and sexual encounters often take place within this setting. Here, the network of the peer group provides a sense of safety. Simultaneously, these friendships are strengthened through the repetition of collective experiences. Like a stage offers room for performance but also for (temporary) transformations, Shanghai's clubs provide a space for teenagers to practice and explore these new narratives of the self. The meanings attributed to nightlife practices are central to their involvement with the city. By making weekends special and allowing them to claim new spaces for themselves, both collectively and without their families, these routines are a mechanism by which they adapt to the move to Shanghai. Shanghai's nightscapes therefore stage expatriate youth culture and its emplacement in the city based on the participants' own agency. It is, in other words, primarily nightlife that helps teenagers transform their enclaved experiences in the schools and compounds into more desirable young urban identities.

CHAPTER 3

The Shop: Hanging Out

While the previous chapter provided one example of expatriate youths' agency in creating their own routines and social spaces within Shanghai's global nightlife culture, this chapter examines another space and its related practices: the shop.

Students in grade ten or above at the German and French school campus are allowed to leave the school premises during the school day. The older students make use of this privilege during breaks or free periods and often have lunch outside. Consequently, it is not surprising that a French café and a German bakery are nearby, offering familiar flavors to the schools' staff, students, and their families. The students, however, are particularly attracted to a small street in the vicinity of campus that hosts Chinese eateries and small shops selling cheap dishes, snacks, and drinks.

3.1 "The shop is our place to chill"

Here, in a narrow alley a five-minute walk from the school campus, students can get cheap drinks, purchase a lunch of fried rice or noodles, or simply hang out. The street differs from the surrounding gated communities and the other cafés and bakeries that are located near the school. The small alley is separated by a wall from the main street that runs parallel to it. When entering the lane, students are suddenly welcomed by a different atmosphere. Shabbier houses, makeshift stalls, new and broken pool tables, laundry hanging out to dry, women cleaning vegetables, and smells of fried food present a world entirely different from the school campus that was just left around the corner. The students refer to this lane, along with all its offerings and atmosphere, simply as "the shop" (Figure 24).

The shop has undoubtedly become part of the students' everyday life. Seventeen-year-old student Karina, for instance, explains her lunch break routine during 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.²⁷ It is incredibly tasty and pretty cheap.

27 Karina refers to the traditional Chinese *gong bao ji ding*, a chicken dish with peanuts, garlic, and chillies.



Figure 24. The Shop: Students and Locals in the Small Alley, June 2012. Photo by M. Sander.

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.²⁸

The shop provides a place to “chill” during lunch break, to recharge for further lessons and activities. The English word “chilling,” which teenagers adapted to German grammar as “chillen,” refers to specific practices of “hanging out” and seems to have spread among youths of various nationalities. Vanderstede (2011, 175), for instance, explains the spatial practice of “chilling” among Belgian youths:

It refers to quite diverse activities and atmospheres. Most often it stands for meeting up with friends in a very “relaxed” ambience (sitting, hanging [sic] 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 youths used to describe their communal leisure practices, which are mostly related to places such as their friends’ homes or the shop.

The importance of these spaces for teenagers has also been proven in other environments. Vanderstede (2011), in his descriptions of teenagers’ spatial practices in the Belgian 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 pub-

28 German original: KARINA: *Der Shop bei der Schule, das ist unser Chill-Ort. Also, er war es zumindest. Wir sind da, ich bin da auch hingegangen, klar. Irgendwie. Wirklich fünf Mal in der Woche in der Mittagspause schnell rüber. Hab mir da was zu essen gekauft, zum Beispiel das gongbao oder so. Das ist unglaublich lecker und eigentlich auch ziemlich billig. Dafür aber eine riesige Portion. Die kochen das wirklich gut. Obwohl, wenn man sich so die Umgebung anschaut, so ziemlich heruntergekommen, da denkt man sich so, von der Hygiene her will ich da lieber nichts essen. Aber das ist wirklich gut. Und ja, in dem Shop, da sind meistens immer Schüler, die sich was zu trinken kaufen. Irgendwelche Brötchen, Süßigkeiten, Kaugummis, alles Mögliche. Das ist unsere Versorgung da.*

lic domain or surrounded by traffic spaces, were emptied within 10 minutes after the courses (Vanderstede 2011, 180).

The shop's appeal as a hangout place is thus, first of all, connected to its proximity to 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' status as "older students," which they can express through taking advantage of the privilege to leave campus during school time. The shop is therefore also an age-specific experience that, unlike the school cafeteria and the schoolyard, does not need to be shared with younger children.

3.2 "The shop is not expat:" The shop as an in-between space

Besides being frequented by expatriate teenagers, the shop also has regular local Chinese customers who usually eat at one of the restaurants (Figure 25).



Figure 25. The Shop: Inside the Small Restaurant, June 2011. Photo by M. Sander.

The shop-owners themselves, who live in the buildings, also use the space for their daily chores and leisure. Students thus describe the shop as local, Chinese, or—in Antonia's words—"not expat."²⁹

²⁹ It is interesting to note how Antonia refers to the shop as "not expat," thus making "expat" the unmarked unit of reference.

ANTONIA: *These shops, the shop is not expat. These shops exist everywhere.*³⁰

While many students regularly eat out at foreign restaurants with their families or friends (see Part III, Chapter 1), the food in the small alley is, for many expatriate youths, the only local food they consume except for dishes prepared at home by their *ayi* (see Part III, Chapter 2.2). Students point out that the shop is obviously “more Chinese” than their other everyday spaces such as the compounds or their schools. Here, some of them have their only regular contact with locals, as sixteen-year-old Bjorn explains.

BJORN: *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.*³¹

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 immediately apparent: their inventory, for instance, includes foreign candy such as imported Haribo gummy bears, which I had never seen in any other small, Chinese-run shops in Shanghai.

The shop-owners have also set up pool tables in the street and put a small stereo outside where students can plug in their mp3 players to play their favorite songs. Furthermore, European students—as some of the teenagers shared with me—have actively shaped the spaces themselves by putting graffiti on the walls (Figure 26a).

However, the local shopkeepers still use the spaces according to their own needs. They often play pool themselves, use the tables to prepare food or display wares for the local community, or hang their laundry to air-dry outside—(see Figure 26b).

The shop thus offers a venue for experiencing the locale. It is also, according to the students, a place that is more in touch with the local Chinese population than any of the other places they frequent. They share the pool tables; they eat at the same restaurant. While the relations between shop-owners and students clearly maintain the distance between customer and service provider, the students, shop-owners, and their families also share a common leisure space by playing pool, sitting outside, eating, smoking, chatting, and relaxing together. The shop is no longer “typically local” nor is it, as Antonia pointed out in the interview, a well-groomed “expat” space; it sits in-between.

This in-betweenness also resonates with the students’ own entangled claims of cultural identification and the process of gaining transcultural perspectives (see Introduction). The shop as an in-between space invites its actors to adopt a transcultural perspective with site-specific knowledge,

30 German original: ANTONIA: *Die Shops, dieser Shop ist ja nicht Expat oder so. Diese Shops gibt es ja überall.*

31 German original: BJORN: *Klar, man lernt natürlich auch viele Chinesen kennen. Also man kennt die Shopbesitzer, also ich kenn die zum Beispiel alle persönlich. Und die sind halt hier total offen.*



Figure 26. The Shop; a) Pool Tables, Graffiti, and Laundry, January 2011; b) Use of Pool Table to Display Wares. Photos by M. Sander.

which I myself as a researcher had to acquire in the same manner as the students. This phase of learning to navigate the area included, for instance, becoming familiar enough with the menu of the little restaurant to order their dishes in Chinese, knowing when and where to sit, or knowing how much items cost in the small shop.

3.3 “The shop is somewhat like a park:”

The shop as an open space and street

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 roles of investors and 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 opened” (ibid). Zukin suggests, therefore, that 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 (ibid.).

Zukin’s understanding of public culture in the city as also “socially constructed on the micro-level” (ibid.) highlights how 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 “public space” to describe areas like the shop. He finds the notion of “public space” ill-fitting for the situation in Chinese urban politics because it relates to western norms of democracy, participation, and civil society (ibid., 32). He puts forward that the duality of “open” and “closed” space is better suited for understanding the urban environment in China (ibid.). The “open space,” Hassenpflug suggests (ibid., 31), is usually undefined space, and is opposed to the “closed,” meaningful space; it 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 game similar to chess. All these practices fall within the realm of what might be considered the “private space” in Western cities. It is with the understanding of such “open

space” that the Chinese shop-owners use the little alley of the shop: there, they clean vegetables, dry laundry, and sit outside with friends, neighbors, and family members.

The dualism of “closed” and “open” space is visible in the expatriate teenagers’ spatial practices as well. Bjorn’s mental map, for instance, highlights the students’ movements from one “closed space” to the next (Figure 27).

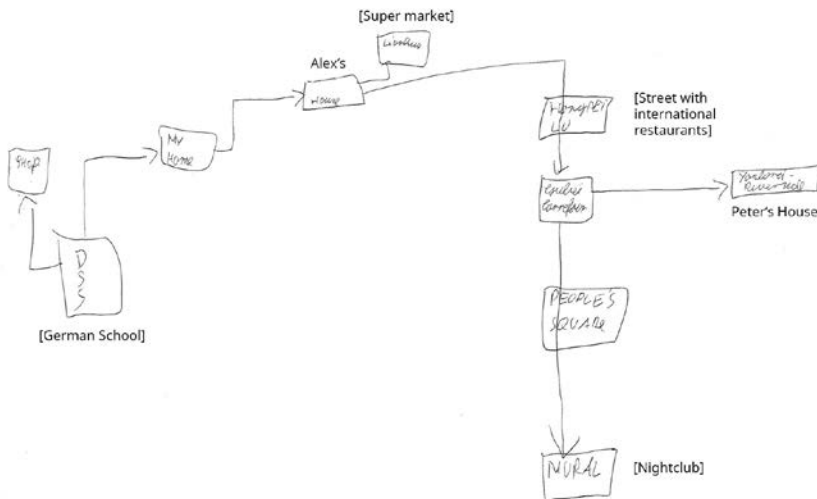


Figure 27. Mental Map of Shanghai. Drawing by 16-year-old Bjorn. Names of friends anonymized and place annotations added.

The locations displayed on this map are almost all closed and restrict entry based on financial means (the nightclub, restaurant) or limit access to those who already have a specific affiliation with the place (housing areas, school). The only two “open spaces” that Bjorn placed on his map of Shanghai are the People’s Square and the shop. Shanghai’s central People’s Square, however, is less of a space to stay than a place of transit, due to its many intersecting metro lines. Bjorn’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 directly at the unit. If we contextualize the experience of the shop in these larger, everyday spatial experiences, the shop—despite its own rules or access regulations prescribed by the school—appears as one of the few “open spaces” the teenagers use.

I argue that it is this openness, and the fact that this liminal space provides them with the freedom and flexibility to simply hang out, that attracts the students most. Bjorn explains the usage of the shop by comparing it to public spaces in Germany. In his comparison, however, he chooses public spaces that—similar to Hassenpflug’s depiction of “open space” in Chinese cities—can be claimed by hanging out in them communally, by listening to music or drinking beer:

BJORN: *For me, the shop is somewhat like a park; or what a bus stop or a playground is for youths in Germany. Practically speaking, that is what the shop is. There are no problems with disturbances 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?*

BJORN: *At least 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, you are simply free.³²*

The shop, in contrast to the guarded housing compounds as Bjorn suggests, is an "open space" that, for him, stands for freedom and escape from strict rules or even surveillance.

Bjorn's description of the shop is also reminiscent of Hugh Matthews's (2003) investigations of the use and meaning of outdoor spaces for less privileged youths in a large public housing estate in a UK town. Matthews (2003, 101) understands these spaces as "the street," a metaphor he introduces to generally refer to "all outdoor spaces within the public domain." According to Matthews, the street "acts as a liminal setting or a site of passage, a place which both makes possible and signifies a means of transition through which some young people move away from the restrictions of their childhood roots towards the independence of adulthood" (ibid.).

Matthews' idea of streets adds another dimension to spaces like the shop, that Hassenpflug's helpful, albeit limiting division of open and closed spaces does not address: the age-specific experience. For youths, streets are places where, according to Matthews (2003, 106), "adultist conventions and moralities about what it is to be a child—that is, less-than-adult—can be put aside." The concept of streets therefore also highlights the liminal stage of youth in society:

32 German original: BJORN: *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.* INTERVIEWER: *Ohne das man sich jetzt eingeschränkt fühlen muss?* BJORN: *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 kaputtmachen oder so. Und hier ist man einfach, sag ich mal, frei.*



Figure 28. The Shop: Hanging Out in the Alley, September 2011. Photo by M. Sander.

Within these interstitial spaces young people can express feelings of belonging and of being apart and celebrate a developing sense of selfhood. In essence, therefore, streets can be grouped among those places where the newness of hybrid identities, no longer a child not yet adult, may be articulated (ibid. 106).

The following three images, taken over the course of my fieldwork, depict the various seating areas in the shop and provide insight into the students' ways of hanging out there and using the area as an open space or, more age-specifically, as a liminal space—as a street (Figures 28 and 29).

The students describe the shop as dirty and run-down, but chilled. They can draw graffiti, listen to music, and play pool. It is a place more organically grown than the carefully designed schools, compounds, and nightclubs. Students do not do any homework or study there but socialize in a way that is less restricted than their interactions at school or in nightclubs. It is the only space they visit during the week that is outside the school and the expat compound. This little street—also “street” in Matthews’s (2003) sense—can therefore be understood as a space of freedom “away from the adult gaze” (ibid., 105), where the teenagers can socialize, smoke, or take a break from school and their parents. As Bjorn further adds, “You’re not at home, but you’re undisturbed.”³³

33 German original: *Man ist nicht zu Hause, aber man ist halt ungestört.*



Figure 29. The Shop: Places to Sit in the Alley, September 2011 and June 2012. Photos by M. Sander.

3.4 Concluding thoughts on the shop

The shop generally serves as an “open space” in Hassenpflug’s (2009) definition, one which the local Chinese residents and the expatriate students of the German and French school campus nearby communally use and shape. For these youths in particular, however, the shop can best be understood in Matthew’s (2003) terms as “the street,” a site of passage where they need not follow behavior conventions and can articulate their age-specific identities as youths. Because the German students see this alley as a place to take a break from school or hang out, the shop offers a feeling of freedom in contrast to the rather sealed-off and surveilled spaces where they spend most of their time. Whether and when students are allowed to go to the shop, however, is still negotiated with the school authorities. At the same time, through these negotiations, the shop confirms the students’ age-identities, namely the privilege of leaving campus during school hours. The shop is a place for teenagers, not elementary school students, and can be seen as a liminal space where one can still be young while moving away from childhood roots, as Matthews’s (2003) understanding of similar spaces highlights.

The German teenagers also describe the shop as one of the few spaces that they share with Chinese locals (and one of the rare sites of interaction with them). The owners of the small eateries and stores, viewing the little street as “open space,” tolerate the students’ behaviors of cycling, listening to music, or even spraying graffiti. The youths’ practices at the shop have developed from a tacit compromise with the shop-owners, who see the teenagers’ presence as an opportunity to enhance their business and subsequently provide pool tables, couches, snacks the students know from home, and even a stereo where they can play their own music. At the same time, the shop owners and residents themselves also utilize the area as a leisure space. In this way, the shop is, in the students’ words, “not expat,” and carries another dimension of liminality or in-betweenness, thus fostering the development of transcultural perspectives. The students’ practices are consequently not only negotiated with the school nearby, but also with the shop-owners. Nonetheless, the teenagers—despite their friendly conversation and interactions with them—also remain customers. The concluding chapter of this part therefore focuses on the emplacement processes of expatriate youths in Shanghai and further examines the students’ relations to Shanghai’s “local” citizens.

CHAPTER 4

“Guests Stay Guests:” The Lack of “Local” Friends

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, exploring, experiencing, and identifying with Shanghai are crucial for enabling expatriate teenagers to both understand the meaning of their stay and to gain agency from the experience. At the same time, Shanghai—despite being an international metropolis—has been described by other scholars as exclusive in the literal sense. To be regarded as “Shanghainese,” for instance, is an almost unobtainable status even for migrants from other parts of China, as sinologist Sonja Schoon’s (2007) work on the relations between *waidiren*, citizens from outside of Shanghai, and *shanghairen*, or Shanghainese, has shown. Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and John Gammack (2007), who also refer to work by Lu Hanchao (1999), describe this divide and the inherent exclusion of both Chinese and foreign migrants who attempt to claim urban citizenship in Shanghai as follows:

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, such as schools and housing areas, are secluded and not even considered part of the city by the students themselves (see Part II, Chapter 1, on managing Shanghai by dividing it into “the city” and familiar spaces). Students and families draw strong boundaries around their expatriate circles and their contact with local Chinese is very limited. Consequently, Shanghai’s citizens have remained rather absent in my accounts tracing the youths’ everyday practices. However, the question arises if this absence is only due to the boundaries expatriates create as a means of making distinctions and finding comfort and community. What

role, if any, 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, sociologist 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" (ibid., 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 allows me to focus on the relations between the two heterogeneous groups, expatriates and "those who are constructed and represented as indigenous" (ibid., 209). To that end, this chapter investigates this "diaspora space" by exploring the relationships between expatriate teenagers and China or Chinese citizens, to further understand the boundaries I have observed and described throughout this ethnography. It also highlights how the students perceive their (lack of) interaction with Chinese citizens and how they position themselves within the greater 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 felt accepted in China. The teenagers reflected on their relationship to Chinese society, at which point I brought the term "integration" into the discussion. It became obvious that, for many of the students, the term "integration" had never been used in relation to their situations, but remained something they saw as reserved for less privileged migrants in Europe or elsewhere. Based on these new reflections on integration, and by tracing their views on the role of the expatriate community and what expatriate status means for them, this chapter investigates the relationship these youths felt they had with Shanghai itself (4.1). It then draws attention to a topic that emerged during interviews—the teenagers' experiences of "not fitting in," of being visibly foreign in the city (4.2). Subsequently, to shed further light on the "diaspora space," I examine the barriers to integration that the students perceived, as well as the difficulty they had making connections with Chinese youths (4.3). Finally, this chapter explores students' subjective

views of the attitude of Chinese authorities toward foreigners (4.4) and shows how integration and feelings of being accepted in China, according to these students' experiences, can only go so far as being welcomed as "a guest" (4.5).

4.1 Autonomous and special? The demarcation of the expatriate community

Part III, Chapter 3 of this ethnography identifies the international schools as hubs in Shanghai's expatriate network and explores practices and values that foster the sense of an expatriate community. These "inner" definitions are tied to the way in which expatriates consider themselves to be separate from China, which becomes visible when discussing the idea of "integration" with students.

During an interview at an Element Fresh—a restaurant chain favored by expatriates—in a downtown shopping mall in Xujiahui, seventeen-year-old Giovanni 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.*³⁴

Giovanni's description of being able to remain independent from local Chinese or, "the others," in his words, seems based on a clear sense of a divide between "us" and "them." His opinion likely derives from the observation that relationships across this divide usually center merely around service or business, and not around casual encounters or friendships as his usage of "need" suggests. Giovanni's statement also startles me, as he does not seem at all curious about meeting any Chinese people. When I inquire further about the process of integration, 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.*³⁵

34 German original: GIOVANNI: *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.*

35 German original: GIOVANNI: *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.*

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,³⁶ 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," which I discuss in the Introduction, and Giovanni's comments on not needing "the others" illustrate how, in their experience, the expatriate community functions (to a large extent) independently of Chinese society. This image of an autonomous community is based on maintaining a unifying and comforting experience for its members, but is simultaneously linked to establishing strong boundaries towards Shanghai's other citizens.

When Giovanni and I further discuss his occasional interactions 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, outside. 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.³⁷*

Giovanni's use of "outside" to describe his interactions with Shanghai's citizens, while sitting in a restaurant highly frequented by expatriates, underlines his perception of a strong local-expat divide. Furthermore, Giovanni addresses his experience of being treated with respect because he is so obviously a foreigner.

This treatment, along with the inherent demarcation of the expatriate community, comes up in a discussion I have with his classmate Andrea, a member of "the girls:"

36 As noted briefly in the Introduction, Jinqiao is part of the newly-developed Pudong area in eastern Shanghai. It hosts, in particular, many expatriate housing estates, supermarkets, and restaurants catering imported food, as well as the campuses of several international schools.

37 German original: GIOVANNI: *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.*

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 to us.*³⁸

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 words, “this special” and “very different status.” Andrea, familiar with expat postings elsewhere, considers this foreigner status not only as “special” in comparison to that of the 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 a car, I think. That's what I heard, from friends, but not everyone gets one. It is much more expensive.*³⁹

In Andrea's view, the status of expatriates in Shanghai is different from that of expatriates elsewhere due to the financial benefits and clear difference between the average local income and that of expats. Andrea argues that this status has an influence on the relationships between foreigners and local Chinese: expats do not even have to learn Chinese.

38 German Original: ANDREA: *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.*

39 German original: ANDREA: *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.*

Antonia, the Shanghai veteran and child of a German-Chinese marriage, admits she enjoys the lifestyle she has here, but voices her anger over 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.*

INTERVIEWER: *Hmm.*

ANTONIA: *As if we were something better or something. And then we live our lives where we just have fun and go out.⁴⁰*

She further expands upon 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.⁴¹*

Although I do not present my own critical stance on certain aspects of expatriate ways of life during interviews, Antonia's self-critique might be triggered by my presence and the questions I raise about integration. Nonetheless, her reflections on her own lifestyle and the implications of status leading to expatriates "feeling better than all the others," show the discomfort she feels regarding 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, in her experience, the Chinese always treat her as a foreigner in the sense that she is something special, and that this treatment inevitably hinders friendships:

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.⁴²*

40 German original: ANTONIA: *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. INTERVIEWER: Hmm. ANTONIA: Als wären wir irgendwas Besseres oder so. Und dann leben wir unser Leben wo wir einfach nur Spaß haben und ausgehen.*

41 German original: ANTONIA: *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.*

42 German original: ANTONIA: *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.*

Antonia's argument, that the positive discrimination she experiences impedes integration, can be applied to her fellow students' experiences as well. During our discussion at the mall in Xujiahui, Giovanni, who once 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 having a (white) foreigner among their staff:

GIOVANNI: *But the reason for [me and my brother] being there, was actually not to teach them, but rather, that [the customers] see that there are also foreigners. That was my feeling.*⁴³

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 their physical appearance. Giovanni, however, would have liked to pursue a more meaningful role at the sailing school.

Charlie, born in Germany to Chinese parents, contrasts the different forms of reactions that she and her family have experienced towards foreigners in Germany versus in Shanghai.

CHARLIE: *[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.*⁴⁴

43 German original: GIOVANNI: *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.*

44 German original: CHARLIE: *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. Because he looks Chinese, Don often experiences differences in the way Chinese "locals" view him in contrast to his white friends, who are immediately identifiable as foreigners:

DON: *You get treated differently, as if you were... [...] Well, last year and the year before, I always hung out with German friends, so to speak. 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 get dissed first. As a Chinese, if you look Chinese, you generally get less respect from the Chinese. They respect foreigners to the max.*⁴⁵

In summary, expatriate students feel they have a "special status in Shanghai" and are often treated differently from Chinese citizens. Some of the students' descriptions can even be labeled as cases of positive discrimination. This is particularly true for those who are identifiable as foreign at first sight. Many of the students echo Don's above account of the Chinese citizens' "respect" for foreigners, and for white people in particular. The next section further explores the role of the expatriate students' physical differences from or similarities to the Chinese, and how either affects their experience in 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."

4.2 "We don't fit in:" The gaze of the "other"

"Being a migrant is, amongst other things, a profoundly bodily experience" (Fechter 2007b, 60). Consequently, for many expatriate students, the difference between their bodies and those of the Chinese—namely their "whiteness"—plays a crucial role. Whiteness has recently come into focus among scholars, who explore the cultural construction of whiteness and challenge it as an unexamined and unmarked category (Hill 1997). Whiteness as examined in these studies, is summarized by Donald (2000,

45 German original: DON: *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.*

157) who in turn draws on Richard Dyer's *White* ([1997] 2008), as "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 regard to skin color, but the perceived difference also includes height, overall stature, hair texture, or eye shape. "White" therefore does not stand for skin color alone, 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 receiving preferential treatment, because in many cases it is synonymous with spending power. While the perceptions of racial superiority among expatriate youths in Shanghai are not as extreme as the accounts collected by Jacqueline Knörr (2005, 60–64) of white expatriate youths in Africa,⁴⁶ it seems nonetheless clear, that whiteness is highly regarded in China.⁴⁷ M. Dujon Johnson (2011), who researched racism in Taiwan and Mainland China, sums up his encounters:

The line of reasoning of white racial superiority (that the most advanced societies are predominantly white), exists today in most segments of Chinese culture and the result is that mainstream soci-

46 Jacqueline Knörr (2005), in writing about experiences of (re)migration of expatriate youths 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 as follows:

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).

47 For a historical account of constructions of race in China, see Frank Dikötter (1992), *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. For a contemporary approach and more personal account, see *Race & Racism in the Chinas*, by African-American author M. Dujon Johnson (2011).

ety 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 are based, as Johnson's findings suggest, on the tight link between whiteness and "wealth, status, education and power."⁴⁸

Keeping the privileged status that is attached to being white in mind, this "special status" as the students themselves label it, also means that blending in is impossible. The expatriate youths' "exotic" appearance—as student Antonia once put it—provokes 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 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.*⁴⁹

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.*⁵⁰

Their whiteness attracts attention when they move through the city. While some students can accept the curiosity, others feel unsettled by the "gaze of the Other" (Fechter 2007b, 62) and complain that they find such treat-

48 Fechter and Walsh, however, remind us 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).

49 German original: KARINA: *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.*

50 German original: LARA: *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.*

ment unnerving. My own reactions to attracting stares depended on the context and my mood. Re-reading my field diary from 2007, when I had commented more frequently on being the object of the gaze than during my stays between 2010 and 2012, my own desire to be able to blend in, to not be immediately visible as a “stranger” is apparent. This experience relates to Stephanie Donald’s point that we are unaware of our white ethnicity due to the perceived normality 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,” which I often found disturbing, can be understood in the context of Richard Dyer’s argument, that “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 explains my and the teenagers’ feeling unsettled by the locals’ stares. In a manner similar to my early experiences, Britta, who is Norwegian, 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 staring at [you]. [...] There were like many weird things about coming here. [...] They laugh and smile and [touch] your hair.*

Britta describes her discomfort and how she attempts 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, provide 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 Chinese people commenting on their “fat arms” (Willis and Yeoh 2008). As Katie Walsh (2008) observed among expatriate women in Dubai, increased physical activity—such as taking fitness courses on the compound—and beauty treatments such as manicures, pedicures, and facials are also very common among adult white women in Shanghai. The adult female interviewees I worked with in 2007 also reported feeling large and ungainly when talking about the difficulties they had finding clothes that fit.

While some of my female teenage informants share this experience, they—in contrast to the adult women—do not seem to feel that their

attractiveness is questioned. 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.⁵¹*

These experiences of physical difference play an important role in the migration process. Evidently, these white youths' experiences of Shanghai are significantly affected by the stares and other reactions they receive from Shanghai's Chinese citizens. To some extent, such reactions may, by highlighting the importance of whiteness, reaffirm the impact white skin still has. However, the stares can also be unsettling and thus curb the power usually attributed to whiteness; their physical difference becomes a state which the teenage expats cannot escape, because blending in is impossible. A thorough discussion of the intricate issue of race and racism in Shanghai, however, is beyond the scope of this study and would require research on and input from the Chinese perspective. In my fieldwork, however, I focused on the subjective experiences among expatriate youths and merely aim to point out how their physical appearance influences their practices in Shanghai.

The students' discomfort at constantly being seen as different and their suddenly heightened awareness of their skin color might be a significant reason why they seek out spaces they claim as "expatriate," which, in turn, leads to further boundary drawing. Eighteen-year-old Peter, for example, explains how he feels exhausted and estranged in the urban environment due not just to the language barrier, but to the impossibility of blending 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 haven't mastered 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.⁵²*

51 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 chinesischen Läden, da gehe ich gar nicht erst rein.* KARINA: *Nee. Die Mode. Chinesische Mode ist nicht so, unbedingt.* LARA: *Passt uns auch gar nicht. Ich muss sagen, ich pass in die Hosen nicht rein. Mir passen die Oberweite nicht. Die Oberweite ist zu eng.*

52 German original: PETER: *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*

Peter's remark that "life is very exhausting here" stands in stark contrast to the comfort of expatriate life that students usually describe. However, Peter's account delineates expatriate life from what lies outside the "bubble" and, at the same time, points to the factors that contribute to its creation and maintenance, as well as the expats' withdrawal into it. Britta also explains her encounter with 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 experience of being white therefore clearly shapes the ways expatriates create and define spaces for themselves. The physical walls that protect the gated communities or international schools and the boundaries around the body—namely, cultural constructions of whiteness—often support each other. Fechter has identified similar experiences among expatriates in Indonesia (2007b, 59–82), and also notes that

their 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 (ibid., 67).

Thus not only their own view of the city, but also the process of *being viewed*, shapes the ways expatriates respond to these urban landscapes and might be one of their many motives behind avoiding certain spaces—such as the subway—and embracing others, such as nightclubs or bars.

Fechter and Walsh (2010, 1204) emphasize, while drawing from Bonnett (2004), that the usage of "western" for white "may be true in both the imaginations of expatriates and those they come into contact with." However, while expatriates are usually imagined as "western" and "white"—these terms are often used interchangeably—not all expatriates fit into these categories. Many expatriates in Shanghai are not "western" at all and may come from other parts of Asia (as was the case for the majority of the students at the Singaporean school I visited). Furthermore, a considerable number of the expatriate students who consider themselves "western," such as those who come from Germany, are not white. While I only interviewed one black girl at the Singaporean school and did not accompany any black expatriate students in Shanghai, I met many students of Asian

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.

descent who had a Chinese parent or grandparents who had migrated to Europe or North America from Hong Kong, Mainland China, or other parts of Asia decades before the student's family relocated to Shanghai. These children form a large percentage of the students at all of the international schools and their experiences in Shanghai differ substantially from those of their peers who are perceived as "white."

While Don, born to Chinese parents in Germany, for instance, voices his anger about being treated differently by the guards at the gated communities (see Part III, Chapter 2), other students with a more Chinese appearance stress that their ability to blend in is positive. French school 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 français?*
 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 friends with the Chinese guy.*
 INTERVIEWER: <L>
 ARNAUD: *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, having the outward ability to fit in does not mean that these teenagers feel they are part of Shanghai's society. Charlie, for instance, states that she still 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.⁵³*

Although the ways students experience physical differences encourages them to seek out spaces frequented by foreigners, the accounts of the self-ascribed "Chinese looking" expatriates demonstrate that this aspect alone is inadequate for explaining the local-expat divide. To further investigate this "diaspora space," the entangled relations between expatriates and Shanghai's citizens, I return to the expatriate students' contemplations on other barriers which prevent them from forming balanced relationships with local youths.

53 German original: CHARLIE: 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.

4.3 Barriers to “integration,” or, the difficulties of making “Chinese” friends

In 1969, in his influential edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Fredrik Barth ([1969] 1998) proposed that boundaries and barriers between groups are worth close examination because it is “the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth [1969] 1998, 15). While this might seem like an overemphasis on the role of barriers, I believe that perceptions and practices surrounding boundary drawing should be investigated not least because this is a focus that has also been promoted in the realm of transcultural studies. As I have put forth in the Introduction, constant negotiation between creating boundaries and crossing them takes place in culturally-entangled environments. To explore new surroundings and unknown practices does not necessarily erase but may even provoke the desire to create distinct spaces of familiarity. Therefore, drawing on both Nadig (2004) and Pütz (2004), and their ideas of transculturality in progress and as practice, I highlighted the relevance of the processes and practices of drawing cultural boundaries to our understanding of 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 contemplation about what “integration” might mean, and students often aim to apply the idea to their own social worlds in Shanghai. At the same time, these discussions implicitly show how the youths perceive such 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.*⁵⁴

54 German original: KARINA: Also, Integration, würde ich sagen, wenn ich in irgend-ein 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 anfangen 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.

Karina defined "integration" by applying it to her own situation in China and seeing it as the efforts she should make, such as learning the language and becoming familiar with Chinese culture, food, and behavioral practices. Taking up the four perceived barriers that Karina names—language, culture, food, and behavior—this section illustrates how expatriate youths experience these categories as areas for potential insight.

All the international schools currently offer Chinese language courses and the majority of students try learning Chinese at some point during their stay in Shanghai. While some students keep studying Chinese, many find it too challenging and abandon their efforts. Some students who have a native Chinese parent already have language proficiency, but the differences in dialect can make it difficult even for them to understand Shanghai citizens. Furthermore, all of the parents of Chinese descent have a good command of the language spoken at their children's school. 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 Chinese dialect with his parents, judges his Chinese as "not so good" and considers learning Chinese extremely difficult for foreigners in general:

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.*⁵⁵

While many of the students at the German school actually enroll in the Chinese language classes the school offers as part of their curriculum, the time most students spend studying, as Don points out, is not sufficient to achieve a good conversational level or the ability to read Chinese characters adequately. 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. [...] 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*

55 German original: DON: *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.*

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.⁵⁶

Antonia thinks that the extrinsic motivation to learn Chinese is, for some students, very low because they can manage their daily lives successfully without having any Chinese language skills. Antonia's lack of Chinese friends, on the other hand, cannot be attributed to an inability to communicate. As she sees it, making friends with Chinese locals would require more effort on her part.

Paul, though he does not know any Chinese, also believes that there is a barrier beyond mere 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 from having Chinese friends as "the whole culture thing" but leaves his belief unexplained. Norwegian student Britta's description of her initial encounters with a Chinese family touches upon this issue as well, showing how this cultural barrier can be understood as consisting of 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.*

56 German original: ANTONIA: *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. [...] Noch komischer ist zum 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.*

Britta apparently experiences the need to "figure out the stuff" in order to cross the local-expat divide as stressful, uncomfortable, and perhaps even frightening. She thus actively seeks out the company of, in her words, "international friends." These statements illustrate that the international high school students actively participate in the boundary-drawing of the expatriate communities. However, Britta's quote also shows that the demarcation gives expatriate teenagers, who constantly move, a sense of continuity through finding "similar things to home." The tentative exploration of Shanghai's environment, coping with the emotional strain of moving, and integration into the expatriate community are among the many experiences expatriate teenagers are forced to contend with (See Parts II and III.)

Sixteen-year-old Charlie, whose parents grew up in China, says that having a different daily routine is another explanation for her difficulty making 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 [who is the 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.⁵⁷*

Charlie thinks that the separation of international and Chinese schools and the extremely time-consuming Chinese schooling renders friendships to local Chinese students difficult for her. Based on her friend's accounts, she also assumes that they "think differently."

While the statements 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 effort made—to get to know Chinese youths.

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*

57 German original: CHARLIE: *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.*

talk to the 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.⁵⁸

Antonia's statement again reveals the differences in school systems as a key factor in impeding friendships with "local" students. She also points out that, the older students are, the greater this divide becomes. My own observations confirm that (especially for teenagers) there is very little overlap in the everyday spaces of expatriate and Chinese youths. Additionally, even those spaces that are less demarcated—namely, nightlife spaces (Part IV, Chapter 2) and the shop (Part IV, Chapter 3)—present few possibilities for meeting Chinese students their age.

In addition to drawing (spatial) barriers to create comfort zones, language difficulties, differences in practices surrounding food and education, and the lack of places to meet Chinese youths, some expatriate teenagers also perceive the Chinese state and its citizens as active agents in keeping foreigners "foreigner."

4.4 Youths' perceptions of local attitudes towards foreigners

Some students also voiced a feeling that China, or Shanghai's citizens, reject or limit non-Chinese people from being part of their society. In this section, and keeping the expatriates' practices of demarcation in mind, I present three teenage girls' perceptions of exclusion. Two perspectives, those of white girls Andrea and Karina, convey their feelings on the local-expat divide, as well as the state's policies and its treatment of foreigners. The third 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 the status of "foreigner" to her. It shows that her idea of urban citizenship, her claim to be Shanghainese as a way of taking a transcultural perspective (as I discussed in Part I, Chapter 4.1) can be difficult to pursue.

Sixteen-year-old Andrea, who moved with her family to a Chinese complex downtown, feels she could never truly be a part of Chinese society:

58 German original: ANTONIA: *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 Fünften, Sechsten wurde bei ihr die Schule richtig hart. Und dann konnten wir uns gar nicht mehr treffen. Und seitdem 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.*

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.*⁵⁹

Andrea 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.*⁶⁰

While Andrea's assumption is not entirely true, research by Anna Greenspan (Greenspan 2008a; 2008b; 2011b; 2011a) demonstrates the extreme difficulties expatriates face when choosing local schools. Greenspan's research comments on the differences between Chinese and "Western" education, a debate that gained prominence not only 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 cases of western families who chose the Chinese education system for their children. 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 possess the necessary language skills and persistence. One mother interviewed by Greenspan describes the difficulties her family experienced when attempting to enroll her children in a Chinese school:

My husband literally banged on gates to get us in. He went to probably ten [schools]. He would bang on the gates and say: "I want to come here" and they would answer "*laowai*,⁶¹ 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).⁶²

59 German original: ANDREA: *So auf einer emotionalen Ebene würde ich sagen, dass wir hier jetzt nicht so. Also wir sind kein Teil. [...] Die 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.*

60 German original: ANDREA: *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.*

61 A colloquial term meaning "foreigner."

62 *That's Shanghai* magazine, "Local experiences: Anna Greenspan interviews Emily Meyer on her experiences with the local education system." Last modified April

The extraordinary efforts foreigners have to make to send their children to a local Chinese school become apparent in Greenspan's interviews. During a joint talk with James Farrer at a workshop organized by Heidelberg University's Cluster of Excellence: "Asia and Europe in a Global Context,"⁶³ Greenspan discussed the cases of a few parents and children who chose this option. She found that teachers continuously ascribed "foreign" status to foreign children, i.e. using them to shame other students who performed worse in class than the foreigners did. Many western parents, Greenspan argued, also felt uneasy about the political education their children received, which conflicted too strongly with their own values.

It is the political and legal situation in China that high school student Karina feels most affects her experience 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: *That's 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 it, and then jumped on him and told him "It is your fault." And then, of course, the police were against him. [...]*

INTERVIEWER: *So, on the one, hand you feel safe—*

KARINA: *But on the other hand <L>*

INTERVIEWER: *On the other hand, the security forces are suspect to you.*

KARINA: *Yes. It's extreme. Especially if you know how it works here. The death penalty? That is also quite extreme. They still get shot in prison here. When I look at Ai Weiwei;⁶⁴*

21st 2011, accessed April 10th, 2012. <http://www.thatsmags.com/shanghai/article/368/local-experiences>.

63 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, the work is mainly based on the parents' perspectives.

64 Ai Weiwei, a Chinese artist and activist, was arrested in Beijing in 2011 and held by officials for 81 days without any charges being filed against him.

*he disappeared without a trace. Nobody knew where he was.*⁶⁵

While other students feel that Chinese law does not apply to them—as we saw, they find buying drugs easy and the police not at all intimidating—Karina clearly fears the Chinese judicial system. Her account of the police also differs from Charlie's account of her father's preferential treatment due to his German passport. Experiences, therefore, differ greatly. Karina's family is originally from the Czech Republic, where her relatives experienced the Prague Spring, in 1968. Her family's memories of this era, which they likely communicated to Karina, undoubtedly contribute to her fear of arbitrary state power and her perception of the Chinese state as being hostile toward foreigners.

Her classmate Antonia, one of the few students who actually claims to be Shanghainese, has a different view on China that focuses less on the role of the state and more upon the diversity of its citizens:

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 is those who studied together with her. That is a different society than, erm, those whom you see every day. [...] More educated. Not affluent, necessarily, but highly educated. My mom and her engineering students.*⁶⁶

Antonia makes it clear that, for her, "Chinese society"—as I named it during the interview to see what kind of response the term would provoke—is

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- 65 German original: KARINA: *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? KARINA: 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 ... KARINA: Aber auf der anderen Seite <L> INTERVIEWER: aber andererseits sind die Sicherheitskräfte dir suspekt. KARINA: 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.*
- 66 German original: ANTONIA: *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. [...] Gebildete. Wohlhabend nicht unbedingt, aber es ist eine sehr gebildete Schicht. Meine Mama und die ganzen Maschinenbaustudenten halt.*

a diverse group. She explains how education, or even education abroad, plays a large role in how Shanghai's citizens perceive 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...*

ANTONIA: *No, the people are not being integrated here. If, for example in Germany, foreigners come, then normally many of them stay, as does 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.⁶⁷*

Antonia, whose experience can be placed in the context of long-term settler narratives, emphasizes her distance from "typical expats." Farrer (2010) examines the narratives of emplaced foreigners, such as Antonia and her family, who have been living in Shanghai for more than five years. His interviewees differed from expatriates who were only in Shanghai for a temporary assignment, as they had made a conscious decision to stay there. Farrer (*ibid.*, 2) argues that the different narratives of these long-term settlers serve as "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

67 German original: ANTONIA: *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.* ANTONIA: *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.*

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 should be seen as distinct among her expatriate classmates. At the same time, Antonia, like Farrer's informants, has a high ideal of being a "culturally cosmopolitan, locally integrated" citizen. Antonia's reflections show how it is difficult to "live up to this nearly impossible ideal." As the child of a mixed marriage who even speaks Chinese, she describes how she still feels she will 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.*⁶⁸

She further explains how Chinese society's refusal to accept her as Shanghainese leads her to doubt her 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 briefly discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Consequently, while Antonia would otherwise consider herself Shanghainese, she feels like a foreigner because she believes she is seen as one. I have elaborated on her identity performances in Part I, but her descriptions are also interesting in the context of Shanghainese-expat relations. She notes:

ANTONIA: *Well, you are welcome and people are hospitable and so on, but you are not integrated. [...] Guests stay guests.*⁶⁹

Having shed light on the prominent divisions between locals and expats, I reiterate nevertheless that my discussions with the foreign youths gener-

68 German original: ANTONIA: *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.*

69 German original: ANTONIA: *Ja, also man ist zwar willkommen und gastfreundlich und so, aber man ist nicht integriert. [...] Gäste bleiben Gäste.*

ally agreed with Farrer's findings on 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, a few moments occur in which feelings of differences and otherness are forgotten, whether at "the shop," or during mundane practices:

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.*⁷⁰

4.5 Concluding thoughts on the local-expat youth divide in Shanghai

When aiming to be part of Shanghai's cosmopolitan image, expatriate teenagers often turn to the city's spaces that are frequented by both foreigners and locals, as Chapter 2 of this part (on nightlife) illustrates. Further, the young expatriates explore and claim open spaces outside the traditional, glamorous image of the metropolis—such as the shop—to simply hang out with their friends. Their engagement with the city through such places serves an important function by helping them find a sense of emplacement, and to regain the agency they might have been missing after moving, which is always initiated by their parents. In order to foster a sense of continuity, community, and social standing, and to create comfortable ways of life (see Part III), however, the expatriates draw boundaries between themselves and Shanghai's "locals." The experience of emplacement and locality is thus, at the same time, tied to expatriate practices that attempt, to a certain extent, to exclude "China" from their everyday spaces—for example at the international schools, gated communities, Western restaurants, and imported food stores that expatriates frequent.

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) and by discussing students' ideas about "integration" in Shanghai, this chapter shows that transgressing or even dissolving the strong local-expat divide is generally difficult for expatriate teenagers. None of the students I accompanied during their everyday routines have local friends. These youths often see their expatriate community as self-sufficient or even "autonomous." Students feel that interacting with or even befriending Chinese people is difficult because they are considered different for being white. Most students gain this awareness of bodily differences, of being *consciously* white, suddenly and unprepared and they experience it as unsettling. As a consequence, they often seek out

70 German original: ANDREA: *Ich bin am nächsten zu China, wenn ich mit meinem Hund rausgehe, und, ja, und durch die Chinesen laufe und der Chinese neben mir auch seinen Hund ausführt. Dann bin ich am nächsten dran.*

places with large numbers of other white people. The teenagers are also intimidated by language and cultural barriers.

Furthermore, expatriate youths who were in frequent contact with Chinese children when they were younger experience Chinese teenagers as being too involved with their schoolwork and having no time for friendships or activities outside of school. Therefore, neither the Chinese and expat students' schools nor their leisure spaces coincide. The strong local-expat divide is therefore also related to a lack of concrete meeting places, a lack which is interpreted by some students as the Chinese government's way of keeping Chinese and foreign youths apart. Chinese passport holders are prohibited by the Shanghai municipal government from enrolling in international schools, and Chinese local schools are not an option—or at least a very difficult one—for foreign students, as the accounts by Greenspan (2008a; 2008b; 2011b; 2011a) above show. 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 feel that the Chinese youths regard them as "exotic" and that Chinese society only accepts them as "guests."

This lack of interaction with Chinese youths demonstrates that the most influential part of the move to Shanghai, for some students, might not necessarily be exploring or learning about the new cultural environment or specific cultural practices in Shanghai, but rather their general experience of "difference" and the emotional challenges associated with being uprooted. In the words of ethnographer Ghassan Hage (2005), who studied Lebanese communities in different national settings, "one 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).

Hage's words bring us back to the idea of transcultural perspectives that I described in the Introduction, to the students' own reflections on the various aspects and consequences of moving abroad. As described in Part I, Chapter 4, when tracing four students' different transcultural perspectives and identity positionings, this chapter shows in more detail how the experience of difference and attempts to overcome (as well as efforts to draw and maintain) boundaries are central to expatriate students' daily lives. The distinctions expatriate youths make towards "local" society and the apparent lack of opportunity to meet (as well as their meager interest in meeting) Shanghainese youths, originate in the transitory nature of their stay in Shanghai—an aspect of the expatriate lifestyle that is highlighted throughout this ethnography. The international students are all aware that the moment of moving on will come. For the youths I worked with at the German school, this moment coincides with graduation, an event that I discuss in all its elements of celebration and farewell—and the corresponding need to make decisions about the future that it places on all students—in the final part of this ethnography, "Moving On."