Cityzenship: A Study of Transnational Chinese Student Returnees in Three Megacities in Mainland China



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Abstract

This thesis is a qualitative study of the return migration of overseas Chinese students. When overseas students return to China, many do not return to their hometown but usually land, work and settle down in one of China's megacities: Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. Their return migration is thus not only transnational migration but also internal-urban migration.

To study the migration of transnational Chinese student returnees to megacities, I conducted a one-year multisited ethnographic research in China. I stayed in three cities: Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai, from September 2018 to August 2019. Data were collected by semi-structured interviews with 90 returnees (30 participants in each megacity) graduating from universities in the United Kingdom, United States, Korea, Australia, Germany, France and Hong Kong. I also observed and lived with participants, took photographs and field notes.

This study proposes a framework I call *cityzenship* to bridge scholarship on transnational return migration and internal-urban migration. This thesis explains *cityzenship* as membership attached to multiscalar communities, as embodied and practiced identities and as class-based rights. Moreover, this thesis illustrates how *cityzenship* reproduces domestic social and geographical inequalities. It also proposes the importance of the lens of family in the analysis of practices of *cityzenship*.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background: a tide of return

By the year 2018, 3,541,4000 overseas Chinese graduates have returned to China, accounting for 84.46% of all the overseas Chinese students, and the number is expected to increase the near further (Ministry of Education, 2018). When overseas students return to China, many of them do not go back to their hometowns but usually land, work, and settle down in one of China's megacities, and according to the Center for China and Globalization (2019), Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen are the top three metropolises receiving overseas student returnees. Existing literature usually frames the discussion about the return migration of overseas students in a nation-state paradigm, suggesting that students return to their home country, but ignores the fact that 'migrants seldom return to their place of birth and what the word *return* actually means is the movement from overseas to any part of one's *nation* of origin' (Xiang, Yeoh and Toyota, 2013, p. 7). So, this thesis understands overseas Chinese students' return migration not only as transnational[1] migration but also as a distinctive type of internal-urban (im)migration. Therefore, the main research aim of this thesis is to explore the migration of transnational Chinese student returnees[2] to three megacities in China. In addition to

[1] This thesis uses 'transnational' rather than 'international' or 'global' to describe the return migration of overseas Chinese students because the concept transnationalism implies the networked and multiscalar nature of migration. See a detailed explanation in Section 2.2.

[2] a. This thesis uses 'transnational Chinese student returnees' to refer to the overseas Chinese students who immigrated to a third place (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen) instead of returning to their hometown when they returned. I also refer to them as 'returnees'.

b. I define overseas Chinese students in the same way as how the national Minister of Education defines them: students who travel abroad to study, complete the program(s) and get a degree(s) (bachelor's, master's and doctorate) from a university recognised by the Ministry of Education, including universities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao. It should be noted that, although I use the concept transnational students in most of this thesis, I only use to the term 'transnational' as it is a term emphasising network

contemporaneous[3] internal-urban migration, their return migration also takes place at other geographical scales[4]. For example, in fieldwork, participants frequently used the phrases 'developed world/countries' and 'developing countries' to refer to the countries/regions they studied in and China, respectively. Embedded in their narratives was an imaginative world geography that regards China as a less modernised, less globalised country than the countries they studied. Participants' description resonates with Fong's (2011) explanation of how this particular imaginative geography inspires Chinese students to travel overseas to study. According to Fong, Chinese students believe that studying abroad leads to the acquisition of 'membership' within the 'developed world', which ultimately increases the chance of living a 'successful' life. Several similar terms were deployed to capture the same idea during my fieldwork: 'developed' and 'developing' were the most frequently used, but also 'East' and 'West', and 'First World' and 'Third World' emerged in participants' narratives. Some participants described their experience of travelling overseas and returning to China as migration between the 'capitalist world' and a 'socialist country'. The return migration of overseas Chinese students thus contemporaneously takes place at multiple geographical scales. Therefore, offering a challenge to the sometimes exclusive methodological nationalism embedded in the existing literature on the return migration of overseas Chinese students, this study proposes multiscalar thinking about returnees' migration.

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and relational thinking of cross-border activities, and I regard Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan as inseparable parts of China.

c. The names of the recognised universities are listed on the official website of the Minister of Education: http://www.jsj.edu.cn.

[3] This thesis borrows the concept of 'contemporaneous migration' from Ho (2020, p1). In her book, she uses contemporaneous migration to bring 'seemingly distinct emigration, immigration, and re-migration trends under the same analytical framework', illuminating 'how citizenship formations in different national contexts are drawn into a constellation of relations'.

[4] Scale is a recurring concept in this thesis, for example, return migration as migrations taking place at different scales, and cityzenship as memberships attached to multiscalar communities (Chapter 4). This thesis conceptualises scales as effects of scaling and proposes a non-essentialist and humanistic account of scales (see detailed discussion in Section 2.2).

Moreover, while overseas Chinese student returnees have drawn a great deal of research attention, existing literature mainly focuses on their employability and the convertibility of the overseas degrees into social and economic capitals (Xiang and Shen, 2009; Ma and Pan, 2015; Wang and Bao, 2015). Studies have been dominantly undertaken from the perspective of 'brain drain', 'brain gain', or 'brain circulation' (Chen, 2008; Wang, Zweig and Lin, 2011; Pieke, 2012; Hao, Wen and Welch, 2016). Researchers regard the economic development of China as the main factor pulling the tide of return. Returnees are assumed to contribute to the technological and economic development of the country along with its modernisation and globalisation (Zweig, 1997, 2006; Pang, 2001; Xiang and Shen, 2009; Wang, Zweig and Lin, 2011; Li and Yang, 2013; Liu and Zweig, 2013; Zweig and Yang, 2014; Ma and Pan, 2015). The mass media and the public have labelled returnees as 'haigui'— 'sea turtles' in Chinese—which has usually referred to the group of transnational Chinese students dispatched by the government, studying overseas, seeing the 'world', returning to China, taking up sought-after positions, and serving the country (Li and Yang, 2013). In this sense, 'haigui' is more than an identity of overseas-educated student returnees. Rather it implies an elite status and symbolises one's involvement in the state's opening-up and modernisation enterprise (Li and Yang, 2013). However, as a growing number of overseas degree holders returned to China in the 2000s, 'haidai' (seaweed in Chinese) replaced 'haigui' in the mass media, referring to overseas student returnees as 'leftovers', who could not convert their overseas education achievements into advantages in the local job market (Han and Zweig, 2010; Welch and Hao, 2013; Hu and Cairns, 2017). This change in terminology—from 'sea turtles' to 'seaweed'—implies a devaluation of overseas degrees (Ye and Liu, 2016).

A recent mobilities turn within the field of transnational education has challenged the economic-oriented analysis of transnational students and their migration. First, the mobilities turn entails humanistic accounts of transnational students and transnational education (Waters 2017). As stated by Cresswell (2006, pp. 5, 6), 'mobility, as a social product, does not exist in an abstract world of absolute time and space, but is a meaningful world of social space and social time', that 'connects mobility at the scale of the body to mobility at other scales' (also see in Adey, 2017; Urry, 2000). In the field of transnational education, the lens of mobilities allows scholars to focus on students' everyday life, imaginations, and feelings, rather than their economic motivation (Collins, 2009; Waters, 2009b; King, Findlay and Ahrens, 2010; Waters, 2012; Nowok *et al*., 2013; Beech, 2014; Collins *et al*., 2014; Soong, 2015; Tindal *et al*., 2015; Ho, 2017, 2018; Lee, 2020). Through the lens of mobilities, researchers thus present the students' movements as social and cultural practices. For example, scholars have illustrated how transnational students, as social agents embodied with social and cultural capitals, knowledge and discourses, reproduce social structures through their mobilities (Waters, 2009b; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters and Leung, 2012, 2013). However, there is still a lack of literature on the humanistic accounts of the migration experienced by overseas Chinese student returnees (except only for a few scholars, for example, Xiang and Shen, 2009; Gill, 2010; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015; Y. Zhang, 2018). But their works failed to notice the importance of cities in students' return trips, as mentioned earlier.

1.2 *Cityzenship* of overseas Chinese student returnees

Based on the research gaps identified in the existing literature, this thesis first proposes a city-level analysis of the migration experiences of overseas Chinese student returnees when they migrate to the three megacities in China: Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. Second, this thesis emphasises the importance of a humanistic account of their everyday experiences, feelings, imaginations and reflections after their 'return' and draws research attention to the relationality between their transnational education mobilities and the immobilities of significant others (for example, returnees' families). Thus, the main research questions are:

> Why do participants choose to land in Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen?
>
> How do they choose among these three cities?
>
> How do they experience and interpret their everyday lives in Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen after their return?

This thesis uses the concept of *cityzenship* to investigate the migration of transnational Chinese students to Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen and their everyday lives within the three megacities after their return. The starting point for my concept has been the notion of 'citizenship' as it has been deployed within the migration literature. Focusing on three key aspects of migrants' citizenship: membership, identity and rights (Marshall, 1950), scholarship has produced fruitful works illustrating how citizenship, as the foundation of the nation-state, mediates migration by (1) restricting migrants' entry to, exit of, and residency in territorial boundaries, (2) controlling migrants' access to political, social and cultural rights, and (3) impacting on their political, social and cultural identities

(Mouffe, 1992, 1995; Painter and Philo, 1995; Pakulski, 1997; Turner, 1997; Voet, 1998; Isin and Wood, 1999; Isin and Turner, 2002; Jones and Gaventa, 2004; Glick Schiller, 2005). Apart from citizenship, 'city' is also the theoretical underpinning of *cityzenship*. Drawing on insights from citizenship, *cityzenship* examines returnees' membership, identity and rights at the city level. In what follows, I first discuss *cityzenship* as a constellation of identities and rights attached to the memberships of different communities and then explain how *cityzenship* is helpful to understand the contemporaneous migration experienced by returnees.

1.2.1 Cityzenship as a constellation of identities and rights attached to the membership of different communities

In migration studies, noticing 'a devolution of citizenship claims-making from national to urban space', researchers use the concept of urban citizenship to situate the analysis of the rights, membership and identity of cross-border migrants in urban space (Smith and Guarnizo, 2009, p. 610; also see in Isin and Wood, 1999; Bauböck, 2003). In the scholarship on the domestic migration in China, urban citizenship is also a useful lens to examine the social and cultural exclusion experienced by rural-to-urban migrants (Smart and Smart, 2001; Zhang, 2002b). However, the concept of '*cityzenship*' differs from 'urban citizenship' as it stresses a contextualised and multiscalar analysis of returnees' memberships, identities and rights. Drawing on insights from poststructural theory[5] on space and place (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988; Crang and Thrift, 2000; Massey, 2005, 2013; DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze and Parnet, 2007), this thesis theorises megacities as *assemblages* of networked relations of humans, objects and discourses, both within and

[5] Poststructuralism 'renders contextual or uncertain a conceptual system by illustrating that system's codependence on other, presumably independent concepts or systems' (Ortensi and Belgiojoso, 2018). See a detailed explanation of the poststructuralist theorisation of space in Section 2.1.

stretching across the city borders (also see Roy and Ong, 2011; Sassen, 2013). Moreover, agreeing that megacities are composed of both internal relations and external relations (Massey, 2013), this thesis further argues that each city is a distinct mixture of local and wider networks of power relations, with its own localised historical urban context (Sassen, 2013; Çaglar and Glick Schiller, 2015, 2018). Therefore, while existing literature on Chinese migration mainly focuses on the general dichotomy between urban citizenship and rural citizenship, this thesis situates the discussion of *cityzenship* in the localised urban contexts of three cities and proposes a multisited study of *cityzenship*. Moreover, *cityzenship* also implies a multiscalar analysis of returnees' memberships, rights and identities. In the era of globalisation, external relations increasingly connect with internal ones, both constituting diverse and complex networks in cities (Doel, 2000; Massey, 2005). Existing scholarship uses the concept of scale to describe different networks. Scales, in Legg's words, refer to 'bigger or smaller networks', and the hierarchies of scales are effects of networks 'near or far', rather than levels dividing the world into 'high or low' (Legg 2009, p. 237; also see Latour 2005). In other words, the scale of the network depends on the distance of locations that the network connects. As will be discussed in the empirical chapters, the networks in megacities are multiscalar, and these multiscalar networks played an essential role in returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*. To returnees, *cityzenship* referred to a constellation of different memberships, identities and rights attached to different communities constitutive of these multiscalar networks.

To explore returnees' *cityzenship*, this thesis places the everyday embodied dimensions at the centre of discussion (Ong, 1999; Conradson and Latham, 2005; King, 2012; Ho, 2020). Using the idea of 'everyday', researchers pay attention to the mundane and taken-

for-granted actions and subjectivities that are too small and frequent to be overlooked (Ho and Hatfield, 2011). In migration studies, the idea of 'everyday' provides a useful lens to examine 'the unfettered global mobilities' in the social and cultural lives of migrants (Ho, 2007, p. 16). For example, looking at the everyday life of transnational businessmen and cosmopolitan professionals, Ley (2004) illustrates how transnational spaces are circumscribed in everyday lives. To geographers, it is the micro daily mundane activities and practices that sustain macro-scale structures and processes (Rose, 1993, 2017). To explain the interplay between macro structures and processes and micro everyday actions and subjectivities, geographers use the concept of embodiment and insist that everyday life is produced through embodied practices (Nast and Pile, 1998; Crouch, 2001). Embodiment, as defined by Cresswell (1999, p. 176), 'refers to the production of social and cultural relations through and by the body at the same time as the body is being "made up" by external forces'. Embodied with social and cultural relations, social actors, in turn, reproduce those relations through their everyday practices (Cresswell, 1999, p. 176; also see Grosz and Grosz, 1994; McDowell, 1996, 1999; Dunn, 2010). Moreover, in addition to embodied practices, the 'everyday' perspective also highlights how social actors make sense of and feel their everyday life. This argument is exemplified by the humanistic accounts of migrants' everyday life in the scholarship of transnational migration (Ley, 2011; Ho, 2020). As Ley (2011) argues:

> *transnational networks are not limited to the much-discussed circuitry of flows, measurable movements of capital, people, information and commodities. They also reflect and shape lines of meaning, the experiences of lives lived; they invoke memories, hopes and special relationships across a distended social field* (p. 26).

Examining the constitution of citizenship through everyday experienced emotions, Ho (2009, p. 788) discusses how 'an emotionally inflected analysis of citizenship, or what I term emotional citizenship, helps illuminate social relations and structures producing the politics of citizenship'. In scholarship on transnational students, Soong (2016, p. 32), for example, not only unpacks how social imagination is embedded in students' everyday embodied practices, but also reveals their 'feelings and perceptions about their relationship to social reality'. Therefore, following the above arguments, this thesis also draws research attention to the embodied practices, perceptions and emotions captured in returnees' everyday life as a way to analyse *cityzenship*.

To study returnees' *cityzenship* in their everyday life, I conducted a multisited ethnographic study over a period of twelve months in three megacities: Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai, and stayed in each city for at least three months, respectively. During the fieldwork, I also conducted in-depth interviews with a total of 90 participants (30 participants in each city). I found that, as I will discuss in the empirical chapters, *cityzenship* is a constellation of memberships, rights and identifies attached to different communities: for example, being a member of the developed world and a citizen of China as a developing country at the same time; *cityzenship* represents a class-based cosmopolitan identity and rights to consume the globalised commodities and symbols; *cityzenship* is a localised legal status (*hukou*[6]) which provides *cityzens* with localised social rights; *cityzenship* refers to a localised and regionalised identities which imply inter-city difference; *cityzenship* refers to a 'modern' identity as participants believed

[6]The *hukou* system, also known as the household registration system, has been a basic governmental technology product since ancient times. It mainly has two functions: it serves as the census register recording one's *hukou* category (agriculture/non-agriculture), residential location, birth date, state of marriage, degree of literacy and occupation, and operates as a social management system. Also, since municipal governments in three cities have been carrying out *hukou* reforms, I set September 2019, the time I went out of the field, as the last date for data collection.

that compared with life in their hometowns, life in megacities is more independent; *cityzenship* is constructed by gendered practices. To be succinct, c*ityzenship* represents embodied practices structured by different political, social and cultural power relations, including the imaginative geography of the developed and developing worlds, the middle-class habitus, the national discourse of *suzhi*[7], and the discourse of modernity as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism. Thus, this thesis exemplifies how bodies are 'connected into larger networks of meaning at a variety of scales' (Cresswell, 1999, p. 176; also see Grosz and Grosz, 1994; McDowell, 1996, 1999; Dunn, 2010).

Moreover, examining returnees' everyday life, the empirical chapters also present how the three megacities, as the assembled sites for multiscalar networked relations, met returnees' aspiration of *cityzenship* and sorts out the multiple structural forces embedded in the returnees' embodied practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*. Instead of being a backdrop where activities take place, megacities play an essential role in returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*. Megacities are also key to participants' construction of their identity. To participants, their identity as a *cityzen* means that on the one hand, they retain their Chinese identity in both an ethnic and political sense, and on the other hand, they remain to be a member of the developed world despite living in a developing nation. Megacities are more developed than other parts of China because they provide *cityzens* with better social welfare (Chapter 6) and connect participants' everyday life to the developed world (Chapter 4). In interviews, megacities are described as the converging space of global capital, business, ideas, talents and

[7] *Suzhi*, usually glossed as nurtured and educated intellectual, moral and ideological 'qualities' of human bodies, is analysed by researchers as a keyword in Raymond Williams's terms (Woodward, Dixon and Jones III, 2009, p. 396). *Suzhi*, as the keyword, is central to governance in China, as it 'justifies social and political hierarchies of all sorts, with those of high quality gaining more income, power and status than the low' (1983). See a detailed discussion on *Suzhi* and *cityzenship* in Section 4.3.

commodities (Chapter 5), represent a society valuing the spirit of individualism and symbolise an arena where *cityzens* pursue career successes and live independent and professional lives (Chapter 7). Thus, in this thesis, megacities, as both physical urban spaces and signs and imaginations, are essential to the analysis of *cityzenship*.

1.2.2 Cityzenship and contemporaneous migration

In addition to teasing out different memberships, identities and rights embedded in returnees' *cityzenship*, this thesis aims to examine the association between *cityzenship* and migrations contemporaneously taking place at different geographical scales experienced by returnees. To do so, this study draws insights from the concept of 'transnationalism'. Compared with the concepts of 'international' and 'global', the concept of 'transnational'[8] emphasises the linkages between people (migrants and non-migrants) and places crossing nation-state borders (Dicken *et al*., 2001; Levitt, 2001; Smith, 2001; Paasi, 2004; Bulkeley, 2005; Vertovec, 2006; Isin, 2007; Leitner and Miller, 2007; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008). For geographers, transnationalism provides researchers with a way of thinking about transnational migration at multiple scales other than migration at the nation-state level, as the concept of transnationalism recognises places as sites where transnational migration as lived experiences take place (Brickell and Datta, 2011). Similarly, this thesis conceives contemporaneous migration as different spatialities of networks, which stretch across different localities. To be more specific, to connect migration and *cityzenship* at different geographical scales, this thesis focuses on the topology of returnees' migration and their place-based lived experiences in and among different localities, for example, hometowns, studying countries, China and the three megacities.

[8] See a more detailed theoretical review on transnationalism and transnational migration in Section 2.2.

Examining the topology of returnees' contemporaneous migration and pursuit of *cityzenship*, this thesis illustrates how returnees' transnational education mobilities reproduce domestic geographical and social inequalities. Drawing on insights from Lefebvre's philosophy of 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'space of representations', this thesis explains how returnees' everyday practices (re)produce and sustain the social spaces. When transnational student returnees 'return' to China, instead of returning to their hometown, they immigrate to a third place (a megacity), which also transforms their transnational 'return migration' into internal-urban migration. As the new *cityzens*, returnees are not only workers embodied with knowledge but also investors in local real estate markets and consumers who have strong purchasing desire and power. In other words, accompanied by returnees' immigration and settlement is the influx of a series of cultural and economic resources to megacities, which reproduces the existing unequal geographies between megacities and other parts of China (Chen and Fan, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2020). Returnees' practices of *cityzenship* also reproduce gentrifying urban space in megacities. For example, returnees' consumption habitus roots their everyday *cityzen* life in particular gentrifying urban spaces, including CBDs, shopping malls and development areas. Finally, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, it was comparatively easier for overseas student returnees than other less educated migrants to apply for *hukou* in megacities and access localised social rights granted to local *hukou* holders. While the *hukou* system institutionalises transnational education mobilities as cultural capital that can be converted to localised social rights, it excludes other domestic migrants, such as rural-to-urban migrants. Therefore, analysing the topology of returnees' migration and their practices of *cityzenship*, this thesis elucidates how their

transnational education (im)mobilities and everyday practices reproduce social inequalities in China.

The interplay between the contemporaneous migration experienced by overseas Chinese student returnees and their pursuit and practices of *cityzenship* echoes the scholarship in the field of spatialities of transnational education. Drawing on insights from transnationalism, scholars have shown how the networks of transnational education are maintained through the migration of transnational students (see Waters and Leung, forthcoming; Raghuram, 2013). For example, theorising transnational students as social agents embodied with capitals and knowledge, researchers explain the interplay between transnational education as networks of social reproduction and students' transnational education migration (Waters, 2009a, 2018a; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Leung and Waters, 2013; Waters and Leung, 2017). Collins (2010b) shows how transnational student migration connects places over time through everyday lived practices. As in Raghuram's (2013, p. 145) words, 'education was itself not really transnational', but it was the students who travel across the borders maintaining the networks of transnational education. In addition to students, researchers also focus on the family as the institution that maintains the spatialities of transnational education (Waters, 2005, 2010; Ho and Bedford, 2008; Tu, 2019). Furthermore, scholarship highlights the importance of the academics, university campuses, labour markets, multilateral organisations and governments in maintaining the spatialities of transnational education (Findlay *et al*., 2012; Raghuram, 2013; Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo, 2015; Brooks and Waters, 2018; Waters, 2018a, 2018b). Resonating with the above argument, this thesis also illustrates how transnational Chinese students, their families, megacities, municipal institutions (*hukou*), and national governments, all as key players, sustain the spatialities of

transnational education. As there is a general lack of research on cities as the localities in the spatialities of transnational education, this thesis further contributes to the scholarship by examining the migration of transnational Chinese student returnees to the three megacities.

1.3 Thesis layout

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 first reviews literature on transnationalism, citizenship and urban migration and then explains how the theoretical framework *cityzenship* has been developed. The first theoretical underpinning of *cityzenship* is the network and relational thinking of cities. The second theoretical underpinning of *cityzenship* consists of citizenship, a concept frequently used by scholarship to investigate transnational migration (Bauböck, 1994; Ong, 1999; Ho, 2020). Bridging the lenses of city and citizenship, *cityzenship* focuses on returnees' everyday practices and perceptions of rights, memberships and identities in the three megacities. Chapter 3 elucidates the methodological design and research processes that underpin this thesis. This chapter first demonstrates the design of a multisited ethnographic study and justifies the choices of Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai as the research sites. It then proceeds to show the process of data collection in the fieldwork, including the recruitment of participants and different data collection methods. This chapter reflects on my positionality, my identity as an insider and difficulties and dilemmas I experienced during firework, and how I dealt with them. Finally, the chapter addresses issues of analysis and writing by emphasising the importance of undertaking an initial analysis of the data *during* fieldwork and showing how systematic coding and analysis in post-fieldwork writing was undertaken.

Chapter 4 draws upon my empirical data to explain why returnees decided to return to China and how they chose a megacity. Most returnees recruited in this study chose to return to China immediately after they finished their overseas study, and some had worked for a while in the 'host' country before they returned to China. However, no matter when they decided to return, the reasons underpinning this decision shared similarities. Most participants actively chose to return to one of the three megacities because they regarded it as a way to keep their ethnic and political identity as Chinese and to become a member of the developed world at the same time. This observation challenges a conventional research argument that to transnational Chinese students, returning to China without attaining the citizenship of a developed country means failing the dream of becoming a member of the developed world (for example, Fong 2011). In this chapter, I discuss how their overseas studying experiences influenced their identities how returnees conceived megacity *cityzenship* as membership in the 'developed' world. Moreover, this chapter also explains how participants chose among the three megacities by drawing attention to inter-city differences. To returnees, three cities differed in terms of environment, climates, economic and industrial structures, and social welfare provided by local *hukou*. Finally, this chapter shows how cities were interpreted as places full of meanings and emotions and highlights the importance of taking into account returnees' emotions in studying *cityzenship*.

Chapter 5 explains *cityzenship* as a class-based identity. Through the lens of distinction, consumption and class (Bourdieu, 1990, 2018a), this chapter shows how *cityzenship* is practised as a class-based cosmopolitan identity through everyday consumption in megacities. Focusing on the everyday practices of *cityzenship*, this chapter first shows

how *cityzenship* is practised as a privileged cosmopolitan identity in the consumption of transnationally mobile food and services. Second, this chapter illustrates how *cityzenship* was practised as an identity rooted in particular areas of the city and how returnees interpreted these areas as gentrifying urban spaces that represent and symbolise China's modernisation and globalisation. Third, *cityzenship* as a class-based identity is also exemplified by returnees' pursuit of the locally produced global. To returnees, uniqueness and features in megacities are usually gentrifying urban landscapes that helped to make the city 'global'. Therefore, this chapter shows how *cityzenship* is practised as a class identity in returnees' everyday life.

Chapter 6 discusses how the *hukou* system[9] influences returnees' migration and *cityzenship*. The *hukou* system, also known as the household registration system, has been a basic governmental technology product since ancient times. It mainly has two functions: it serves as the census register recording one's *hukou* category (agriculture/non-agriculture), residential location, birth date, state of marriage, degree of literacy and occupation, and operates as a social management system. This chapter begins with a review of the literature on the *hukou* system and explains why megacity *hukou* is the most desired by domestic migrants but also the most difficult to obtain. It then presents a detailed elaboration of how student returnees attain hukou in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen with relative ease. The chapter argues that the way in which the *hukou* system operates in megacities institutionalises overseas degrees as cultural capital which can be converted to localised social rights (i.e., a form of *cityzenship*). Finally,

[9] Since the *hukou* system is always under reformed, the *hukou* policies discussed in this thesis precede September 2019, the time my fieldwork trip ended.

illustrating how returnees evaluate the social rights attached to local *hukou*, this chapter proposes to understand the *hukou* system as a family-based institution.

Chapter 7 focuses on the discussing returnees' transnational education (im)mobilities through the perspective of lifecourse and gender. This chapter shows that returnees' experiences of study abroad and the acquisition of megacity *cityzenship* are underpinned by a discourse of individualisation characterised by child-centred familism. Moreover, this chapter also focuses on the *cityzenship* of female returnees in megacities and elucidates the gendered practice of individualisation characterised by child-centred familism. Learning how female participants make sense of their transnational education (im)mobilities and everyday life in megacities after their return, this chapter illustrates how class and the discourse of individualisation characterised by child-centred familism influence the gendered practices of *cityzenship*.

Chapter 8 concludes the study by summarising returnees' *cityzenship*, stating the research contributions made by this thesis, pointing out the research limitations, and giving future research suggestions.

Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part, Section 2.1, reviews the literature on transnationalism and suggests that citizenship is a useful theoretical concept to analyse transnational and urban migration. The first subsection reviews how geographers theorise transnationalism as networked relations continuously (re)produced by cross-border (im)mobilities and connections and how the lens of network informs scholarship on transnational education and the migration of transnational students. The second subsection looks at how the existing scholarship discusses the cities in transnational networks and how the city-level analysis is both possible and necessary to examine transnational migration. The third subsection focuses on how the concept of citizenship is useful to analyse transnational migration and urban migration in the existing scholarship. This subsection begins with a discussion of three aspects of citizenship—membership, rights, and identity—and then looks at how increased transnational migration and urban migration bring new insights to citizenship studies. Reviewing existing scholarship on Chinese internal urban migration and the citizenship of Chinese urban migrants, I argue that conventional literature ignores the inter-city differences among Chinese cities as well as the influence of transnational migration on domestic citizenship.

The second section elucidates how the existing discussion on 'citizenship' and 'city' is valuable for understanding transnational Chinese students' *cityzenship*. In this thesis, I use the concept of *cityzenship* as the theoretical framework to elucidate the particular case of migration of transnational Chinese students to the three megacities in China. This section illustrates how the scholarship on cities, transnational migration and citizenship helps understand returnees' *cityzenship* as membership attached to multiscalar communities, embodied and practised identities and class-based urban rights, as found in fieldwork. Drawing on insights from Lefebvre's theory on the production of space (1991), I further introduce how returnees' pursuit and practice of *cityzenship* reproduce domestic socio-spatial inequalities.

2.2 Literature review

Throughout the thesis, I use the theoretical concept of 'transnationalism' to understand the migration of overseas Chinese students. The first subsection reviews contemporary ontological debates on space, a central consideration in transnationalism (Jackson, Crang and Dwyer, 2004). It then illustrates how geographers theorise transnationalism as networked relations continuously (re)produced by cross-border (im)mobilities and connections (Dicken *et al*., 2001; Levitt, 2001; Smith, 2001; Bulkeley, 2005; Isin, 2007; Leitner and Miller, 2007; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008; Bear, 2013). Finally, this subsection discusses how the lens of network informs scholarship on transnational education and the migration of transnational students.

The second subsection focuses on the discussion of cities, scales and transnational networks. Instead of using it as a fixed, vertical and hierarchical system dividing the world into different levels, this subsection shows how existing literature understands scales as the effects of scaling, produced and reproduced by social practices, referring to networks stretching near or far (Marston, Jones III and Woodward, 2005; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008; Legg, 2009). Then, I review how it is both necessary and possible to examine multiscalar migration at the city-level of analysis.

The third subsection considers why the concept of citizenship is useful to analyse urban migration. This subsection begins with a discussion of three aspects of citizenship—membership, rights, and identity—and then looks at how increased transnational migration and urban migration bring new insights to citizenship studies. Reviewing existing scholarship on Chinese internal-urban migration and the citizenship of Chinese urban migrants, I argue that conventional literature ignores the inter-city differences among Chinese cities and the influence of transnational migration on domestic citizenship.

2.2.1 Spatialities of transnationality

Recent years have witnessed an expansion of literature applying poststructuralist thinking to the concept of space within and beyond the discipline of geography (Hess, 2004; Massey, 2005, 2013; Murdoch, 2006; Thrift, 2000). This perspective mainly draws on insights from the writings of poststructuralist philosophers (Crang and Thrift, 2000). For example, the theoretical concept of 'assemblage', proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988), provides a poststructuralist understanding of space. Conceptualised in a variety

of positions, the concept of assemblage refers to processes involving the coming together of different elements, including materialities, human beings, technologies, knowledge, nature and culture and so on. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1988), the assemblage is both a continuous composition of relations and the effects of the interactions of constituting relations instead of an outcome of the properties of constitutive segments; it operates as a whole and changes over time (also see DeLanda, 2006; Deleuze and Parnet, 2007). Poststructuralism conceptualises space as relations and linkages of humans, practices, objects and discourses.

Within geography, the conceptualisation of space 'move[s] away from the Kantian perspective on space—as an absolute category—towards space as process and in process' (Crang and Thrift, 2000, p. 3). Space is viewed as an event of becoming, a process and an action (Doel, 2000; McFarlane, 2011). Some geographers adopt the concept of rhizome to explain such an ontological position (for exmaple, Hess, 2004; Gibas, 2019). Used by Deleuze and Guattari (1988) as a metaphor, the concept of rhizome describes heterogeneous networks 'with no central axis, no unified point of origin, and no given direction of growth' (Thrift, 2000, p. 716). Following this conceptual framework, space as a rhizome is composed of relations (folds) and grows into 'a network and in places shooting[s] into bulbs and tubers' (Hess, 2004, p. 197). Space is a 'whole thing' (the rhizome), composed of crossroads and connectedness (multiple branching, growing and connecting roots) (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 155; also see Doel, 2000). This poststructuralist ontological view of space is also reflected in geographers' use of Latour's (2005) actor-network theory (ANT) in spatial analysis (see for example Murdoch 1998). Compared to assemblage thinking, ANT further provides a 'spatial account of the ways in which assemblages are drawn together, reach across space

and are stabilised' (Müller and Schurr, 2016, p. 217). Hence, emphasising the infinite, destabilised and heterogeneous realities of space, poststructuralist geographers propose a topological analysis thereof (Smith, 2003).

Influenced by the topological thinking of space, scholars theorise transnationalism as processes of networks building and (dis)connecting across national borders (Bailey, 2001; Crang, Dwyer and Jackson, 2003; Basch, Schiller and Blanc, 2005). Transnational immigrants produce and sustain the spatialities of transnationalism as multi-stranded social networks through 'multiple relations — familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political — that span borders' (Schiller, Schiller and Szanton, 1992, p. 1). Conceiving transnationalism as cross-border networks sustained by multiple relations, scholars further emphasise the complexity and heterogeneity of transnational spatialities by showing different typologies of different forms of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of transnational subjectivities (Rouse, 1992, 1991; Ong, 1999; Faist, 2000; Ang, 2001; Crang, Dwyer and Jackson, 2003; Ley, 2004; Smith, 2005; Conradson and Latham, 2005; Robert, 2006; Ho, 2008; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2020).

The social relations that constitute transnational space are not only restricted to those who migrate, but also involve immobile objects and non-migrants. The paradigm of mobilities and immobilities is useful in explaining this. Regarding mobilities and immobilities as interdependent concepts, scholars stress the importance of considering immobilities in forming and sustaining transnational mobilities and networks (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006). First, mobilities of people and materialities rely on immobile infrastructures including roads, petrol stations, airports, docks and so on (Graham and Marvin, 2002; Sassen, 2002). Second, these mobilities are also supported

by immobile others, such as left-behind children and women in transnational families and local workers providing service for transnational business (Sheller, 2004; Graham *et al*., 2012; Hoang and Yeoh, 2012). Third, the diaspora space is 'inhabited' not only by transnational migrants but also by those who are believed to be 'indigenous' (Brah, 2005, p. 16; also see Rouse, 1992). This is because researchers believe that those who do move 'remain connected to migrants through networks of social relations that transcend borders' (Ho, 2008, p. 1288). Hence, transnational space is social-material networks 'constituted through the dialectical relations of the grounded and flighty, the settled and the flowing, the sticky and the smooth' (Jackson, Crang and Dwyer, 2004, p. 2).

An emphasis on the 'indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence, and the sociomateriality' of space also highlights the importance of considering time in studying spatialities of transnationality (McFarlane, 2011, p. 635). It is not until recently that scholarship has witnessed explicit research attention dedicated to time and space (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; May and Thrift, 2003; Massey, 2005; Waters, Brooks and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Wright and Ellis, 2016; Mavroudi, Page and Christou, 2017). In scholarship on geographies of lifecourse and ageing, researchers begin to notice how one's experiences of places and spaces overlap with and connect to time (Hopkins and Pain, 2007; Skinner, Cloutier and Andrews, 2015). Conceptualising migration as 'a space-time' phenomenon, King (2012) identifies time as one of the key features in his article on the retrospect and prospect for migration theory. Griffiths (2014) proposed a typology of temporalities to explore failed asylum seekers' experiences of mobility and deportability. Mavroudi, Page and Christou (2017) present a series of empirical chapters on timespace and international migration, showing the value of time helping scholars develop new insights into studying transnational (im)mobilities. As recommended by

Smith (2017, p. xi), this is a book ‘exemplify[ing] that it is now the right 'time' to take ‘time’ more seriously via “time-informed studies of migration”’. This thesis also finds the perspective of time valuable as it explains how transnational education migration and return migration are related to different life stages (see Chapter 7 on the lifecourse analysis of transnational education migration).

Influenced by theories of transnationalism, researchers use the concept of transnational education instead of concepts such as international/global education (as mentioned in Section 1.2), to analyse the cross-border spatialities of education as networked and actor-centred social processes. Unlike ‘global’ which represents the world as a surface of sameness, blurs borders among nations and welcomes the totalitarian practices and outcomes and ‘international’ which emphasises the interactions among people, organisations and nations associated with different countries, ‘transnational’ regards the cross-border activities as the socio-spatial networked processes in which migrants, non-migrants, institutions and governments are involved (Rouse, 2019). Scholarship uses the concept of transnational education to draw attention to how cross-border educational activities operate as systems and how different actors, such as students, academics, universities (including the offshore programmes and campuses) and governments, are involved in and sustain the operation of the cross-border systems (Waters and Leung, forthcoming). They further point out the importance of considering the socio-political and knowledge structures, such as neo-colonial knowledge, as the influential actors in producing and sustaining transnational education processes (also see the empirical studies made by Leung and Waters, 2013; Sin, 2013; Waters and Leung, 2013, 2017; Koh, 2017; Raghuram, Breines and Gunter, 2020).

Analysing transnational students as cross-border student migrants, scholars in the field of transnational education propose a topological analysis of students' migration. On the one hand, researchers explore how diverse power relations and knowledge (for example the postcolonial discourse) structure the spatialities of transnational education and direct the transnational mobilities of students; on the other hand, they also exemplify how transnational students as embodied social actors and agents of knowledge produce and reproduce the spatialities of transnational education (Waters, 2006, 2018b; Collins, 2010a; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Leung and Waters, 2013; Raghuram, 2013; Beech, 2014; Waters and Leung, 2014; Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo, 2015; Ho, 2017). Bourdieu's capital theory (2018b) and practice theory (1990; 2018a) are helpful for explaining the interplay between social structure and transnational education space[10]. Drawing on insights from Bourdieu's theories, scholars exemplifies how transnational education space operates the field where students from privileged background accumulate both institutionalised and embodied cultural capital that can be converted to other types of capital (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters, 2012; Waters and Leung 2012. 2017; Zhang and Xu, 2020). To be more specific, through the lens of Bourdieu, scholars theorise spatialities of transnational education as process of social reproduction. In addition to class, scholars also consider how students' gender, families as well as students' lifecourse and experience of time-space impact their practices and interpretations of transnational education mobilities (Waters and Leung, forthcoming; Waters, 2006; Brooks and Waters, 2011). However, the importance of cities remains understudied in the existing literature on the spatialities of transnational education. Therefore, this study contributes to the scholarship on spatialities of transnational education by suggesting a city-level analysis of the migration of transnational students.

[10] See detailed discussion on Bourdieu's capital theory in Chapter 5.

2.2.2 Cities and multiscalar geographies

As discussed in Chapter 1, transnational Chinese students' return migration takes place contemporaneously at multiple geographical scales. I also use the concept of 'multiscalar membership' to refer to returnees' practices and aspirations of status attached to communities at different geographical scales (as I will show in Chapter 4). So, before demonstrating the importance of the city-level analysis of returnees' *cityzenship*, this subsection first reviews how the concept of scale is deployed in existing scholarship. Then, this subsection explains why cities are ideal sites to analyse transnationalism at different geographical scales.

First, recent scholarship proposes to investigate scales as fluid and open (Dicken *et al*., 2001; Bulkeley, 2005; Marston, Jones III and Woodward, 2005; Isin, 2007; Leitner and Miller, 2007; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008). This is because, as explained by Jones (2009), scales are the effects of scaling, produced and reproduced by de/reterritorialising practices and discourses, so that their denotation changes with shifting political, social and cultural power relations. In not a dissimilar way, Legg (2009) also holds a non-essentialist perspective on scales. Drawing on insights from Latour (2005), Legg suggests a network thinking of scale. Scale, in Legg's words, refers to 'bigger or smaller' networks, and the hierarchies of scales are effects of networks 'near or far', rather than levels dividing the world into 'high or low' (Legg, 2009, p. 237). Both Jones and Legg's understanding of scale are poststructuralist, perceiving scale as multifaceted and multi-local processes. Thus, a multiscalar analysis needs to focus on producing and maintaining different networks across multiple localities.

Scalar thinking is common within transnationalism studies, for example, local/global and cities/nations/unions. Scholarship in transnationalism studies has produced fruitful work that exemplifies how multiscalar analysis should not assume that scales are fixed, static and closed levels that divide the social world hierarchically. This is best illustrated by geographers' call for a dialectical view on 'the global' and 'the local' (see for example Oakes, 2006; Tolia- Kelly, 2008; Freitag and Von Oppen, 2010; Brickell and Datta, 2011; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013; Legg et al., 2015; Moskal, 2015). For example, some scholars use the theoretical concept of 'translocality' to explain transnationalism as deterritorialised and reterritorialised social networks that are produced, maintained and sustained in local-to-local practices (Mandaville, 1999; Conradson and McKay, 2007; Gielis, 2009; Brickell and Datta, 2011). In a similar vein, other scholars use the idea of 'transnationalism from below' to describe transnationalism as networks produced and sustained by transnational migrants in different localities (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Smith, 2001, 2005; Beaverstock, 2002; Krätke, Wildner and Lanz, 2012). Grounding transnational networks in different localities, literature in both strands thus challenges a scenario in which geographical scales are assumed to be fixed hierarchies (Mitchell, 1997; Ong, 1999; Bailey, 2001; Crang, Dwyer and Jackson, 2003; Brickell and Datta, 2011).

Agreeing with the argument that scales are fluid and contextualised in diverse localities, Çaglar and Schiller (2018) further propose that it is also possible and necessary to observe multiscalar networks in a single site as well. This is because, as in their own words, 'e[E]ach research site is always multiscalar because all places are constituted in relationship to elsewhere as parts of intersecting networks linking multiple forms of

disparate institutionalized power' (2018, pp. 10-11). Their understanding of places echoes Massey's conceptualisation of places as 'open and porous networks of social relations' (2013, p. 121). As discussed in the previous section, poststructuralist scholarship analyses space as networks constitutive of relations, and geographers take this notion and further conceptualise places as 'particular moments in such intersecting social relations, nets of which have over time been constructed, laid down, interacted with one another, decayed and renewed' (Massey, 2013, p. 120). To be more specific, places are interactions of networks of social relations. While some relations are internal, others 'stretch beyond it, tying any particular locality into wider relations and processes in which other places are implicated too' (Massey, 2013, p. 120; see similar discussion in Thrift, 1983). In the era of globalisation, as external relations increasingly connect with internal ones, both constituting more diverse, dynamic and complex networks, places are then 'flow upon flow; variation upon variation; differential upon differential', in which multiple scales are thus concentrated, folded and overlapped (Doel, 2000, p. 124). In this sense, it is possible to study multiscalar networks without moving among different places. Hence, while agreeing with the traditional multisited approach to studying multiscalar networks, Çaglar and Schiller (2018) further propose that a single-sited approach is also possible and necessary for multiscalar research (also see Saseen, 2013).

Furthermore, scholarship emphasises the importance of looking at the articulation, negotiation and interconnection of multiscalar networks in a single-sited research (Ong, 2011; Çaglar and Glick Schiller, 2018). To be more specific, it is not only necessary to tease out multiscalar networks in a single site, but also important to examine how those multiscalar networks articulate, negotiate and interconnect with each other. Examining the relationship between internal relations and external ones stretching over urban space,

Massey proposes to understand both forms of power relations as mutual interacted processes:

> *not only was the character of a particular place a product of its position in relation to wider forces (the more general social and economic restructuring, for instance), but also that that character in turn stamped its own imprint on those wider processes. There was mutual interaction* (Massey, 2013, p. 131).

In a city, power relations are diverse, including the localised historical urban contexts, the municipal and national development plans, regional economic and national political process, global capital and so on (Massey, 2007; Roy and Ong, 2011; Clarke and Bainton, 2015; Jones, Heley and Woods, 2018; Li and Wu, 2018). According to Massey (2007), the articulations, negotiations and interconnections of diverse internal and external power relations structure, restructure and regenerate urban landscapes over time. In other words, urban landscapes, such as buildings, markets, public squares, as well as CBDs, economic and technological development zones and urban slums, indicate the trajectories of the articulations, negotiations and interconnections of the unequal power relations in urban space (Massey, 2007; see also Çaglar and Schiller, 2018; Ong, 2011; Sassen, 2013). Hence, following these arguments, this thesis also pays attention to the articulations, interconnections and negotiations of different power relations in the three megacities.

To sum up, ontologically, existing scholarship conceives cities as sites of assembled networks of power relations and proposes to understand cities as fluid and ongoing processes. The poststructural thinking of space challenges the traditional thoughts that

divide the global geography into hierarchical scales and suggests that cities 'represent the localization of global forces as much as they do the dense articulation of national resources, persons, and projects' (Holston and Appadurai, 2003, p. 19). Perceiving scales as networks, scholars argue that it is both possible and necessary to examine multiscalar networks of power relations in a single city (Çaglar and Schiller, 2018). Moreover, since each city has its own localised historical urban context, each city is a distinct mixture of local and wider networks of power relations (Krätke *et al*., 2012; Massey, 2005, 2007, 2013). As Mitchell and Parker write, 'the scales that are produced within the context of globalization processes are never neutral; rather they reflect specific configurations of power that must be identified contextually' (2008, p. 778). Therefore, as returnees are concentrated in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, this thesis chooses three cities as its research sites to examine their return migration with a consideration of the urban contexts of each city and the inter-city differences.

2.2.3 Migration and urban citizenship

This section reviews how existing scholarship uses the concept of citizenship to analyse different forms of migration in transnational space. It first explains why citizenship is a useful theoretical lens to study migration, especially transnational urban migration. Second, it reviews the literature on Chinese citizenship and points out the research gaps in conventional scholarship.

There are three key ideas contained within the concept of citizenship: membership, rights and identity (Marshall, 1950). Membership, or legal citizenship, is the most foundational aspect of citizenship, as it refers to not only the consent of entry to or exit of territorial boundaries of a state or a political community but also its legal formula conferring an

individual's rights and impacting on one's construction of identity (Turner, 1997; Isin and Turner, 2002). Rights 'lie at the heart of the language of citizenship' (Jones and Gaventa, 2004, p. 8), and Marshall (1950) divided them into three types: civil rights which means one's freedom and liberty provided by the legal system, political rights with which one can elect or participate in a governing body, and social rights as social befits (for example subsidised education and health and retirement benefits) provided by the Welfare State. The last aspect of citizenship is identity referring to shared beliefs and images that tie individuals to a political community, and the beliefs and images include the empirical ones held by people and the normative ones the state government wants to impute on people (Jones and Gaventa, 2004; Joppke, 2010). Hence, 'as the foundation of the nation-state', citizenship mediates migration by restricting entry, exit, residency and other social and cultural rights, as well as shaping one's identity (Ho, 2008, p. 1287; also see Isin and Turner, 2002).

However, Marshall's (1950) theorisation of citizenship is challenged by researchers pointing out the mutual shaping between the identity related to citizenship and other social and cultural identities such as gender, sexuality, race and class (Mouffe, 1992, 1995; Painter and Philo, 1995; Voet, 1998; Isin and Wood, 1999). Emphasising the relationality of identity, contemporary studies on citizens' identities go beyond narrow ethno-cultural nationality and consider citizens' identity as situational, temporal, multiple and negotiable, recognising an individual's race, ethnicity, gender and class as constitutive of the subject (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996; Woodward, 1997; Isin and Wood, 1999; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Jenkins, 2014). As described by Isin and Wood (1999), a citizen's identity is an 'ensemble' of 'different forms of citizenship', including 'the political, civil, social, economic, diasporic, cultural, sexual and ecological'

(p. 21). In other words, identity is not only in relation to the political fields, but also economic, social, cultural realms (McNay, 2004; Cresswell, 2006; Adey, 2017).

To examine citizens' identity, scholarship places everyday embodied practices at the centre of discussion. This argument is supported by poststructural philosophies conceiving bodies as carriers of capitals, embodied within discourses and knowledge, disciplined and regulated by forms of power (Bourdieu, 1990; Foucault, 2007). For example, when transnational students migrate from one place to another, they move in the social, cultural, political and economic networks, where they are embodied with knowledge, cultural capital and social, cultural and geopolitical imaginations and so on (Findlay *et al*., 2012; King and Raghuram, 2013; Beech, 2014; Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo, 2015; Waters, 2017). While the theoretical concept of embodiment locates identity formation in networked power relations, the lens of practice draws attention to the performance of embodied identities and theorises 'practice and doing as carriers and producers of identity' (Spinney, Aldred and Brown, 2015, p. 328; also see similar arguments made by Soysal and Soyland, 1994; Benhabib, 1999; Ong, 1999; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004). For example, Isin and Wood (1999) examine the construction of cosmopolitan citizenship by everyday consumption of the urban middle class. The practice-oriented perspective also helps existing scholarship consider citizenship through a process of exercise of rights (Isin, 2008, 2009; Staeheli, 2011; Isin and Nielsen, 2013; Wood and Black, 2018; Lemanski, 2020). For example, Pakulski (1997, p. 73) expands the discussion of citizenship rights into a new domain of cultural rights which 'involve the right to symbolic presence, dignifying representation, propagation of identity and maintenance of lifestyles'. Schiller (2005) has pointed out that not all legal citizens are able to claim the same rights from the states, as they

experience forms of denials and exclusions of civil rights due to their gender, sexuality, class and race (also see in Painter and Philo, 1995; Tagliabue, 2002; Salih, 2013).

In migration studies, the lens of embodied practice informs studies interested in new affinities, loyalties and identities generated by increasing transnational flows of migration and social networks stretching across borders (Isin, 2008; Kallio and Mitchell, 2016). Scholarship has already made the argument that citizenship is no longer a stable or given negotiation between states and citizens, and recent literature thus moves from the nation-state level of analysis, 'of which nation-state identity is but one' (Jones and Gaventa, 2004, p. 19). First, increasing multifarious and multi-directional mobilities locate the discussion of citizenship in transnational fields. Examining the status, identities, rights and practices of transnational migrants, researchers call for attention to the impacts of multi-stranded social relations on the conceptualisation of citizenship (Basch, Schiller and Blanc, 1994; Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Concerned about diverse manners in which citizenship transcends national borders and attaches to multiple sites in transnational social fields, transnational studies produce various works on citizenship: transnational citizenship (Bauböck, 1994), post-national citizenship (Soysal and Soyland, 1994), flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999), cosmopolitan citizenship (Linklater, 1998) and global citizenship (Dower and Williams, 2016). Second, in addition to citizenship stretching beyond national borders, researchers also pay attention to the citizenship of urban residents and urban migrants. As sites where multiscalar networks are folded and global flows of migration, ideas, capital, cultures and images are concentrated, cities are thus arenas to examine how contemporary forms of citizenship disconnect with nations. Therefore, apart from national citizenship, scholars also pay research attention to the

citizenship stretching across national borders and the localised urban citizenship disconnected from nation-states.

Citizenship has long been a concept associated with cities. 'Citizen' as a concept first emerged as a legal figure referring to 'male' 'resident[s] of the polis' in 'Athens, Sparta, and Thebes', and 'women children and slaves could not be formal citizens' (Cresswell, 2013, p. 107). At that time, citizenship was the 'product of birth', which made it impossible for an immigrant to become a citizen. As citizenship 'came with the rootedness of birthrights', the figure of a citizen was attached to a 'clearly bounded territorial city-state' (Cresswell, 2013, p. 107). In medieval cities, urban law emerged and gave more secular rights and freedoms to the citizens than to peasants (Berman, 1983; Cresswell, 2013; Sassen, 2008). Since the end of the nineteenth century, nation-states have replaced cities as the spatial units of citizenship by attaching the membership, rights and identity of a citizen to a modern nation (Holston and Appadurai, 2003).

In recent years, however, driven by the global flows, cities are 'once again becoming an important site for the production of the citizen' (Cresswell, 2013, p. 109). For example, some researchers have pointed out that increasing transnational flows of migration, ideas, images, capitals and cultures associate urban citizenship with hybridity and mobilities and national citizenship with the notions of purity, the rural and immobilities (Holston and Appadurai, 2003; Sassen, 2001; Urry, 2012). As cities are involved in wider global networks, there is 'a deeper wedge between national space and its urban centers' (Holston and Appadurai 2003, p. 18), and a 'disjuncture' between the spaces of citizenship as nation-based legal membership and daily urban life in transnational networks (Smith and Guarnizo, 2009). Especially in the world's major cities, the

reterritorialisation of global flows makes the city as a heterogeneous lived space in which urban residents have diverse cultural and social identities and rights attached to membership in different nation-states.

Due to the disconnectedness of urban citizenship from the national context, scholars suggest a devolution analysis of citizenship from nation-states to cities (Holston, 1999; Sassen, 2009). Urban geographers further point out that cities are not only sites tied to transnational networks, but also places that engender transnational mobilities by attracting migrants from other parts of the world (Smith and Guarnizo, 2009, p. 161). According to Smith and Guarnizo (2009), economic growth and global involvement have replaced the enhancement of citizens' welfare and become the main goal of city development. City governments thus devise an array of projects to attract global investment, capital and talents (see a similar argument in Holston, 1999; Ong, 2011). While making policies bypassing regimes of national citizenship to draw professionals, city governments expel low-income populations from city centres and new developing zones (Purcell, 2003; Massey, 2007; Smith and Guarnizo, 2009). Hence, at the heart of the discussion of urban citizenship is 'the right to the city'.

The argument of 'the right to the city' is a response to the reconstruction of urban citizenship resulting from 'global mobility, the neoliberal restructuring of the global economy, and the rescaling of the state' (Smith and Guarnizo, 2009, p. 615; also see in Isin, Wood and Wood, 1999; Purcell, 2003; Binnie *et al*., 2006). Proposed by French philosopher Lefebvre, the concept of 'the right to the city' refers to 'a superior form of rights: the right to freedom, to individualization and socialization, to habitat and to inhabit' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 173). Urban citizenship then becomes a privileged

membership and 'to exclude the urban from groups, classes, individuals, is also to exclude them from civilization, if from not society itself' (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 195). Lefebvre's statement on the right to the city and social exclusion thus directs research focus to classes. For example, defining 'cosmopolitan citizenship' as a new membership of global professional classes, Isin and Wood (1999, p. 103) conceive urban spaces as sites of social reproduction. Based on such observations, Isin and Wood believe that:

> *To constitute the global city as a field of citizenship means investigating these class conflicts and the changes they bring about in the content and extent of citizenship, and how they condition the city, which has become the political space where new rights of citizenship to the city are being negotiated* (1999, p. 103).

Hence, the concept 'the right to the city' not only opens up the possibilities to consider urban citizenship as the status 'of local citizenship that is based on residence and disconnected from nationality' (Bauböck, 2003, p. 139) but also calls for research attention to be paid to social inequalities (re)produced by urban citizenship.

The concept of urban citizenship also catches great research attention of scholars interested in Chinese citizenship and the rights of Chinese urban migrants. The idea of citizenship was first introduced to China in the 18th century along with the influence of western countries and translated into Chinese in multiple ways:

> *guomin (national), gongmin (state membership), shimin (city people) and renmin (people as distinguished from the class enemies in communist China)* (Ho, 2011, p. 7).

While citizenship is a terminology with each term's connotation and usage differing in the Chinese context, there are two inter-related research focuses: social citizenship looking at localised rights and membership and cultural citizenship exploring the migration experience of marginalised groups. The *hukou* system is a fundamental part of social citizenship because it classifies Chinese people into two statuses -- urban *hukou* holders and rural *hukou* holders (Cheng and Selden, 1994; Fan, 2008; Chan, 2009). As a citizen's rights are closely interlocked with where their *hukou* is registered, conventional literature focuses on the discussion of Chinese social citizenship by looking at the social exclusion and deprivation of rights experienced by the rural *hukou* holders in cities (Solinger, 1999b; Li, Li and Chen, 2010; Wu, 2010; Zhang and Wang, 2010; Chan, 2018). For example, Zhang (2002a, p. 313) argues that the *hukou* system 'divides national space into two hierarchically ordered parts: the city and the countryside' and classifies Chinese citizens into 'urban residents' and 'rural residents'. Zhang (2002) uses the term 'urban citizenship' to refer to a set of rights attached to urban *hukou*, including state-subsidised medical care, housing, education for children and so on. I will discuss how *hukou* regulates migration in China in more detail in Section 6.1.

The exclusion experienced by rural-to-urban migrants is also reflected in studies on cultural citizenship. In the literature on Chinese cultural citizenship, the division between rural citizenship and urban citizenship is due to not only the *hukou* system but also the *suzhi* discourse. Usually glossed as quality, *suzhi* is a discourse central to and used in multiple ways of contemporary China governance, for example, '*renkou suzhi*' (the national population quality) in Birth Control propaganda and '*suzhi jiaoyu*' (education for quality) (Kipnis, 2006). Though *suzhi* has different usages in different contexts, it is

agreed by scholars that reference to *suzhi* justifies the hierarchies between rural citizenship and urban citizenship, as it marginalises rural citizens as citizens of lower *suzhi* than urban citizens (Fong and Murphy, 2006; Kipnis, 2006; Jacka, 2009).

I argue that two prominent gaps within the literature on Chinese *citizenship* studies exist[11]. First, while scholars have criticised the methodological nationalism in the analysis of citizenship (Kymlicka, 2001; Nagel and Staeheli, 2004; Staeheli and Nagel, 2006; Maas, 2013; Castles and Davidson, 2020), literature on Chinese citizenship is still predominately limited by national borders and seldom considers the influence of broader geographical relations, for example, the global impact on domestic citizenship. This thesis thus calls for research on how transnational flows of migration influence domestic citizenship and governance in China (Ellis, 2006). Second, scholarship highlights the division of rural-urban citizenship but ignores i*nter-city differences* in Chinese citizenship. Recent years have witnessed the devolution of the *hukou* system, as it is now the local municipal governments that decide the *hukou* application requirement. The value of *hukou* is stratified in accordance with location, with the rural areas at the bottom, and the first-tier[12] cities at the top (Hao and Tang, 2018). This hierarchy also indicates the level of difficulty of having *hukou* in the first-tier cities for domestic migrants, and different cities have different policies of issuing *hukou* to migrants (Liang and Ma, 2004; Wang, 2005a; Tao, 2008). Research has, to date, failed to consider how the localised *hukou* system impacts migrants differently in different cities.

[11] I review literature written in both in English and Chinese.
[12] In China, cities are classified into different tiers according to their population sizes and economic performance. Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou are four cities regarded as first-tier cities. See a detailed introduction to Chinese cities in Section 3.2.

Based on those gaps, this study proposes the concept of *cityzenship* to analyse the inter-city difference of urban citizenship and how global forces impact domestic urban migration and urban citizenship. In addition, based on the ontological discussion of cities in subsection 2.2.2, I argue that stressing the importance of global, transnational, regional and local lenses in citizenship studies does not argue for an analysis of *cityzenship* in a world without national borders, 'the demise of the nation-state' or the 'insignificance of national rules, practices and traditions' (Wood and Black, 2018, p. 188). For example, while migration flows increase at a global level, nation-states are still using citizenship to regulate migration, either by 'restricting or excluding' migrants who are assumed to be 'a risk to the cohesiveness and safety of the state' or limiting 'the scope of existing citizenship rights in the name of that state' (Wood and Black, 2018, p. 188; also see similar discussion in Holston and Appadurai, 2003). So as cities are sites where multiscalar power relations assemble, interconnect and negotiate, the analysis of returnees' *cityzenship* also requires a multiscalar lens.

2.3 Theoretical framework: *cityzenship*

In this thesis, I use the theoretical concept of *cityzenship* as the framework to situate the analysis of the return migration of overseas Chinese students in the three megacities. Based on the theoretical debated presented, this thesis stresses three aspects in the analysis of returnees' *cityzenship*:

1. Multiscalar and sensitive to interconnections of diverse power relations: ontologically framing cities as assembled networks of power relations both within and stretching across city territories, the concept of *cityzenship* requires multiscalar thinking of

memberships, identities and rights. In addition, it is also necessary to focus on how multiscalar networked power relations are connected and mutually influenced. Thus, this thesis emphasises the connection and interrelation of memberships, rights and identities attached to multiscalar networks.

2. Multisited: this thesis further proposes a multisited analysis of *cityzenship*. This is because each megacity has distinctive localised and historical urban contexts as the character of the city itself. Thus, the concept of cityzenship proposes to root the analysis of membership, identities and rights of migrants in localised urban contexts and pays attention to the inter-city differences.

3. Human-centred: my approach starts from a close examination of everyday embodied experience to investigate the dialectical relationship between practices and the (re)production of space. The perspective of embodiment regards participants as cross-border bearers of genders, classes, races, nationalities and knowledge. This perspective implies discussing the identities and rights of *cityzens* in their mundane practices and perceptions.

In what follows, I outline how the theoretical framework of *cityzenship* provides valuable insights into the analysis of the migration experienced by transnational Chinese students to the three megacities.

First, concurring with the argument that identity is situational, temporal, multiple and negotiable as stated in the previous section (McNay, 2004; Cresswell, 2006; Adey, 2017), this thesis illustrates returnees' *cityzenship* as multidimensional and plural

identities. Focusing the research attention on returnees' everyday life, this thesis exemplifies how the lens of embodied practice is a useful analytical approach to examining returnees' identities. For example, returnees' practices of identities are embodied with global geographical knowledge and imagination of the developed world, national discourses such as the *suzhi* discourse, and different urban imaginations promoted by the different municipal governments (Chapter 4). This thesis also emphasises the importance of class in structuring social actors' embodied practice by drawing on Bourdieu's practice theory (1990). Looking at returnees' mundane consumption practices in returnees' everyday city life, this thesis also demonstrates how returnees practice *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity (Chapter 5). *Cityzenship* also refers to a modern identity structured by a discourse of modernity characterised by child-centred familism (Chapter 7).

Second, the practice-oriented perspective also helps this thesis consider *cityzenship* through a process of exercise of rights (see similar arguments made by Isin, 2008, 2009; Staeheli, 2011; Isin and Nielsen, 2013; Wood and Black, 2018; Lemanski, 2020). As discussed in the previous section, urban geographers consider the rights attached to urban citizenship, or 'the right to the city', as privileged rights: rights to use the urban space and rights to participate in the decision-making processes that produce the city (Purcell, 2002, 2003). In China, the 'rights to the city' and the practices of urban rights are closely interlocked with the localised *hukou* system. This thesis investigates returnees' application of *hukou* as a way of accessing to localised urban rights. Drawing on Bourdieu's capital theory (2018b), this thesis elaborate how transnational education is institutionalised by the *hukou* system as cultural capital which can be converted into institutionalised social rights (Chapter 6). Moreover, examining returnees' interpretation

and practices of rights attached to *hukou*, this thesis also illustrates how *cityzenship* is culturally structured, as the rights attached to the *hukou* system are practised as family-oriented rights.

Third, the poststructural ontology of cities and scales is also key to understanding returnees' *cityzenship* as memberships attached to different communities at multiple geographical scales. For example, to participants, being a resident in megacities in China means attaining the membership of a domestic metropolis and the membership of the developed world at the same time (Chapter 4). Returnees' multiscalar memberships echoes Turner's (1990) claim that different forms of membership do not mutually exclude but co-exit, overlap and intersect in a citizen's identity. The network thinking of cities informs the analysis of *cityzenship* as multiscalar memberships. Through the network lens, megacities are localised assemblages where multiscalar networks are concentrated, unfolded and interconnected, within or stretching over urban space. Thus, as returnees live in megacities, they live in diverse forms of networks. Hence, the poststructural ontology of cities explains why *cityzenship* is not merely a legal status conferred by the civic government but also 'an ensemble of different forms of belonging' (Isin and Wood, 1999, p. 21). Returnees' multiscalar membership illustrates Wood and Black's (2018, p. 187) statement that 'citizenship is layered: that is, it operates simultaneously at local, regional, nation-state and global levels, thus requiring more global, cosmopolitan and transnational conceptions' (see similar arguments in Osler and Starkey, 2005; Beck, 2007; Heater, 2013). As Cresswell (2013) argues:

> *The citizen, I argue, is a legal, cultural, and social figure who stands at the intersection of three geographical imaginations – the imaginary of a rooted and*

> *sedentary nation with clear and unambiguous boundaries, the imaginary of a dense and heterogeneous city, and the imaginary of free mobility in an interconnected world* (p. 105).

Connecting the discussion of megacities and returnees' multiscalar memberships, locally-reproduced cosmopolitan identities and rights as city-based institutionalised and cultured social welfare, the concept of *cityzenship* further explains how transnational education mobilities (re)produce social and geographical inequalities. I use Lefebvre's philosophy on space (1991) to illustrate this argument. Lefebvre conceptualises space as the product of three inter-related processes: 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation'. 'Spatial practices' structure everyday reality and include patterned routine networks of material, social practice and interaction, so it is perceived space. 'Representations of space' refer to conceived space in which ideology, knowledge, and power are embedded. Representations of space dominate the society and play a 'substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42) because they are 'tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Representational spaces, or spaces of representation, are lived space, experienced and felt by its 'inhabitants' through complex symbols and images overlaying the physical space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). It is felt and 'has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42). Believing everyday life to be the primary site that internalises three processes, Lefebvre's spatial triad thus conveys a sense of social embodiment and inhuman embeddedness in the production of space.

Applying Lefebvre's spatial theories to the transnational education mobilities of Chinese students, this thesis shows how transnational education (re)produces domestic social and geographical inequalities. Based on a topological analysis of *cityzenship*, this thesis found that participants' decisions of return and choices of megacities are influenced by their perception of the three megacities as developed cities in developing countries. I argue that these representations of megacities are shaped by geographical knowledge dividing the world into developed countries and developing countries, national discourses such as the *suzhi* discourse, urban images promoted by municipal governments and so on. According to Lefebvre's spatial theory, these knowledges dominate society and produce urban space. Thus, on the one hand, globalised capital and culture, national discourses and development plans produce megacities as physical sites where global capital, transnational flows of ideas, commodities and people converge. In other words, power relations create a lived space, such as CBDs, shopping malls and development areas in megacities, for returnees to live a cosmopolitan life. On the other hand, transnational Chinese students, as social actors embodied with discourses, knowledge and capitals, reproduce urban space through their 'spatial practices'. For example, returnees' returning to megacities, attaining local *hukou*, purchase of residential properties with family help and everyday consumption are all 'spatial practices' reproducing unequal power relations between megacities and other parts of China.

Therefore, while Deleuze's ontology conceives space as assembled networks of relations, Lefebvre's theory also emphasises the fluid and relational dimension of space but places people and everyday lived space at the centre of discussion (Gottdiener,

1993). His theory of 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'space of representations' thus explains the forming and sustaining of spatial networks. As said by Merrifield (2000), Lefebvre's philosophy on space stresses the dialectical nature of space and affirms a humanist analysis of it. Crang and Thrift (2000, p. 22) comment on Lefebvre's spatial theory, stating that it brings together 'a mobile synthesis', as his spatial triad 'convey[s] a quality of experience which arises out of the conglomeration of different spaces and times, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in discord, but always mobile— encountering—alive, to be found in modern societies'. Connecting the spatial theories of both Deleuze and Lefebvre, the concept of *cityzenship* requires multiscalar thinking of returnees' membership, rights and identities on the one hand, and relates practices of *cityzenship* to the production and reproduction of urban space on the other hand.

2.4 Conclusion

In Section 2.1, I review the literature on transnationalism, transnational migration and citizenship. The first two subsections illustrate how poststructural perspectives on space and place are valuable to understand cross-border migration in the existing scholarship. The first subsection reviews how geographers theorise transnationalism as networked relations continuously (re)produced by cross-border (im)mobilities and connections. This subsection then looks at how scholarship uses the idea of transnational education to draw research attention to the topology of cross-border educational activities. Scholars theorise transnational education as systems produced and sustained by various actors, including students, academics, institutions, governments and knowledges, and have produced fruitful work to exemplify the complexities of the spatialities of transnational

education (Waters and Leung, forthcoming). Transnational students are then embodied social actors moving in the educational networks, whose (im)mobilities, in turn, reproduce the networks. Based on the network thinking of transnational space and activities, the second subsection reviews why and how the existing literature situates the analysis of transnationalism at the city level. Explaining how the concept of scale is deployed in this thesis, this subsection illustrates why it is both necessary and possible to examine multiscalar migration and membership at the city-level of analysis. The third subsection considers why the concept of citizenship is useful to analyse migration happening at different geographical levels. Reviewing existing scholarship on the citizenship of Chinese urban migrants, this subsection identifies the research gaps in the conventional literature on Chinese migration and proposes to draw research focus on the inter-city differences among Chinese cities and the influence of transnational migration on domestic citizenship.

Based on the theoretical review of transnationalism, cities, migration and citizenship, the second half of this chapter demonstrates how existing theoretical debates help analyse returnees' *cityzenship* in everyday life in the process of transnational education (im)mobilities and after-return life in megacities. In other words, this section outlines how the existing literature offers main theoretical underpinnings in understanding the returnees' *cityzenship* as membership attached to multiscalar communities, as embodied and practised identities and as class-based rights, as found during fieldwork. This section concludes by showing how Lefebvre's theory on the production of space (1991) provides valuable insights into the interplay of returnees' pursuit and practice of *cityzenship* and the (re)production of domestic socio-spatial inequalities.

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This thesis utilises a multisited ethnographic study to explore the *cityzenship* of transnational Chinese student returnees (used interchangeably with the term 'returnees'). Regarding 'ethnography as a way of being, seeing, thinking and writing' (Mills and Morton, 2013, p. 3), this chapter proceeds to explain the methodological route from selection of the three megacities as fieldwork sites to fieldwork practices and to post-fieldwork analysis and writing.

This chapter first explains the choice of three cities in China: Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai as the sites to study returnees' *cityzenship*. Section 3.2 begins with the justification of a multisited study of *cityzenship*. While Classical anthropological ethnographies tend to confine the observation and description of cultured practices to a single site, more recently, multisited ethnography has emerged as a way to trace complex globalised phenomena (Marcus, 1995). Following the return flows of transnational Chinese students, I chose Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen as ethnographic sites because they are the top three cities receiving returnees in China (Center for China & Globalization, 2019). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, ontologically conceiving each city as a distinctive assemblage of networks of power relations, this thesis grounds the discussion of returnees' embodied practices in the localised urban contexts. This section then draws attention to the urban contexts of each city. While all the three

megacities share a range of similarities, for example all being first-tier cities in China, they differ in terms of climates, histories, cultural contexts, social and economic structures.

Section 3.3 focuses on how I conducted the ethnographic fieldwork. First, I returned to China for a year and lived in each city for at least three consecutive months to observe the everyday life of transnational Chinese student returnees. In addition, formal in-depth interviews were also an integral part of my data collection. In interviews, I asked returnees about their transnational education mobilities and their everyday city life after their return. I also used go-along interviews as an ethnographic research tool. In this section, I discuss how a combination of research tools enabled this thesis to generate grounded accounts of returnees' *cityzenship*. In this section, I also devote considerable space to my reflections on my identity as an 'insider'. I did my master's degree in a UK university, and participants frequently regarded me as one of them -- an overseas student. In addition, like my participants, I am not local to any of the three cities. My hometown is a second-tier city in China, and before my fieldwork, I had never lived in Beijing and Shanghai. In this section, I also elaborate on difficulties I encountered during fieldwork and how I dealt with them.

Section 3.4 discusses the process of post-fieldwork analysis of data collected. In this section, I discuss how I weaved my fieldwork data into a thesis. I emphasise the importance of an initial analysis of the data during the fieldwork and systematic analysis in post-fieldwork writing. I coded the fieldwork notes and used narrative analysis to analyse formal interviews and discourse analysis to analyse supplementary governmental documents.

3.2 A multisited study

In this section, I first explain why I chose a multisited study to explore returnees' *cityzenship*. In the second and third subsections, I focus on the discussion of the context of Chinese cities and provide basic information about Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

3.2.1 Justification for a multisited study

Falzon (2009, p. 1) defines ethnography as an eclectic mode of methodology which 'privileges an engaged, contextually rich and nuanced type of qualitative social research'. Emphasising the complexity of social relations, researchers conducting ethnographic research collect unstructured data through paying attention to daily interactions (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Ethnographers believe that data are produced in 'thick interaction between researcher/s and researched' (Falzon, 2009, p. 1). This perspective entails the situational combination of field data collection methods, including participant observation (to live in the same way as the 'natives'), note-taking, interviews, audio/visual recording and so on. Classical ethnographies usually frame the research in a specific bounded space and conceive the site of study as a container of localised social relations (Massey, 2003). Recent poststructural network thinking about social relations, as discussed in Chapter 2, breaks the dichotomy between the local and the broader social, cultural, economic and political processes. To be more specific, researchers now not only consider the embeddedness of broader networked relations in the local phenomenon, but also examine roles played by sites as key nodes in the (re)production of cross-boundary networks of relations (Marcus,

1995; Falzon, 2009). Ethnographers thus design research by following people across different places, which usually includes spatially dispersed field sites. This thesis followed the migration routes of transnational Chinese student returnees and chose Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, the top three recipients of student returnees, as the research sites. Moreover, a multisited ethnographic study of *cityzenship* also reflects my ontological stance that space is 'the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny', as discussed in Chapter 2 (Massey, 2005, p. 9). While all three cities share a range of similarities, for example ranked first-tier cities, each city has distinctive urban features. Therefore, a multisited ethnographic study also enables a contextualised analysis of *cityzenship*.

The multisited analysis enables me to investigate returnees' contemporaneous migration and grasp the complexities of their *cityzenship*, for example how the inter-city differences (different geographical locations, historical contexts, economic structures and *hukou* as the localised institution) influence their choice of the city and after-return life in the city. But it should be noted that a multisited research and an emphasises on the localised urban contexts do not mean that this thesis conducts a comparative analysis of returnees' *cityzenship*. In other words, this thesis does not explicitly compare the similarities or differences of the three megacities and returnees' *cityzenship* in three cities. As discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis regards both the megacities and returnees' *cityzenship* as the processes of becoming rather than the entities which can be compared. Moreover, the goal of conducting a multisited ethnography is to examine how the three megacities sustain the transnational education network. Although, as shown in the empirical chapters, the idea of 'comparative' reflects from the empirical chapters, for example, returnees' explanation of their choices of megacities by drawing comparisons

of their hometowns, the studying countries and the megacities and even among the three megacities, the aim of elucidating the inter-places differences observed in returnees' words is to elaborate on the spatialities of transnational education. According to Simmons and Smith (2019), comparisons are valuable as they allow researchers to see specific contexts in larger entities by considering how a social phenomenon might occur differently in different places. Accordingly, comparisons in this thesis are made by attending to the complexities of transnational social processes.

3.2.2 China's cities

In China, the discussion of cities and urbanisation is closely interlocked with the national projects of modernisation and the discourse of national revival (Lu, 2006). As stated by Wu (2007, p. 3), 'Chinese cities are the country's engine of economic growth'. Existing literature usually interprets China's rapid urbanisation as the result of programs planned by the state with an enduring emphasis on economic growth. For example, according to Yusuf and Saich (2008), the factors contributing to China's rapid pace of urbanisation include the state's channelling of resources to cities, Chinese municipalities' autonomy and authority to introduce and implement localised policies, and the *hukou* system as the city-level control over the flow of migrants (also see Wu, 1997; Solinger, 1999; Zhang, 2001; Friedmann, 2005; Gaubatz, 2005). China's urban geography has been forcefully transformed in the process of the country's urbanisation and modernisation. There are four first-tier cities in China: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen[13], many other large cities such as Chongqing, Wuhan, Chengdu, Suzhou and Nanjing. First-tier cities are the beneficiaries of China's urbanisation and represent the most developed areas in

[13] There are no official government documents which recognise or provide official definition of the tier system in China. However, various media publications frequently refer to by the tier system of cities.

the country (Fan and Sun, 2008; Yusuf and Saich, 2008; Miller, 2012; Chan, 2013). They have witnessed a rise of new urban spaces, such as central business areas (CBD), development zones and high-tech parks, signature architecture buildings, shopping malls, luxury residential enclaves (Gaubatz, 2005; Wu, 2005; F. Wu, 2007). As these cities continue to absorb inflows of investments, capitals and migrants from other parts of China, the imbalanced regional development has been deepened (Fan, 1997; Fan and Sun, 2008; Wei, 2013). At the same time, some researchers also notice an uneven development within first-tier cities and large cities, for example the existence of urban villages as the 'quasi-slum' areas and 'deteriorated neighborhoods' which 'accommodate millions of floating populations[14]' (Wu, 2007, p. 4).

In recent years, while first-tier cities are still leading the country's economic growth, domestic population flows have begun to shift. First, the country's labour force, especially migrant workers, has returned from the eastern coastal regions to the central and western regions. For example, in the year 2012, instead of traveling to first-tier or coastal cities, nearly two-thirds of all migrant workers found jobs in inland provincial capitals, such as Chengdu, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Zhengzhou (Miller, 2012). Miller (2012) explains this transition as a result of the economic development of inland cities and migrants' preference for cities close to their hometowns. The Migrant Population Service Centre of the National Health Commission (2018) interprets the transition as optimised allocation of human capital among regions. This reverse flow of internal migration, however, shows a striking contrast with the concentration of the transnational return migration of overseas students in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen (Center for China&Globalization, 2018, 2019). Second, the scale of the floating population has also

[14] Floating population in China refers primarily to migrants in cities without the local hukou (Liang, Li and Ma, 2014).

been declining. According to the Migrant Population Service Centre of the National Health Commission (2018): compared with 2015, the size of the floating population nationwide decreased by 1.71 million, in 2016, and it continued to decrease by 820,000 in 2017. Therefore, returnees' migration to megacities is worthy of study.

3.2.3 Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen

While all the three cities are first-tier cities, constituting large metropolitan economic and political centres in China, with over ten million inhabitants, each city has distinctive historical and geographical features. This subsection briefly introduces three cities.

Beijing is the capital of China. It is located in Northern China with an administrative area of 16,410.5 km and over 21 million residents. Beijing together with Hubei Province and Tianjin forms the Jingjinji megalopolis. As an ancient capital of China, the centre of Beijing is Tian'anmen Square and the Forbidden City, and its urban geography spreads out in concentric ring roads. In 2017, the Chinese government implemented the policy of population controls for Beijing as a way to solve the 'big city disease', including air pollution, traffic congestion and shortages of education and medical services. Low-end industries and low-income people were removed from the city[15]. Since the implementation of this policy, according to the *Beijing Population Blue Book Beijing Population Development Research Report* (Beijing Government, 2019), the permanent migrant population in Beijing has been declining: from 8.226 million in 2015, to 7.64 million in 2018.

[15] See a discussion of the 'campaign' in Subsection 6.3.1.

Shanghai is a direct-administered municipality, which is located on Eastern China, with a population of 24.87 million in 2020 (China Population Cencus, 2021). Shanghai was originally a fishing village and forced open to European trade as a treaty port in 1842 after the First Opium War. As the French Concession and International Settlement were subsequently established in Shanghai, the city flourished and became a primary commercial and financial centre of Asia in the 1930s. Since the 1990s, Shanghai has witnessed an intense redevelopment and an increase of finance and foreign investment. Throughout the city, heritage architectures, including villas in the French Concession, churches, hotels and Banks alongside the Huangpu River, are preserved and restored, conveying the nostalgia for the 'urban golden age' in the 1930s. As Abbas (2000, p. 780) formulates, the city is 'not Back to the Future, but Forward to the Past'. To be a global city, in addition to a recall of its glory of the past, Shanghai also hosts high-rise office blocks, tech parks and modern architecture. Like Beijing, Shanghai receives a huge number of migrants. There are 10.48 million permanent residents migrating from other provinces and cities, accounting for 42.1% of the city's permanent population (China Population Census, 2021).

Shenzhen is a city of Guangzhou province, bordering Hong Kong. The city is famous for its miracle of modernization, economic prosperity and industrial productivity. Shenzhen is China's first special economic zone, established in 1980. Compared to the planned economy elsewhere in China at that time, special economic zones (SEZs) are areas introducing more flexible economic policies and market-oriented business and trade laws to attract foreign and domestic investment, business and technology. In SEZs, local governments can use localised policies to boost the local economy without the authorisation of the central government, such as tax incentives (Farole and Akinci, 2011;

Wang, 2013). As one of the first SEZs, Shenzhen soon attracted domestic and foreign investment and rapidly expanded its light and consumer-goods industries. Shenzhen also attracted a large inflow of population, as the permanent residents grew from 0.35 million in 1982 to 17.56 million in 2020 (China Population Census, 2021). Accompanying the population boom, from 1979 to 2017, Shenzhen has experienced a 3400% urban expansion by city size/area (Yu *et al*., 2019).

Therefore, while the three megacities share a range of similarities in terms of demographic features and economic importance in China, they also differ in geographical and historical contexts. In this thesis, I also paid attention to how the similarities and differences of each city shape returnees' experience and interpretation of *cityzenship*.

3.3 Producing data

This study deploys qualitative mixed methods to examine returnees' *cityzenship*. As stated by Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015, p. 8), qualitative methods are concerned with 'understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it' (also see Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In existing literature on transnational education (im)mobilities, the qualitative methodology entails a turn from a statistic-oriented way of analysing the flows of student migrations towards a more humanistic account of students' everyday practices, and sociality and materiality of everyday life, including gendered identity, social networks, imaginations, feelings, daily social interactions and all other ways of embodiment of the students (for example, Waters, 2007; Brooks and Waters, 2011, 2017; Beech, 2014; Ho, 2018; Lee, 2020). In

total, I spent twelve months in the field, from September 2018 to August 2019, and lived in each city for at least three consecutive months to collect data. In the fieldwork, the methods I employed included participant observation, informal conversations, in-depth interviews and go-along interviews. These methods allow me to explore returnees' embodied practices and their interpretations in mundane everyday lives and uncover the power relations and social processes embedded in their migration and *cityzenship*. The first subsection elaborates the ethnographic fieldwork and the second subsection focus on the formal in-depth interviews.

3.3.1 Ethnographic fieldwork

As said by Firth (1984, p. 215) that by 'the greater part of ethnographic fieldwork is usually reckoned to comprise of observations of actual actions and utterances which accompany them', I undertook ethnography to study returnees' everyday practices, interpretations and feelings of *cityzenship*. In this subsection, I detail how I used a set of methods to examine the everyday life of returnees during fieldwork.

Beijing was the first site where I stayed from September to December 2018. Before this, I had never lived in Beijing, or more preciously, it was the first time I lived in the north part of China. I shared a flat with other three roommates. My friend introduced this shared flat to me as other three roommates were all her friends. At that time, she was about to graduate from a UK university and planned to find a job in Beijing after graduation. One week before I left Beijing, she had returned from the UK and lived with me for a week. From January to April 2019 I stayed in Shenzhen and shared a flat with a friend who graduated from a Hong Kong university. I arrived in Shanghai in May 2019 and lived in the city for four months. I rented a room in a shared flat via an App

developed by a real estate company. During fieldwork, I found that a lot of participants used an App to rent a room in a shared flat. So, when I planned my trip to Shanghai, I rented a room in a shared flat via the App. Before I moved into the flat, there had been three flatmates. One of them happened to be an overseas returnee, who had studied in Korea for two years. Living with overseas returnees enabled me to observe their everyday practices and feelings, and to have frequent informal conversations. In addition to my flatmates, I also had several key informants in each city, with whom I met on a frequent basis. I had both formal interviews and informal conversations with them, visited their offices and homes. Together we tried out restaurants and bars and visited theme parks, galleries, art exhibitions, musicals and so on. In a word, during fieldwork, I imbricated myself in the 'field' (Firth, 1984; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011; Lune and Berg, 2017).

These key informants also introduced me to their friends and colleagues who met my selection criteria to participate in my research. To begin with, the overseas returnees selected for this study have at least completed an overseas undergraduate/postgraduate taught/research program. Second, as this thesis aims to investigate the contemporaneous internal-urban migration experienced by overseas student returnees, I recruited participants whose *hukou* was not registered in the chosen megacity at the time of return. Third, I also tried to ensure gender balance and diversity in age, educational levels, majors, studying countries, years staying aboard and family backgrounds to ensure wide representation within the sample. Participants recruited in my research further introduced me to more returnees. Thus, personal contacts and the snowballing technique were my main sampling methods during fieldwork. The concept of purposive sampling informs this selected focus, as this thesis does not aim to generate a representative case of the

whole population but to build an information-rich sample that can help answer the research question (Patton, 1990). The purposive sampling thus enabled me to investigate a variety of student practices and interpretations to enrich my ethnographic analysis of migration and *cityzenship* in the everyday situated urban context.

However, during fieldwork, many participants told me that they felt they were not representative when I contacted them. They showed their concerns about validity of their stories and worried that they could not help me. Some of them told me that they were not a typical returnee, some told me that their overseas studying experiences were very plain, and some participants even asked me why I did not use big data and how my data could be valid and robust if only collected from interview and observation. Every time I encountered such concerns, I would explain that I was conducting a *qualitative study* and the main purpose of this study was not to generalise from their experiences. I always explained the validity of my research by way of analogy. For example, if we want to show the majesty of the mountain, we can measure the height, altitudes and extension of the mountain; we can also express its majesty by drawing a picture, in which there are mountains with waterfalls, running rivers, clouds covering the mountainsides and the sun hanging on peak. Both qualitative and quantitative methods describe the majesty of the mountain, but different methods represent different methodologies. Unlike the quantitative research emphasising on generalisation of data, qualitative research can show the complexities of the society on the one hand, and to trace (both backward and forward) how different relations (for example ideologies, cultures, political powers and economic structures) form and is forming the complexities.

During fieldwork, I immersed myself in returnees' lives for an extended period of time and observed their everyday activities and their interactions with friends, colleagues and family members, and listened to their conversations with others and with me. First, I used participant observation '(1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation, and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation' (Spradley, 2016, p. 54). I paid attention to returnees' consumption of food, clothes and services, their working and living location and environment, ways of social networking, the frequency of business travels and overtime work and so on. Second, I had both informal conversations and formal in-depth recorded interviews with participants. In informal conversations, I could grasp situated accounts made by participants, as well as their memories, beliefs, fears, worries and expectations. Third, I also collected data by 'walking around'. It was not only a way to familiarise myself with the cities but also a useful method to immerse myself in returnees' everyday life in megacities. For example, every time the participants introduced me to places they liked, such as parks, landmark buildings, places of interest in the city, and even places they disliked, such as urban villages and packed subway stations during rush hours, I would pay a visit to those places. I also tried the food they mentioned and the bars they recommended (Chapter 5). As ethnography is an embodied practice, in this way, I internalised the 'observed' meanings, feelings and expectations of *cityzenship* (Mills and Morton, 2013).

My backgrounds sometimes made me an 'insider' in my research. I came from a second-tier city in China, I used to work in Shenzhen and had studied for a master's degree in a UK university. As an insider, my personal relationships were embedded in the field. In fieldwork, my identity and experience allowed the participants to afford me a great deal of trust, and helped me conduct detailed conversations and collect rich data which could

not otherwise have been accessed. For example, I joined several online group chats which exclusively accepted overseas student returnees. In these group chats, individuals expressed and discussed nostalgia for their overseas student life and the pressure and loneliness of living in megacities away from home. This offered me a chance to access returnees' everyday lived experiences, expectations and worries, as well as their intra-group interactions[16]. In addition, I also found that I was a part of some participants' narratives; as in Taylor (2011, p. 9): 'the narrative of the researched and the researcher become entwined'. For example, some participants and I had studied in the same university and I was inextricably tied to their recall of overseas student life. A similar situation happened when I interviewed my previous colleague. Then my own retrospection and reflection became a part of data collection and interpretation, involving 'a degree of, or may even be called a type of, autoethnography' (Taylor, 2011, p. 9; also see Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Coffey, 2002; Chang, 2016; Reed-Danahay, 2021). In other words, as a transnational Chinese student, I was privy to the social and cultural phenomenon embedded in returnees' narratives. However, I should clarify that though I knew the group well, I kept reminding myself not to presuppose any responses, especially in interviews.

But, at some point, I was regarded as an 'outsider'. To participants, I was still an overseas student who had lived outside China for a long period of time. 'You haven't been in China for a long time, so you don't understand' was a typical statement emerging from participants' narratives. In this situation, I always encouraged participants to explain the recent changes they experienced in China. Second, to some participants, I was a self-funded student studying in the UK for both a master's and doctoral degree,

[16] Strictly following the CUREC 1A for social sciences and humanities, I did not used these data as the quotations cited in the thesis, but only as sources of inspirations for interview questions.

which made them assume I was from a relatively wealthy family background. Given the cost of studying abroad, the majority of participants *did* come from well-off families, with parents working as professionals, such as civil servants, teachers in public schools, doctors, and so forth. However, some participants came from less privileged family backgrounds. The class-related conversation usually took place when we talked about buying residential property (through parents' help) in first-tier cities, which was a huge financial burden to their parents (Chapter 7). Under such circumstances, I would briefly introduce my family background by telling them that I came from a 'typical' middle-class family with both parents working in governmental sectors and that studying abroad as a self-funded student was not an easy decision for my family. This 'practice of class matching between researcher and participant' helped me to collect data as an insider (Mellor *et al*., 2014, p. 146). As I will discuss in Chapter 7, it is very difficult for returnees to buy the flat on their own and usually they asked help from their parents. Then I asked questions focusing on reasons why they wanted to buy a flat, why their parents supported or planned to support it, and how their parents supported or planned to support it.

My 'outsider' status also emerged when I introduced myself as a doctoral student studying at the University of Oxford. Sometimes, I felt that participants regarded me as one who only did well in academic study but lacked working experience and social skills. To them, I was only a student, studying hard in an elite university, armed with theories and book knowledge learned in the ivory tower, ambitiously aiming to understand the complexity of society by asking several superficial questions. They used the word 'innocent' to describe the difference between the identity of students and the identity of workers/employed social members. To be clear, not all participants reacted in

this fashion. Under these circumstances, I would tell them that before I studied abroad I had worked for several years and my research interests derived from my working experiences. I made use of time to share with them how my previous working experiences and doctoral research integrated within this study. In the process of revealing my personal stories and my reflections, meaningful conversations emerged as we developed certain affinities in our interactions. I also expressed my gratitude towards their support for my research. After my explanation, they generally became more hospitable and cooperative.

Ethnography regards research relationships as social relationships, and interpersonal relationships between researchers and the researched, especially friendship, play an essential role in researchers' fieldwork (Mills and Morton, 2013; Taylor, 2011). In most cases, the research relationship between my participants and me was professional as our relationship was maintained by occasional meet-ups. During our meeting, to thank participants for their time and willingness of sharing their stories and feelings, I bought them drinks and paid for dinners. However, some of my key informants are my pre-existing friends, and the dilemma between chatting as a friend and researching as a researcher emerged from time to time (Hall, 2009). First, being a professional researcher meant that I followed the ethical commitments and responsibilities all the time. During our interactions, my friends introduced me to their colleagues, who sometimes told me some 'secret' things and complained about their work in the company. As a researcher, I have never and will never share with my friends any information that I heard from their colleagues. Second, another dilemma I experienced was that, as a researcher, I was cautious in asking favours from my friends, because helping me with my research might put them under some sort of pressure. Therefore, I constantly checked that my friends

felt comfortable with the research side of our relationship, and once I sensed any discomfort caused by the research, I would not continue to involve them in the research. Finally, as some participants knew each other, there were possibilities that my thesis might expose their identities. To ensure that my thesis meets the ethical standards, I sent the sentences quoted from their narratives to them via WeChat individually, a social network application, to make sure that I had their permission to use their stories and interpretations.

I recorded my observations and reflections in my field notes, which are a useful springboard for subsequent coding and theoretical elaboration of the data in the post-fieldwork analysis and writing. During fieldwork, I took copious notes, in which I wrote down details about places I went, and people I saw and talked with. I also used my cell phone to record photographic and video data (for example, pictures shown in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). In addition, I took notes of the initial analytic thoughts about what I observed and heard in fieldwork. To be more specific, apart from recording participants' activities and feelings, I also wrote down my personal interpretations of observed data, reflections of the mistakes I made, possible conversations between data collected and existing scholarship. This is because I believe that maintenance of a professional distance allowed 'adequate observation and recording of data' (Fetterman, 2019, p. 45). As said by Bryman (2016, p. 447): 'such notes (personal reflections and feelings) may be helpful for formulating a reflexive account of fieldwork'.

3.3.2 In-depth interviews

Interview data were collected by semi-structured interviews with returnees graduating from the United Kingdom, the United States, Korea, Australia, Germany, France, and

Hong Kong (30 participants in each city). The researcher also observed and lived with some of the participants, took photographs and field notes. All interviews were confidential and strictly followed the CUREC 1A guidance for social sciences and humanities. In total, 90 participants were involved in this study: 30 participants in each city. 72 participants were financially supported by their parents, and 16 participants had full/partial scholarships. Three participants had worked before studying abroad, and two of them were self-funded students. Before studying abroad, 89 participants were urban residents and had urban *hukou*, and only one participant came from a rural area and used to be a rural-*hukou* holder, which means the internal migration experienced by most participants is inter-city migration. Because the recruitment of participants largely depended on my personal network, the proportion of returnees who had studied in the UK was the highest.

City		**Beijing**	**Shenzhen**	**Shanghai**	**Total**
Number of participants		30	30	30	90
Number of new *hukou* holders[17]		18	20	24	62
Gender	Male	17	15	9	41
	Female	13	15	21	49
Educational level	bachelor	0	3	2	5
	master	25	20	24	69
	Doctoral	5	7	4	16
Hometown city level	First-tier city	0	2	0	2
	Second-tier city/ provincial capital	11	9	10	30
	Third/lower-tier city	19	19	20	58

[17] Till August 2019.

Country of study	UK	14	15	14	43
	US	6	3	5	14
	Canada	2	0	0	2
	Australia+ New Zealand	3	2	1	6
	Europe mainland	0	2	3	5
	Asia (Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Singapore, etc.)	5	8	7	20

Table 3.1 Description of Participants

A semi-structured interview was designed to unravel, to an extent, participants' migration and *cityzenship*. The interviews usually lasted for two hours and were divided into two parts. The first part was to encourage participants to narrate their biographies, how they made sense of transnational education mobilities and rationalised their mobilities in terms of career and future considerations. The second half focused on what *cityzenship* meant to them. For example, questions were asked to encourage participants to talk about motivation, experience, and reflection on studying overseas after the return, experiences of becoming and being residents in the landing cities, accounts of application (or not) of *hukou*, expectations, plans for the future, people and events influencing their actions, and the accounts of their decisions and so on (see the interview questions in Appendix I. Most participants participated in a one-off interview, while some participants talked with me more than once. The reason for multiple interviews was participants' willingness to share their daily work and life, such as difficulties encountered at work, promotions, getting married, and so on.

In addition, I also paid attention to the role that 'places' and urban landscapes played in influencing the embodied practices and perceptions. This research method resonates with the ontological framing of space in this thesis discussed in Chapter 2, which recognises space and places as integral to social experiences. As Casey (2000, 2001) suggests, through the bodily encounters of places and the simultaneous embodiment of traces of places, for example, inhabitation and dwelling, the person–place relationship is then developed. Over time, meanings and memories are embedded in places, a process which links the personal memory and identity and places (Halbwachs, 1992; Crang and Travlou, 2001). Agreeing with these arguments, in fieldwork, I not only visited places which frequently emerged from returnees' description of their daily activities, such as cafés and restaurants, but also conducted go-along interviews, more particularly talking whilst walking, to 'harness the relationship between humans and place to uncover meanings and understandings of the life world' (Anderson, 2004, p. 255). According to Kusenbach (2003, p. 455), go-along interviews help researchers access 'the transcendent and reflexive aspects of lived experience in situ' (see a similar argument made by Evans and Jones, 2011). By interviewing whilst walking, I investigated how the subtle and complex meanings embedded in places and how meaningful places influenced returnees' everyday experiences and practices.

3.4 Analysis and writing

In this section, I discuss how I weaved my fieldwork data into a thesis through 'a process of reviewing, summarizing, cross-checking, looking for patterns, and drawing conclusions' (Musante and DeWalt, 2010, p. 179; also see LeCompte and Schensul,

1999; Bernard, Wutich and Ryan, 2016). Rather than exclusively depending on post-fieldwork data analysis, once I entered the field site, I began my analysis by developing preliminary interpretations of data from everyday observation, informal conversations, formal interviews, documentaries, and the process continued up to the post-fieldwork writing. As argued by LeCompte (2012, p. 4), ethnographic researchers enter the field with 'an initial set of research questions' and 'a conceptual model or diagram', 'develop and test initial interpretations of the data', stay 'alert for possible surprises', and 'modify their project continually during its entirety'. In what follows, I introduce a systemic combination of different analytical tools I used in the process of analysis and writing.

During fieldwork, I usually transcribed the recorded interviews as soon as I went home because I found that there were several benefits of doing this. First, before I began the fieldwork, I had realised that transcribing 90 interviews would be a huge post-fieldwork project. So, I decided to transcribe the recording once I finished an interview. Second, immediate transcription helped me identified questions I should have asked, but had failed to, during an interview. Therefore, I could ask the participant right away. Third, immediate transcription also reminded me my thoughts and participants' body languages and manners I had noticed but failed to write down during the interviews. I found that if I wrote too many notes while participants were narrating, some of them might be discouraged from talking. Listening to recordings jogged my memory of the details of the interviews and I could add the missing notes that I had not had time to write down in the interviews.

Fieldwork notes were key to the process of analysis and writing. As mentioned earlier in the previous section, I not only documented my fieldwork observations but also recorded

my reflections and preliminary analysis in my fieldwork notes. The immediate transcription enabled me to make connections between fieldwork notes and interviews. My fieldwork notes were divided into two parts. The first part was a fieldwork diary in which I recorded everyday observations, thoughts and reflections. The second part was a profile of each participant, in which I wrote down the interview location, basic information of the participants, brands of their clothes, favourite places and food, tones and manners, and primarily themes and analysis that I noticed while I transcribed the recorded interview. Since I did both transcription and coding manually, writing fieldwork notes and transcribing immediately after the interview helped me organise and categorise data. Therefore, fieldwork notes worked as the guidance for reading and locating the transcripts, connecting the preliminary themes, concepts and categories with narrative data collected.

My analysis of ethnographic informal conversations and transcribed interviews was largely informed by narrative analysis. As Cortazzi (2001, p. 394) proposes, 'a careful analysis of the topics, content, style, context and telling of narratives told by individuals or groups under ethnographic study should, in principle, give researchers access to tellers' understandings of the meanings of key events in their lives, communities or cultural contexts'. In addition, narrative can also be considered as the process of social performances and interactions, in which experiences are constructed and interpreted with others (Edwards, 1997). Thus, the narrative analysis is 'a genre of analytic frames whereby researchers interpret stories that are told within the context of research and/or are shared in everyday life' (Bryman, 2016, p. 1069). According to (Riessman, 1993), there are four levels of analysis in this approach. The first level of analysis is the thematic analysis, which emphasises the content of a text. This level contextualises the

stories related by the participants and the accounts by which they are affected in their lives (Bryman, 2016). The second level of analysis is the structural analysis. As stories are always told with intended effects, this level of analysis focuses the attention on how people make sense of their experience (Bryman, 2016). The third level of analysis is the interactional analysis in which the attention shifts to the dialogic process between the teller and the listener. Fourthly, the performative analysis focuses on storytelling. Narratives are 'seen as performance – by a 'self' with a past – who involves, persuades, and (perhaps) moves an audience through language and gesture, 'doing' rather than telling alone' (Riessman, 1993, p. 5). Thus, as a systematic research tool, narrative analysis helped me examine participants' lived stories, as well as their accounts of significant moments and incidents in their lives, interpersonal relationships, life aspirations and so on.

In addition, I also used speeches and reports of the central government and municipal governments as supplementary documents, for example, the released *hukou* application requirements, city master plans and videos promoting city images in three cities. Incorporating insights from the work of philosophers, for example, Foucault's *Power/Knowledge* (2020), researchers believe that discourses are powers and knowledge which construct the social world and that the aim of discourse analysis is to examine how people's understanding of things in the social world is framed by discourses (Bryman, 2016). In other words, discourse analysis 'treats texts as mediated cultural products which are part of wider systems of knowledge which may set the limits for, or discipline, everyday life' (Hannam, 2001, p. 195). In this study, I read and analysed the documents by situating the analysis within returnees' practices and interpretations to

identify the power structures embedded within discourses. Therefore, I connected the analysis of documents with the ethnographic analysis.

Finally, it was during the post-fieldwork stage that I engaged most intensely with the systematic analysis and integrated the data into a thesis with consistent arguments. During this stage, I organised the preliminary analysis, read transcripts and fieldwork notes and listened to recordings when necessary. By matching, grouping and contrasting, I identified patterns embedded within complex practices and interpretations. Moreover, my data analysis included three iterative activities: data reduction, data display, and data interpretation and verification (Huberman and Miles, 1994). I constantly moved among the three activities during the post-fieldwork analysis and writing to make sure that the thesis is based on the systematic analysis but not exhaustive use of data (Firth, 1984). For example, I removed a section because it was not closely related to the central arguments in this thesis. In fieldwork, I noticed that returnees practised their identity as overseas returnees by 'establishing social boundaries' at the workplace. To be more specific, most of the returnees interpreted keeping interpersonal distance with colleagues as a way of being professional. At first, I analysed the phenomenon in the thesis, but later I realised that the theme 'establishing social boundaries' was not closely relevant to the central arguments about *cityzenship* (city-based citizenship) but implied how transnational education space was reproduced by returnees' everyday spatial activities. Thus, to make a coherent argument, I removed this part from the thesis.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter elucidates the methodological design and research processes that underpin my study. Section 3.2 first explains the design of a multisited ethnographic study and justifies the choices of Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai as the sites to study returnees' *cityzenship*. Section 3.3 proceeds to show the fieldwork process including the recruitment of participants and data collection methods. In particular, I also reflect on my identity as an insider as well as difficulties I encountered during firework and how I dealt with them. Section 3.4 addresses issues of analysis and writing by emphasising the importance of an initial analysis of the data during the fieldwork and showing the systematic coding and analysis processes in post-fieldwork writing.

Chapter 4 To be a *cityzen* of where? multiscalar *cityzenship*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses multiscalar *cityzenship* observed in participants' explanations of why they decided to return to China and how they chose their particular (megacity) location. Theorising cities as assemblages where multiscalar social networks layer and interact, this chapter proposes a multiscalar analysis of *cityzenship*: *cityzenship* as identities and memberships of multiple communities.

As discussed in Chapter 2, identities are always situational, temporal, multiple and negotiable, constructed in relation to one's nationality, race, ethnicity, gender and class (Grossberg, 1996; Hall, 1996; Woodward, 1997; Isin and Wood, 1999; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Jenkins, 2014). Geographers further point out that one's identity is tied both to places (Massey and Jess, 1995; Rose, 1995; Massey, 2013; Malpas, 2018) and to mobilities (Cresswell, 2006; Easthope, 2009; Prazeres, 2013). As stated by Cresswell (2006, p. 22): 'we experience the world as we move through it', an argument that stresses the importance of both mobilities and place to identity construction. Also believing that mobility and place work simultaneously on individuals' identity building, this section reviews the literature on how transnational education mobilities influence students' identities.

Researchers have paid great attention to the identity transformations of transnational students (see for example King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Bagnoli, 2007, 2009; King, 2012). Rizvi (2000) looked at how transnational education mobilities changed the cultural identity of Malaysian students studying in Australia, reflecting upon how they made sense of their identity transformations. The theme 'exposure' is an explanation of students' identity changes. 'Exposure' to different cultures and values in Australia reshaped students' cultural values and made them develop a sense of belonging to Chinese diasporas and global imagination at the same time. Later, Rizvi (2005, p. 81) conducted another research project on the cultural identities of Chinese and Indian students in Australia and draw a similar conclusion: both their identities and global imagination were 'shaped not only by their personal histories, cultural traditions and professional aspirations but are also continually reshaped by new cultural experiences, but in ways that are neither uniform nor predictable'. In both projects, Rizvi links the discussion of students' identity transformations to their transnational cultural experience and implies a cosmopolitan identity and a cosmopolitan view of the world reinforced by transnational education.

In addition to the transformation of cultural identity experienced by transnational students, research attention has also focused on how transnational educational mobilities influence national identity and citizenship. King and Ruiz-Gelices' (2003) explored the national identity of UK students who studied in a different European country for a year and found that transnational education mobilities resulted in a 'Europeanising' of students' identity. However, Dolby (2004) shows how studying in Australia reinforces American students' national identity. She found that American students' national identity was reinforced through a series of encountering with others throughout the course of

their study abroad. Responding to Rizvi's (2001, 2005) global imagination, Dolby (2004) argues that American students developed an identity that was grounded in an American perspective and focused on the USA. Similar arguments can be found in Matthews and Sidhu's article (2005) on the identity changes of international students in Australia. They found that transnational education mobilities gave rise to territorialised national identities and ethnocultural affiliations.

Other work has looked at the identity of transnational students from mainland China, with a particular focus on citizenship. Fong (2011), for example, found that transnational Chinese students aspired to be a member in the 'developed world', and to attain social, cultural and/or political citizenship in a 'developed' country. According to Fong (2011), traveling abroad to study was a way to get permanent residency rights in a developed country, rights that 'enable them to live as social and cultural citizens of the developed world even though they remained legal citizens and residents of China' (2011, p. 95). In addition to permanent residency rights in a developed country, students' desire of being connected to the developed world is also reflected in their career aspirations. For example, they hoped to get jobs that allow them to travel between China and other developed countries on a frequent basis, or they aspired to find a job or start their own business to achieve upward social mobility. To explain transnational Chinese students' aspiration of citizenship in the developed world, Fong draws on Amartya Sen' theory of freedoms, broadly defined to include social rights, economic facilities, political freedoms and security, and capabilities, meaning that one can do whatever he or she wants to do and to be anyone he or she wants to be, even if they choose not to do or be so (Sen, 1993). Fong explains that, such freedoms and capabilities, as believed by Chinese

students, were only provided by governments in the developed world rather than the Chinese government.

In interviews, I noticed that transnational education mobilities influenced returnees' identity and citizenship aspirations which further impacted their decision to return to megacities in China. Agreeing with the argument that migration is 'never singular in its temporality, but rather is an ongoing process where past, present and future are folded together in the emergence of migrant lives' (Collins, 2018, p. 967; also see McCormack and Schwanen, 2011), Section 4.2 shows how participants made their decision of returning to China by presenting the ways in which transnational education mobilities and emplacement of transnational education impacted participants' construction of identity. Pointing out a shift of identification from 'I am Chinese' to 'I came from China, the mainland' in the course of transnational education mobilities, Section 4.2 conceptualises *cityzenship* as a nationally and politically territorialised identity.

Section 4.3 explains why participants chose to migrate to megacities instead of returning to their hometown. In fieldwork, I noticed that participants usually explained their choice of megacities by conceiving megacities as developed cities in developing countries. Participants' understanding megacities as developed places presents a strike contrast with how existing literature believes that transnational Chinese students aspire to citizenship of the developed world and that returning to China without citizenship of a developed country amounts to failure (for example Fong, 2011). Unlike Fong's argument that only the citizenship in the developed countries could meet transnational Chinese students' aspiration of capabilities and freedoms, this study found that, to participants, megacities in China also met such aspiration. This section illustrates how *cityzenship* is a

membership of China *and* membership of the developed world to negotiate with the conflicts between their ethnic and political identity as Chinese and aspiration of citizenship in the developed world at the same time. Therefore, this section explains why most of participants actively chose to return to China instead of being forced to do so, for example, a failure of finding a job in the studying countries.

Finally, the multiscalar analysis of *cityzenship* is also reflected in how participants interpreted *cityzenship* as a city-based identity based on the perceived inter-city differences. Section 4.4 examines how returnees view different megacities differently and how those differences influence their choice of location. Therefore, this chapter proposes a multiscalar analysis of *cityzenship*.

4.2 *Cityzenship* as a cultural, national and political identity

This section elucidates how *cityzenship* is a cultural, national and political identity. When I asked participants how they decided to work and live in the megacities, they collectively explained their migration to megacities by stressing the megacity as a Chinese city. In interviews, they usually responded that 'I wanted to return to China in the first place, and then I chose a city', 'I am Chinese' and so on. To returnees, self-identification as Chinese is one of the main reasons why they 'returned' to the megacities in China. I further noticed that participants referred to Chinese not only as a cultural identity but also, more notably, a nationally and politically territorialised one. Embedded in their explanation of being Chinese, I found that their construction of identity was accomplished in a series of encounters with 'others' when they studied abroad. This section begins with how participants reflected Chinese as a cultural identity in the course

of studying abroad. Then I turn attention to how transnational Chinese students interpret Chinese as a national and political identity more than a cultural one.

To begin with, transnational education mobilities enhanced participants' understanding of Chinese as a cultural identity. In interviews, participants provided a detailed account of how their awareness of Chinese as a cultural identity was constructed through experiencing cultural differences. For example, participants told me that their identity as Chinese was intensified when they noticed the difficulties to socialise with 'locals'. As voiced by Chun (27, female, Beijing), who studied in the UK:

> *I tried to make friends with the locals (British), but it was really difficult for me to join their conversation. On the one hand, it was difficult for me to accurately express what I meant; and more importantly, I often didn't understand what they were discussing, or they were talking very fast. Sometimes, their topic had changed before I figured out what they talked about and tried to join the conversation. What made things worse was that I did not have the background knowledge, such as the music they (British) had listened to when they were young, or TV shows they had watched. It was really difficult for me to establish a local circle in my life (build social networks with locals).* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

That Chinese as a cultural identity is aroused by difficulties encountered in the course of studying aboard echoes the augment made by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015). In their article, through experiencing cultural differences, transnational Chinese students reflect upon themselves and their cultural roots. In addition to encounters with 'difference',

Chinese as a cultural identity was also practised through cultural activities, for example cooking Chinese food (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1977; Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015; Li and Zizzi, 2018). Hence, consistent with existing research conclusions, this study also suggests that studying abroad enhances transnational Chinese students' cultural identity.

However, to returnees, being Chinese was more notably interpreted as a nationally and politically territorialised identity than a cultural one. This statement was captured in the shift from describing themselves as 'Chinese' to 'I come from mainland China', when interacting with classmates, foreigners, and other Chinese students while studying abroad. In her article on American students in Australia, Dolby (2004) notices a similar 'encountering' of national identity:

> *Study abroad provides not only the possibility of encountering the world, but of encountering oneself— particularly one's national identity—in a context that may stimulate new questions and new formulations of that self* (Dolby, 2004, p. 150).

Resonating with Dolby's findings, based on participants' after-study reflection and retrospection, this study also suggests that transnational Chinese students understand Chinese as a territorialised political and national identity through encounter with others in the course of studying abroad. First, their construction of Chinese as a territorialised political and national identity was accomplished through recognition of the fissures between Chinese as an ethnic and cultural identity and Chinese as a mainland-territorialised identity. When studying abroad, participants usually noticed that Chinese students from non-mainland regions tended to identify themselves by referring to

specific regions and emphatically excluding the concept of 'China' or 'Chinese'. 'I am not Chinese. I am a Hongkonger', 'I am Taiwanese', 'I am Chinese, and I come from Macau' were typical examples captured in participants' stories. Realising that the concept of 'Chinese' was refused by non-mainland Chinese as 'the other' in the construction of identity, participants began to reflect that Chinese might not be an ethnic and cultural identity but a territorialised one. As noted by Jennie (female, 25, Shanghai):

> *So, yes, maybe they are not Chinese, if they wish not to be. But I am Chinese because I come from mainland China…. Later (having realised non-mainlander Chinese' construction of identity by excluding the word Chinese), when we refer to someone as Chinese, we mean he or she comes from mainland China… (*Jennie, 25, female, Shanghai*)*

Encountering other non-mainland Chinese and getting to know their regionalised identity construction, participants became cognizant of differences among different regionalised and territorialised Chinese. Moreover, non-mainland Chinses' construction of identity by excluding 'China' and 'Chinese' further encouraged some participants to reflect on questions such as 'why not being Chinese is so important to them':

> *I don't know why they don't want to be Chinese. Maybe because they think we (mainland Chinese and mainland China) are poorer or because they think their political system and society is more westernised, advanced and civilised than ours? Maybe because they want to show their difference from and superior to us.* (Dan, 25, male, Beijing*)*

Similar comments frequently emerged in interviews. Many participants felt that, to the non-mainland Chinese, being Chinese meant one's belonging to a less-developed country, a socialist nation and sometimes an authoritarian regime. Hence, reflecting on the self-identification of the non-mainlanders, participants became cognizant of Chinese as a national and political identity rather than a cultural one. As commented by Jennie: 'I had never expected that Chinese can be made sense of in such a political way.'

Participants' understanding of Chinese as a territorialised national and political identity was also related to their experiences of political events while studying abroad. In interviews, it was found that political events, including the recent Hong Kong protests and earlier Tibet protests in 2008, were important in the construction of the political and national identity of transnational Chinese students. This is because these political events provided them with opportunities to hear different (often negative) voices from the foreign media and people in the host countries. In reflecting on others' comments on these events, transnational Chinese students began to consider themselves as Chinese in a political way. Jack's story is very illustrative. Jack was born in China in the 1970s and attained his bachelor's degree in Beijing in 2000. Then he moved to Shanghai to work as an accountant in a foreign company and in the year 2006, he went to New York to study for a master's degree. He studied and worked in the United States for the next twelve years, and in 2018, he returned and settled in Beijing. Reflecting on his entire migrating experience, he told me that the Tibet protests and Olympic events in 2008 influenced him most in his understanding himself as Chinese.

> *In 2008, the US media made derogatory reports on the Beijing Olympic and China. At that time, I suddenly discovered that there were so many tricks, made-*

up stories and fake news in the US media that I hadn't known before. It was very obvious in 2008. For example, CNN used software to cut out some pictures and reported them selectively to create an image for US readers that minorities in China were experiencing the same racial discrimination or mistreat[ment] as what black people had suffered in the United States. Everyone (Chinese) was shocked to find that the West saw China in such a way. We all had a sense of being deceived at that time, because we had always felt that the West should be more advanced than us in terms of social structure, system, and humanity. The west should be equal, free and fraternity. But in 2008, we discovered that many of their slogans were just disguises. Suddenly, we found that we were actually hated and despised. In order to fight the CNN fake news, we (Chinese people) collected facts and hard evidence, and created a website named Anti-CNN.[18]

But what surprised me most was a university teacher's attitude. At that time, I was still studying at university. One day, a teacher called me to the office and asked me to tell him something about the recent reports on the Beijing Olympics. He is white, and his wife is Chinese. He said that his wife was upset towards negative reports on China and Beijing Olympics. I then introduced him to visit Anti-CNN website. Then he was very upset and surprised, and asked me why I wanted to anti CNN. I told him that we listed a lot of CNN's smears of China. Then he felt that it very incredible, and he told me that Americans would never do that. It seems to me that, to the teacher, Americans have this kind of moral

[18] I failed to open the website: http://www.anti-cnn.com. But I find a report talking about this website: https://www.news.com.au/technology/chinese-students-launch-anti-cnn-website/news-story/1568cb5da5c3edb72a8fd7cc8cc43bf2?sv=d811a3cf6562fc688279bd6db532c934

superiority, and American reports must be very objective. Only governments like China or Russia distort news reports. But in fact, it was not the case.

So, in order to support the Beijing Olympics and oppose Tibet's independence. Chinese people marched in major cities in the United States. Of course, Americans would not report it. All Chinese people had never expected any Chinese gatherings like this in New York before the event, because everyone had been very busy, and they had not usually gone out for political issues. But on that day, we were on a square in Manhattan, opposite to the Supreme Court of the United States. Almost six thousand Chinese people presented to express our political attitude and support of the Beijing Olympics. There was a gathering of tens of thousands of Chinese in San Francisco. And that day everyone was very excited. Mandarin was spoken in the subway. This was the first time that made Chinese like me who studied and worked in the United States to be united. (Jack, 39, male, Beijing)

Jack's story is quite illustrative: in interviews, I found most of the participants' national and political identity was constructed in the process of reflecting on how political events were reported and interpreted by governments, media and people in the host country. In the existing literature, discussion of transnational Chinese students' positive attitudes towards China and its politics is usually framed by nationalism or patriotism. While studying overseas should be a time for transnational students to live in democratic contexts and to develop liberal values (Williams, 2004; Kessler, Rüland and Rother, 2009; Atkinson, 2010; Han and Zweig, 2010), longitudinal studies of transnational Chinese students find little evidence of ideological change (Hail, 2015; Wilson, 2016;

Lu, 2018). Resonating with existing literature, this study also finds that participants developed an increased identification with China's political system and a critical view of the western politics and liberal democratic values. Thus, while Chinese identity has in large part been expressed through the lenses of diaspora and culture (for example Ong, 1999; Zheng, 2011), this thesis contributes to the discussion by showing how transnational education mobilities reinforce 'Chinese' as a territorialised national and political identity.

Fong (2011) proffers the concept 'filial nationalism' to explain Chinese students' defence of China against negative critiques from the outside. Their defensive stance is interpreted by Fong as a filial loyalty to China as the 'motherland' despite her flaws. Other explanations include Chinese government's implementation of ideological propaganda and patriotism (Zhao, 1998), or Chinese students' preference of living a confined life in small circles constitutive of Chinese, which limits their integration with locals and exposure to the democracy and liberal ideology in the host country (Qian, 2002; Wilson, 2016). However, this study argues that political identity is never an either/or choice between China and the host country but is constructed in the process of reflection on differences.

Similar to Jack's reflection on American democracy when he discovered how China was reported in the US media, other participants' reflections came from questions raised by locals in the host country. For example, questions related to freedom of speech, internet restriction and monitoring, Hong Kong issues and pollution were typical ones. I noticed that answering these questions always reinforced Chinese students' identification with the 'home' country. For example, Mary (28, female, Shenzhen) told me that 'only

questions related to negative aspects of China, in a way of criticism, were asked'. In addition, some participants also told me that in studying countries, they were encouraged to choose between liberal democracy as the only panacea to China and socialism as an undemocratic and authoritarian regime and any doubt or hesitation in the former is seen as an approval of the latter.

Existing scholarship employs 'social identity theory' to explain why experiences of criticism reinforce one's national identity. According to the 'social identity theory', people, especially minorities, always relate their self-esteem to their group identity and membership such as race and nation (Mehra, Kilduff and Brass, 1998; Umaña-Taylor, 2004), and perception of one's group is being threatened results in a stronger sense of attachment to that group (Turner *et al*., 1984; Ellemers, Spears and Doosje, 2002). In the like vein, studying in a foreign country made the political and national identity of transnational Chinese students salient, and the criticism of China constantly stimulated their awareness of this identity and reminded students that they were identified with China. A similar explanation can be found in Hail's (2015, p. 322) article on the patriotism of overseas Chinese students in America:

> *When Chinese sojourners felt that China was under attack (by protesters or the Western media, for example) or vulnerable (such as when China suffered a natural disaster), they felt more loyal and emotionally attached to their nation. The relationship between perceived threat and emotional attachment was exemplified by respondents' assertions that reading about Western protests against the Chinese government or learning about a devastating earthquake in China made them 'love China even more*. (Hail 2015, p. 322)

In addition to the criticism of China, participants also told me that the way that questions were asked also aroused a sense of discomfort. As in Jack's story, when host country students and locals talked about China, they always used misinformed and distorted information which they had learned about through the media, and sometimes showed prejudiced attitudes towards Chinese current events (Dewan, 2008; Liu and Hewitt, 2008). Fighting biased view of China not only 'reinforced the feeling among Chinese students that they were different from host country members' (Hail 2015, p. 321), but also made them realise how China was constructed as a less politically advanced nation:

> *I don't mind being asked about my political stance. What I mind is, at the very beginning, they (some locals in the host country) put China on their opposite side. For example, I was asked about corruption in China. I said that it used to be very serious, but it has been much better recently. Then they said it might because the government concealed the truth, and I didn't know the whole truth. It seems that they asked this question simply because they wanted to show me that China is not a democratic country. I felt that when they asked questions, what they wanted to know was not my answer, since they thought they had already known it. They asked the question to enlighten me.* (Mary, 28, female, Shenzhen)

Rather than making an argument over political disputes, participants told me they tried to avoid discussing political issues with the people in the host countries. Observing the host country and reflecting on what they saw rather than communicating with locals became students' way of getting to know politics in the host country. Two reasons were given by participants. On the one hand, participants felt that their English was not fluent enough to

articulate their views; on the other hand, their loyalty to China and belief in seeking interpersonal harmony led them to avoid in-depth political discussions (similar findings have been seen in Hail 2015). Since questions and criticism were always related to freedom of speech, internet control and monitoring, Hong Kong issues and so on, reflection on and observing these issues became the main channel to understand western politics. Hence, Chinese students paid particular attention to the attitudes of governments, media and the local people on such issues in the host society. When participants found that western media distorted the news and that locals displayed prejudiced and even offensive attitudes, they became 'doubtful on the universality of liberal democracy rather than reinforcing its legitimacy' (Lu, 2018, p. 13).

To sum up, this section explains how participants' decisions of return were influenced by their construction of Chinese as a territorialised national and political identity in a series of reflections on differences that they had experienced in the host country. Chinese as a national and political identity was produced by a variety of authors: the Chinese government, non-mainland Chinese, western media, local people in the host countries and so on.

4.3 Megacities as 'developed' cities in the 'developing world'

> *I travelled to Shanghai with my parents as a tourist. I could still remember the time I sat in the McDonald's in Lujiazui (CBD in Shanghai). It was located in the very centre of the district. A big circle overpass bridged all the skyscrapers around. I was eating a hamburger, seeing the office ladies rushing on high heels. The logos of famous transnational companies on the skyscrapers were the ones I*

> *saw on TV programs and advertisement. We just finished our bus tour of the new district sightseeing, and although there were also skyscrapers and CBD in my hometown, this was the first time I got the image of concrete jungles in real life. The glass curtained buildings pointed into the sky, reflecting the bright sun rays. I, wearing a backpack and a pair of worn-out sneakers, a very classic image of the tourist, eating the hamburger in the crack of the skyline, was an obvious outsider*. (Qi, 24, female, Shanghai)

Qi's narrative presented a typical illustration of megacities in China found in interviews. While the previous section looks at how returnees constructed a Chinese self as a cultural, national and political identity in the course of studying abroad, this section discusses how participants conceptualised the three megacities as developed cities in the developing world as a way of dealing with a conflict between their identity as Chinese and their aspirations for membership within the imagined 'developed world'. In her book on transnational Chinese students, Fong (2011, p. 41) writes about how a diachronised hierarchy between China as a developing country and western countries as 'the developed world' structures the transnational education mobilities of Chinese students. According to Fong, transnational Chinese students aspire the membership in the developed world as it grants them access to job opportunities, education, income, mobility, comfort and certain standards of living, which she terms as social citizenship. Fong uses Sen's capabilities and freedoms theory to explain transnational Chinese students' aspiration of social citizenship in the developed world. To transnational Chinese students, as Fong argues, citizenship in a developed country means the attainment of substantive freedoms:

> *to have the standard of living one wanted, to get the kind of education and work one wanted, to become the kind of person one wanted to become, and to enjoy the lifestyle, food, relationships, and leisure activities one preferred, as well as freedom from poverty, crime, pollution, corruption, health hazards, unpleasant social relationships, and restrictions on transnational mobility* (Fong 2011, p. 143).

Through Sen's capabilities theory, Fong states that Chinese students aspire the citizenship of the developed world because it provides them with more and better capabilities. Fong's analysis of Chinese students' imagination and interpretation of citizenship in the developed world is also reflected in my research findings. In interviews, I noticed the same diachronised hierarchy between China as a developing country and the host countries for international study as the developed world. At first glance, it could be assumed that students' return migration to China indicates losing the opportunity to attain the citizenship in the developed world. However, I found that participants described megacities as places where they could meet their aspiration for capabilities and freedoms offered by developed world social citizenship. To be more specific, megacities were conceived as 'developed' cities in the developing world. In what follows, I will first present a changing global imagination embedded in participants' interpretations of their aspiration of *cityzenship*, which challenges the geographical division of the world into the developed/developing; second, I discuss how the change of global imagination is structured by social factors and discourses.

First, transnational education mobilities provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the developed/developing world. In interviews,

participants usually used the word 'speed' to describe how 'fast' China's megacities are 'catching up' with the developed world. For example, 'high-speed railway', 'convenient electronic pay', 'subways connecting every corner in the city' and 'vibrant and prosperous CBD' were phrases used by participants to describe China's modernisation success. Most returnees emphasised how China had changed even in the period they were abroad, particularly in relation to the internationalisation of megacities, urban infrastructure improvement and economic and business growth. To participants, this rapid development of megacities meant that megacities promised them the same or even more opportunities as the developed countries. For example, participants told me that the job market in megacities provided them with various career opportunities. In other words, *cityzenship* is the same as social citizenship of the developed world, promising returnees' access to aspired standards of living and income. As said by Jack, who used to work as a trader in Wall Street for ten years and returned to Beijing: 'in the past, there were seldom career opportunities for me because of the underdeveloped financial market in China. Now it grows rapidly, and I can see a lot of opportunities.' Similar comments were heard from Sam (male, Shenzhen), a technology investor, explained how Shenzhen attracted talents:

> *We have Shenzhen speed. It is not a slogan but a reality. Shenzhen has the world's most complete manufacturing industry chain. For example, if you design a new type of electronic device, it only takes three weeks, from manufacturing parts, to assembling units, and to the market. In Less than a month, you can see the device in the market. Only Shenzhen can make it come true*. (Sam, 30, male, Shenzhen)

To most participants, China is still in the process of developing which means a greater chance of getting career success, and megacities as the locomotives of development are places of opportunities. To be more specific, participants believed that being in the process of developing meant that rapid economic growth through intensive industrialisation which creates more job positions and facilitates an improved quality of life. Comparing Shenzhen to a speedy ship carrying *cityzens* to catch up with and even surpass the developed countries, Wendy (23, female, Shenzhen) described her city life as one with constant changes: 'I can feel the city dynamic. It changes every day. Each day, I can see new things in city: the newly opened shops and restaurants, increasing subway lines and so on.' Hence, the developing speed of megacities is essential to participants' global imagination and participants' understanding of *cityzenship* as the membership of the developed world.

Apart from career developments, social welfare in megacities were also mentioned by participants as a key consideration. Some participants expressed their disappointment with medical systems abroad. The NHS (National Health System) in the UK and the US medical system received the most complaints in interviews. 'In the US, even if you buy insurance, medical treatment is still very expensive compared to China,' said Alice (26, female, Shanghai) who did both undergraduate and postgraduate study in the US. According to participants who studied in the UK, some found that it was 'difficult' to see a GP (general practitioner). By saying 'difficult', they usually referred to a long wait and perfunctory treatment.

> *Once I accidentally fell down, and then my waist kept hurting. I had waited a week before I saw a GP. My GP only asked a few questions and did not give me*

any further examinations or treatment. My GP only told me that there was no major problem, and what I needed to do was just to lie in the bed for a few days. But my pain was real. So, once I came out of the GP's office, I made a phone call to my mom. My mom decided that I needed to buy a flight ticket immediately to go home (Dalian, a second-tier city). So, the next day, once I arrived in Dalian, I went to see a doctor directly. The doctor asked me to have a film (X-ray), and after seeing the film, the doctor told me that my lumbar spine was a bit dislocated. The doctor immediately gave me treatment by fixing the dislocation and then gave me an anti-inflammatory injection. After three days of treatment, I then flew back to the UK. But I'm not saying that China's medical treatment and doctors' experience or knowledge level are better than those in the UK, but it's definitely much more efficient. Of course, you have other choices in the UK, for example, private hospitals in London, but I am not from a rich family, and seeing a private doctor is really expensive in the UK. So in comparison, although medical treatment in China is not free as the NHS, and I have to pay for flight tickets, I think it is still worth it. (Che, 24, female, Shenzhen)

Like Che, several participants also chose to fly back to China for medical treatment. But other participants, especially those who had stayed in the UK for a longer period of time, hold different opinions towards 'the inefficiency of the NHS'. Instead, they explained transnational Chinese students' negative attitudes towards NHS as a result of cultural differences in terms of illness. As said by Neo (30, male, Beijing) who used to study in the UK for four years:

> *First, I should say that NHS in the UK treats every patient equally, no matter you are an international student or an ethnic minority. So, because it is for everyone, medical resources should be given to those who really need it, rather than those who have a cold or flu. In the UK culture, cold, flu or even fever are not considered as illness, and if you develop some symptoms such as fever or running nose, all you need to do is to go home and have a rest. But in China, we have a fever department in every hospital. So, if you have a fever, you should go and see a doctor. You need to be checked and examined by a doctor. Obviously, it is not because we need a doctor to help us recover from cold or flu, but because fever might also be a sign of other severe illness and to pay a visit to the fever department is to eliminate the possibility of more serious illnesses than colds and flu. This is our way of treating illness, especially fever. But they (cold, flu and fever) are not regarded as a severe illness which must receive treatment from a GP. It is this cultural difference make many transnational Chinese students have negative attitudes towards NHS. (*Neo, 30, male, Beijing)

Generally speaking, the medical system in China, especially in megacities, was an important indication, for participants, that megacities were catching up with the developed world.

In addition to social welfare, participants also used the term '*suzhi*' to explain why megacities in China can be regarded as developed places. *Suzhi*, usually glossed as the intellectual, moral and ideological 'qualities' of human bodies, is analysed by researchers as a keyword in Raymond Williams's terms (1983). *Suzhi*, as the keyword, is central to governance in China, as it 'justifies social and political hierarchies of all sorts,

with those of high quality gaining more income, power and status than the low' (Kipnis 2006, p. 295). 'Intersecting with, and contains powerful traces of, other keywords, such as civilization and modernity' (Jacka, 2009, p. 524), the *suzhi* discourse also works on Chinese citizens domestic geographical dichotomy between rural area as low *suzhi* while urban area as comparatively high *suzhi* (Friedman, 2018). This geographical imagination also projects upon the global imagination of transnational Chinese students. In interviews, participants used *suzhi* to measure the level of 'development' megacities in China. For example, Linda gave a typical description of Beijing as a city of *suzhi*:

> *Citizens in megacities are generally well educated and highly civilized. For example, everyone follows rules: they will not make loud noises or litter in public places. Everyone stands in a line if they have to wait for something. Moreover, following rules also means that you cannot pull the strings or use guanxi*[19] *to get what you want. So unlike other places in China, megacities are relatively fairer to professionals who have expertise.* (Linda, 25, female, Beijing)

To participants, the three megacities belonged to the developed world because three cities were high quality (*suzhi*) society with well-educated and well-behaved *cityzens*. Participants' narratives on the level of development of cities and the *suzhi* of citizens resonate with Fong's (2001) argument that Chinese citizens regard the developed world as a 'high quality' society because they believe that developed-world citizens are well-educated and connected by civility rather than *guanxi* (Fong 2011, p. 12). Interpreting *suzhi* of megacities by emphasising on their disdain of using *guanxi* to get economic and social resources implies a discourse of individuality which also shapes returnees'

[19] *Guanxi* usually refers to pervasiveness uses of social connection.

spatialized lifecourse. I will go back to this in the discussion of returnees' lifecourse and individuality in China in Chapter 7.

To participants, the social and cultural diversity of megacities were also the reasons why they conceived the megacities as developed places. Culturally, the three megacities were described as global cities where *cityzens* can have a taste of world cultures, and socially, megacities were believed by returnees as westernised society for its openness to different life choices and attitudes. When I asked how megacities resembled the developed world, participants always told me that *cityzens* have a more tolerant attitude towards minorities, for example LGBTQ people, than people in other parts of China. In addition, *cityzens* can enjoy a colourful and diverse life in megacities, for example eating different kinds of foreign food. In Chapter 5, using the theoretical concept of cosmopolitanism, I interpret returnees' aspiration of a colourful and diverse city life as a pursuit of cosmopolitan lifestyle, and discuss how megacities are ideal sites for them to practice their cosmopolitan identity by looking at their everyday consumption. However, it should be noted that, their understanding of openness to culture and social diversity does not mean that they are cosmopolitans who 'think globally, aim to exceed their own local specificities, welcome unfamiliar cultural encounters and express the wish to move toward a true humanity of equality and respect, free of racial, national and other prejudices' (Ley, 2004, p. 159). Instead, I noticed that most participants still hold a negative attitude towards less-educated labour migrants, and participants usually used the words 'low *suzhi*' to exclude these migrants from the megacities' *cityzens*. In other words, that participants regarded social and cultural diversity as the indication of the city's development level is also influenced by the *suzhi* discourse, exemplifying researchers' theorisation of *suzhi* as a neoliberal form of social control:

> *the responsibilities, obligations, claims, and rights that connect members of society to the state; to determinations of which individuals and social groups are included in this set of rights and responsibilities and which are excluded; to discourses on how to produce the 'ideal' citizen as well as what to do about the less-than-ideal citizen; and to processes and institutions that produce and reproduce boundaries and gradations between different types of citizenship and citizen* (Jacka, 2009, p. 524; also see Kipnis, 2007).

In Section 5.2, I will come back to this argument when I discuss why Guangzhou, a first-tier city and the city with most foreign residents in China (Mathews, Lin and Yang, 2017), is not as attractive to returnees as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

Finally, even though most participants refereed to *cityzenship* as the membership in the developed world, some participants still insisted there were gaps between China's megacities and the developed world. For example, critical implication found in interviews was that China was still a country relying on imitations and low-end manufacturing, rather than innovation, especially technological innovations, intellectual property rights, as well as subversive inventions, as the basis of the country's economic growth. Embedded within their concerns about Chinese ability to innovate was a belief in Western world as the dominant part of the developed world. As expressed by Neo (30, male, Beijing): 'global talents will definitely choose Silicon Valley, New York and London, and the Chinese students are no exception.' Moreover, the polluted environment (especially in Beijing) and high working and living pressures in megacities (more detailed discussion will be given in Chapter 7) were also typical reasons given by

participants to explain why the citizenship in the developed world was more appealing than *cityzenship* (see similar findings in Fong, 2011). For some participants, *cityzenship* was only a compensation for the failure of finding a job and getting a working visa in the developed world:

> *I tried but failed. I stayed in the UK for three months after graduation, but I still was not able to find a job which could provide me with a working visa. I had no choice but return (to megacities). If I can, I will definitely go back to the UK.* (Snow, 26, female, Beijing)

Hence, to some participants, though the three megacities were developed places, their positions were still 'below' the western cities. Therefore, returnees' interpretation of their aspired *cityzenship* changed with how they defined the concept of 'developed'.

4.4 Inter-city differences

The previous sections discuss why returnees chose to return to Chinese megacities, and this section further looks at the decision to locate in a particular city. To be more specific, this section focuses on the discussion of inter-city differences. First, theorising cities as sites where geographical, historical, political, social and cultural forces continuously assemble, this section shows how megacities differ in terms of different localised urban contexts. To returnees, each megacity had its own features, reflected in both materialities (e.g. landmark buildings) and immaterialities (e.g. local histories). Also, this section highlights the importance of taking into account emotions and meanings in studying returnees' migration, as cities are not only physical places on the

ground but also centres of meanings and emotions (also see similar arguments made by Tuan, 1975; Massey, 2013). In interviews, participants explained their choices of a particular megacity by demonstrating their emotional attachment to specific places and groups of people in the city. Hence, while the previous sections discuss multiscalar *cityzenship* as a territorialised national and political identity and membership of the developed world, this section analyses *cityzenship* as a city-based identity by illustrating how returnees made sense of the inter-city differences.

4.4.1 Urban functions and city branding

Participants' choices of megacities were influenced by how they perceived the inter-city differences. Usually, participants explained their choices of a megacity by identifying themselves with it, for example connecting the careers and lifestyles they pursued with the city's development goals and branded images. In interviews, choosing a city was interpreted as 'i[I]dentifying with the place goals -- when the majority of the people of the place recognize the goals of the place and are in conformity with them' and 'a fusion and blending with the place's interests and needs' (Shamai, 1991, p. 350). Participants believed that different megacities had different development goals and reflected a particular urban image and that living in different cities meant different career paths and lifestyles. Moreover, I further noticed that devising city mater plans[20] and city branding, three city governments influenced participants' knowledge of development goals and urban images of different megacities.

[20] In China, city master plans refer to urban planning documents designed by governments as the guidance of future growth and development of the city. A city master plan usually includes analysis and proposals for a city's population, community facilities, housing, transportation, land use, economy and so on. The main purpose of designing city master plan is to set goals for the city's economic and social development and determine the development route of the city in a certain period of time. In China, the city master plan is the basic basis for city development and management. The city governments allocate the urban land use and urban resources according to the city master plans (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2007).

First, ‘urban function’ was a key theme that emerged in participants’ explanation of their choice of landing cities and interpretation of inter-city differences. Existing literature usually conceptualises urban functions in three different ways: the use of urban space for residential areas, recreation, industry, etc. (Shen and Karimi, 2016), the productive and economic activity in the city (Venables, 2017) and the main industries of the city for example manufacturing, mining, education, finance and tourism (Tian, Liu and Zhang, 2002). In interviews, participants used ‘functions of the city’ or ‘urban functions’ to refer to the responsibilities taken by cities for China’s modernisation and development. For example, they regarded Shanghai as the city to draw foreign investments and provide the country with financial services and Shenzhen as the city to promote China’s technological development and innovation. Since different megacities took different responsibilities, each megacity was believed to have distinctive urban functions. When participants chose the landing city, they thought that it was better for them to select the city in which urban functions were consistent with their career plan. For example, Jennie explained her choice of Shanghai by linking her career expectation with urban functions of Shanghai:

> *When I was about to graduate (from a UK university), I decided to come to Shanghai to find a job, because I studied Finance and Shanghai is the financial centre of China … Compared with other cities (Beijing and Shenzhen), Shanghai is a better choice considering my career development because Shanghai is the city that attracts the most domestic and foreign capital in China. But if I am a researcher or an academic like you, I might probably go to Beijing and if I am a*

technologist I might choose to work in technology and internet companies in Shenzhen. (Jennie, 25, female, Shanghai)

In interviews, participants interpreted different urban functions of different megacities in a similar way. Beijing was the political and cultural centre in China, a city suitable for those who wanted to work in governmental sectors or academia. Shanghai was the world-class financial centre and the most globalised city in mainland China, so those who studied Business and wanted to work in foreign companies preferred Shanghai. Shenzhen was depicted as a technology city, so returnees who studied STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) could easily find a high-paying job there.

Then how did participants develop a collective belief around urban functions to differentiate cities into different categories? When I asked Jennies how she got to know the concept of 'urban function', she pondered and responded:

*I encounter this concept often. It appears frequently in news, both domestic news and local news, to introduce citizens how the city government plans the city's future. When I was a child, my parents and school teachers also told me so. (*Jennie, 25, female, Shanghai*)*

Similar to Jennie, most of the participants told me that 'urban function' was a concept captured in their everyday life: 'news introducing the city's mater plan broadcasted on the underground', 'daily news telling you how the city will change in the future', 'slogans by the roadside' and so on. I further noticed that 'urban functions' promoted by

news and slogans were manifestations of city governments' development goals. In China, municipal governments usually devise city master plans as guidance and critical instruments to facilitate the city's development, especially economic growth (Hamnett and Forbes, 2012). For megacities like Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, city master plans are crucially important as they are not only devised to materialise the city's own development goals based on the local context (regional industry structures), but also respond to China's globalisation and modernisation (Wei, 2005; Gu, Wei and Cook, 2015). However, even though scholars have paid attention to the implementation of city master plans and their impact on urban development (Tian and Shen, 2011; Gu, Wei and Cook, 2015; Wu, 2015), how city master plans influence migration remains understudied.

An overview of city master plans[21] in the three megacities shows how urban functions embedded in participants' narratives are consistent with the goals and functions of cities proposed in city master plans. In 2016, Shanghai Government released the *Shanghai City Master Plan (2016-2040),* proposing to build Shanghai as a leading global city, an international economic and financial centre, a hub for international trade and technological innovation, and a cultural metropolis by 2040. In 2017, Beijing Government released the *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*, stating that all work in Beijing must adhere to the city's strategic positioning as a national political centre, cultural centre, international exchange centre, and scientific and technological innovation centre. In 2017, Shenzhen Government announced Shenzhen City Master Plan (2016-2035), emphasising on development goals of urban reformation and transformation. Each

[21] The city master plans are available on the official government websites of each cities.
Shanghai Planning and Natural Resources Bureau https://ghzyj.sh.gov.cn
Beijing Planning and Natural Resources Bureau http://ghzrzyw.beijing.gov.cn
Shenzhen Planning and Natural Resources Bureau http://pnr.sz.gov.cn

city presents its own goals and functions: Shanghai is constructed as the economic and financial centre, Beijing as the cultural and political centre, and Shenzhen as a city of reformation.

In interviews, development goals proposed in city master plans echoed participants' understanding of urban functions. To participants, different urban gaols reflected distinctive functions played by megacities in the process of China's modernisation and globalisation. To be more specific, different megacities had different ways of being global and modern. Beijing was a political and cultural centre for the international exchange of knowledge and culture; Shanghai was a global city for international financial investment and trade; Shenzhen, as a young city of technology, was brave to reform and innovate. As in Linda's words:

> *They are all global cities but in different ways. Beijing is the capital of China and it is a world city because of its political and cultural importance, and it works as the brain of the country, deciding the future way of China, so it is suitable for people who want to be decision-makers or academics; As for Shanghai, it is a financial city, and it has long been a port for global trade in China, so those who want to work in transnational companies can go to Shanghai; Shenzhen is a young city, and I think that, though it is not globalised as Beijing and Shanghai, it is definitely a modern city. Everything in Shenzhen is new. I have a friend who is now working in Huawei (a technological company in Shenzhen). He majored in computer science*. (Linda, 25, female, Beijing)

Believing that each megacity played distinctive roles, participants tended to choose the city of which development plans were consistent with their majors and aspired career path. Furthermore, it should be noted that participants' perception of the different urban functions does not reflect the 'real' urban economic and industrial structures of the three megacities. For example, while most participants described Beijing as a cultural and political centre, Shanghai as an economic and financial centre and Shenzhen as a technological centre, exiting scholarship has shown that 'Beijing over Shanghai as a command centre of state-owned and controlled enterprises, acting as a magnet for advanced [global] business services' (Wójcik and Camilleri, 2015, p. 464), and all three cities are financial and technological centres (Pan, Zhao and Wójcik, 2016). Hence, instead of presenting the 'reality' of the inter-city differences, the aim of discussion participants' perception of urban functions is to illustrate how urban planning projects structure returnees' urban imagination, which, in turn, directs the flows of migration.

In addition to the personal career development, participants also linked their aspired lifestyle with the identity of the chosen city. Lynch (1960) defines the identity of a city as the urban images of a city leaving on people's mind. Those images constitute views of 'urban elements such as monumental buildings, public spaces and other special feature' (Riza, Doratli and Fasli, 2012, p. 294). According to Riza et al. (2012, p. 294), the identity of a place is 'the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places'. Distinctive identities of each megacity given by participants support this argument. As mentioned earlier, participants collectively regarded Beijing as the imperial capital, Shanghai as the magic capital and Shenzhen as the new city. Beijing, the imperial capital, was depicted as a city of both the old and the

new. To live in Beijing means to choose a traditional and modern lifestyle. As said by Jack:

> *Beijing is like an old man... You can feel his solemnity and dignity both in ancient architecture and magnificent modern buildings. … He has stood for thousands of years, witnessing the rise and decline of the country and the vicissitudes of life. He is also open to new technologies, and you can find the newest thing in Beijing. Living in Beijing, you live in the ancient and in the present at the same time.* (Jack, 39, male, Beijing)

Jack's description represents how participants believed life in Beijing to have both traditional and modern characteristics. In interviews, participants usually referred to iconic buildings and landscapes to represent these old/new characteristics. The old included ancient architectures such as the Forbidden City, the Hutong (Beijing style alleys), the Great Wall and so on; the new usually included newly-built landmark buildings in CBD, Water Cube built for Beijing Olympics and so on. These old/new urban images of Beijing are essential to Beijing's distinctive traditional and modern lifestyle.

Unlike Beijing, the identity of Shanghai, the magic capital, is produced in contrast between the east and the west. Shanghai, known as the Oriental Paris, has been the epitome of cosmopolitan modernity in China since the late Qing dynasty[22] (Lee and Li, 1999; Wu, 2000). In interviews, Shanghai's life represented a cosmopolitan one with both east and west characteristics. Iconic buildings and landscapes were also invited as

[22] Late Qing Dynasty: the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries when western countries colonised concession areas in Shanghai. See similar discussion in Jayne (2018) and Lee (1999).

symbols of Shanghai lifestyles: western-style buildings in concession areas and CBDs harboring multinational corporations. Shenzhen was described by participants as a 'new-born' city constitutive of immigrants and wonders. 'Change', 'speed', 'young', 'technology' and 'green' were the most mentioned words related to life in Shenzhen, and a Shenzhen lifestyle was frequently illustrated by the high-tech park, development zones and industrial areas.

Then why did participants collectively use those urban images as identities of megacities? Participants told me that they knew about the images of each cities in books, daily news, pedicures, videos and films. Scholarship uses the concept of city branding to theorise the promotion of images of heritage and iconic buildings as the distinctive identity of a city (Kavaratzis, 2004; Dinnie, 2010). In the same vein, researchers also note how cities in China try to promote themselves by creating images of heritage and iconic buildings (Wu, 2000; Wu and Zhang, 2007; Zhang and Zhao, 2009; Ye, 2014; Björner, 2017). Ye and Björner (2018, p. 80) further argue that city branding usually reflects 'the political wills of multiple levels of government, from the national state imposing its urbanization strategy to the local state utilizing national policies'. In China, city governments produce city promos as ways of city branding, for example, *Beijing city promos*[23]*, Shanghai, City for All*[24], and *Shenzhen City Image Promotional Video*[25]. I noticed that resonating with participants' narratives, promos produced different lifestyles in different cities by showing localised and iconic buildings and distinctive urban life. For example, Beijing is constructed as a converging point where the old meets the new and the tradition meets the world. This identity is constructed by contrasting images of

[23] https://v.qq.com/x/page/n0501l1s16.html
[24] https://v.qq.com/x/page/t3157lq3i0i.html
[25] https://v.qq.com/x/page/x0548cnoixm.html

ancient traditional architectures and modern ones in the city, images of seniors and the youth and images of Chinese and foreigners. Shanghai is presented as a site where the east meets the west. Shenzhen's identity is produced as a young and technological one.

To sum up, this subsection discusses how participants' choice of the landing city and interpretation of inter-city differences are influenced by urban functions and identities. Identifying with a city means matching one's desired career and lifestyle with the city's development goals and featured images. Since both the city master plans and city branding promos were devised by the municipal governments, this subsection highlights the importance role played by the municipal governments in returnees' migration.

4.4.2 City-government-supported migration infrastructure

Returnees' choice of city is also influenced by city-government-supported migration infrastructure. Migration infrastructure, a concept developed by Xiang and Lindquist (2014, p. 122) 'to unpack the process of mediation', refers to 'the systematically interlinked technologies, institutions, and actors that facilitate and condition mobility'. Drawing on insights of Latour's Actor Network Theory, they argue that 'it is not migrants who migrate, but rather constellations consisting of migrants and non-migrants, of human and non-human actors' (p. 124). In fieldwork, I found that the three cities had different levels of migration infrastructure. Among all the three megacities, Shenzhen's government, in order to 'escape from the trap of low-wage industrialization and move up the technological ladder' (Roy and Ong, 2011, p. 58), was found to provide the best migration infrastructure to high-end immigrants. For example, since 2010, Shenzhen has launched the Peacock Plan to attract talents, especially those in high-tech fields, by providing them with financial incentives ranging from 1.6 million to 3 million yuan, as

well as preferential treatment for children and spouse. Among 30 participants recruited in Shenzhen, six (3 male and 3 female) received financial incentives from the Peacock Project.

> *There are three categories in the Peacock Project and I am in the category C. I receive 1.6 million yuan in total. The general requirements are that you are a PhD from the top 150 universities and to work in Shenzhen* [26]*…. the city values talents…(*Kate, 28 female Shenzhen*)*

In addition to economic incentives, migration infrastructure in Shenzhen also includes public rental housing to immigrants.

> *The one bedroom flat I live in is a low-rent housing, which costs only 600 yuan a month. If it is a private rented flat, then it will cost at least 4000 yuan. And both the interior and residential environment are pretty good. Even it is government's low-rent housing, I live decently*. (Sam, 30, male, Shenzhen)

[26] Data were collected in the spring of 2019 and the Peacock Program has added new entry requirements to raise the threshold of talent selection in 2020.



Figure 4.1 Public rental housing, photo taken by the author in April 2019 in Shenzhen

The third frequently mentioned migration infrastructure was the *hukou* system. The *hukou* system, also known as the household registration system, allocates one's rights to the city where his or her *hukou* is registered. In order to attract highly educated talents, all the three megacities introduce preferential *hukou* policies to returnees. Since rights attached to *hukou* are provided by the local city government and vary in different cities, the value of *hukou* in different cities varies. Usually, Beijing *hukou* and Shanghai *hukou* are believed to be the most valuable ones in China. Chapter 6 will give a more detailed discussion on *hukou* in three cities.

4.4.3 North-south division: climate matters

In addition to employment opportunities or other 'economic' reasons, the climate (temperature, humidity, rainfall etc.) is also a key consideration of participants when

choose a city. A north-south disparity emerged as a key non-economic explanation of the choice of the landing city. In interviews, some participants divided China into two regions, the north and the south, and self-identified as either a northerner or a southerner. Northern China and southern China are two mega-regions in China. Though the cultural boundary between the two regions is quite ambiguous, the geographical north-south division line usually refers to the Qinling-Huaihe Line (Qin Mountains-Huai River Line) (Young, 1988; Wang, 2007). This line approximates the zero degrees Celsius isotherm in January and the 800 millimetres isohyet line in China, classifying the three megacities into two regions: Beijing in the north and Shanghai and Shenzhen in the south. The climate in Beijing is a typical semi-humid continental monsoon climate in the northern temperate zone, while the climate in both Shanghai and Shenzhen is the subtropical monsoon climate.

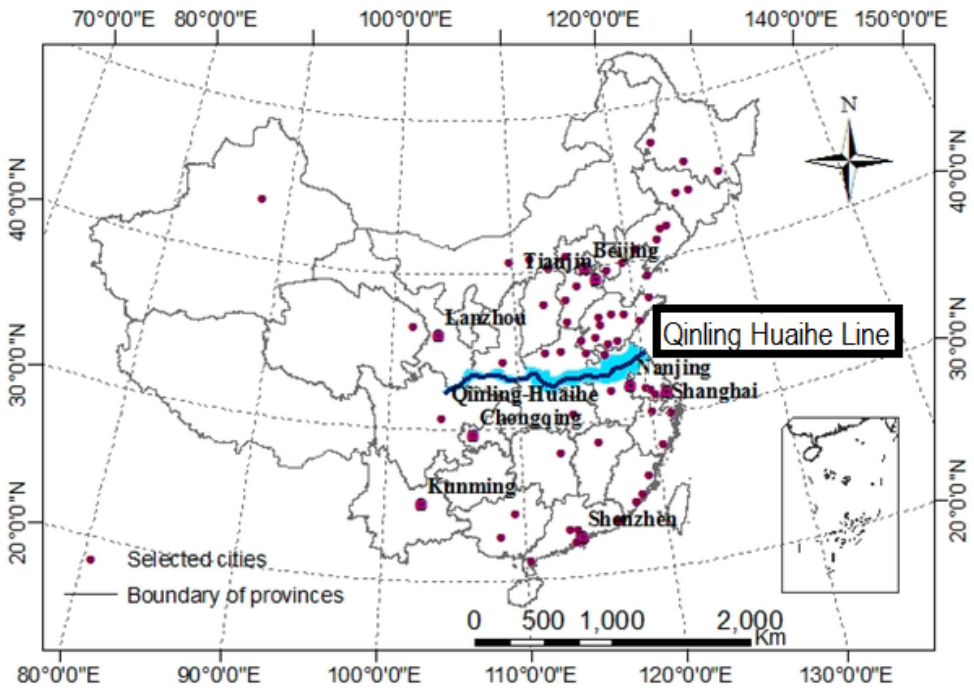


Figure 4.2 The North-South Division Line in China (from Wikipedia)

For participants who came from north China, the climate in the south was too humid and sultry in summer:

> *I used to pay a visit to Guangdong province, and it was so scorching and stuffy in the summer. I kept sweating and felt dizzy. I will never go there again in the summer. Shanghai is the southernmost place I can bear, and Beijing is definitely an ideal choice.* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

In winter, to northerners, the climate in the south was gloomy and bleak. As said by Chun, 'the winter in the south (Shanghai) is actually as cold as the north, but there is no central heating'. The north-south division line bisects the country into regions: the north with a wintertime central heating system[27], and the south without one (see similar discussion on central heat and north-south division in Makinen, 2014).

To southerners, the climate in the north is too dry. My own experience is quite illustrative. I was born and grew up in the southern part of China. Beijing was the first stop in my fieldwork trip. It was the first time I lived in the northern part of China for more than one month. I stayed in Beijing from the early autumn to the late winter. When I was in Beijing, my participants usually told me that 'autumn is the most beautiful season in Beijing'. As described by Chun:

> *As the ginkgo trees alongside the roads turn yellow, the colour of the whole city turns golden during this period. The memory of the beauty of the Imperial*

[27] The central heating system refers to the government-subsidized central heating system. In north China, central heating is installed in every houses/flats and local governments provide the users with subsidise. In south China, there is no central heating system, and when winter comes, people usually use a space heating unit or air-conditioner, which is electricity-consuming and without any subsidises.

> *Capital is concentrated in those colours. Unlike the weather in the UK, it seldom rains. It is still warm and bright in the autumn, and you need to cherish it. The golden autumn will soon vanish without any trace shortly.* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

Beijing's gorgeous golden autumn did not impress me, as its beauty had vanished before I even noticed, but its dim and freezing winter did. In one morning in early November, the whole world fell into the long winter all of a sudden. The city seemed to be cover by ashes of the burning autumn. Everything withered and turned grey. The cold air current from Siberia seemed to suck up every drop of water out of the air. When bitterly piercing cold wind blew over my face, it hurt like being polished by sandpaper. Growing up in the south, I was unaccustomed to the dry and frosty winter in the north. In my hometown, even on the coldest winter days, the city is still lushly green, and the air always has a smell of moisture and life. While southerners valued humid air, northerners did not like it:

> *It seldom rains in winter in the north and I like it. I like a dry and cool climate. In the south, however, it rains a lot in winter. Not only is it inconvenient to walk outside because of the rain, but what is more uncomfortable is the wet shoes and clothes. In addition, they don't have a central heat system, so it is the same damp and cold indoors as outdoors. They have to wear layers of clothes to stay warm even indoors. But the home in the north is much warmer and cosier. Just imagine the picture: there is a snowstorm outside, but indoors, we wear a short-sleeve T-shirt and shorts. The family stays together, and no matter how cold outside, the home is sweet and warm.* (Nancy, 28, female, Beijing)

In interviews, the climate was found to be 'inseparable' from participants' 'imaginative, social and material practices' (Hulme, 2016, p. 57). On the one hand, rather than a natural phenomenon, weathers and climates were understood by participants as lived social events (see similar discussion in Knebusch, 2008); on the other hand, the same weather triggers different emotions among participants from different regions. Northerners and southerners interpreted and valued weathers and climates differently, for example rain, moist air, dry air, temperature, wind and sunshine. Hence, different regionalised identities emerged in participants' anticipation of how their everyday lived experience, activities and emotions were influenced by different climates in different regions. Participants' construction of climate-based regional identities exemplifies literature arguing that climate is the social and cultural interpretation of the natural phenomenon. As said by Hulme (2016, p. 8), the climate is 'a rich ensemble of atmospheric processes, material technologies, memories, landscapes, dress codes, social practices, symbolic rituals, emotions and identities'. In the same vein, identifying with different climate in a specific region, participants constructed their identities as either northerners or southerners, which further influences their choices of cities and understanding inter-city differences. Therefore, this subsection contributes to the literature by examining transnational mobilities through the lens of climate.

4.4.4 Environment and pollution

To many participants, worse than frost was smog. When smog happened, the air smelled like vaporized soot and gasoline, burning my throat. It happened three times throughout the time I stayed in Beijing, almost ten days in total, though my landlord told me that this

situation has been getting better these years. In fieldwork, the environment was the fourth factor influencing participants' choice of the landing city.



14, November 2018 in Beijing　　7, December 2018 in Beijing

Figure 4.3 Air pollution in Beijing (left), photos taken by the author

In interviews, some participants chose the other two cities because of the severe air pollution in Beijing.

> *I chose Shenzhen because it has the best air quality! The sky is always blue and there are a lot of greenery*. (Jason, 29 Male, Shenzhen)

Scholarship on pollution-induced migration in China has produced fruitful works (for example Chen, Oliva and Zhang, 2017; Lu *et al*., 2018; Khanna *et al*., 2021), and research attention is also on how environmental pollution motivates Chinese to emigrate overseas (see for example Qin and Zhu, 2018). Echoing with existing literature, this thesis also suggests the environment as a lens to understand returnees' choice of *cityzenship*.

4.4.5 Cities constitutive of meanings and emotions

Cities not only differ naturally and institutionally but also socially and emotionally (Tuan, 1975; Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Stedman, 2002; Massey, 2005, 2013; Sebastien, 2020). Echoing this argument, this subsection exemplifies how participants understood megacities as constellations of social interactions and 'centres of meaning or points around which they [we] organize their [our] social and inherently meaningful lives' (Adey 2017, p. 67).

First, cities are constitutive of interpersonal relations. For example, some participants chose the city because of they wanted to live with their boyfriend/girlfriend. Another example is that returnees who had studied or worked in a city were more likely to return to that city. Ivy's story is quite illustrative:

> *I had studied in Shanghai before I studied abroad, and my friends and classmates stayed in Shanghai after graduation. When I was about to graduate, I considered no other cities but Shanghai because my friends were here. In the first few months, before I found a job, I had lived with one friend. She gave me a lot of*

help: not only providing me with accommodation and job suggestions but also emotional support. (Ivy, 27, female, Shanghai)

Like Ivy, many participants told me that cities were not just employment destinations but also places constitutive of friendship and personal networks. Returnees' explanation of migration to megacities resonates with the argument made by the existing scholarship that transnational students' mobilities are linked with interpersonal relationships, for example friendship (Waters, 2005, 2017; Robertson, Hoare and Harwood, 2011; Findlay *et al*., 2012; Beech, 2014; Carling and Collins, 2018). Moreover, in addition to the attachment to the interpersonal relations, emotions towards particular urban landscapes also influenced returnees' choices of megacities. Usually, those urban landscapes were places participants had been to before studied abroad, like food courts, cuisine streets, bistros frequently visited, university campuses, amusement centres and so on. Sometimes, participants invited me to pay a visit to these places together, as a way to explain how they chose the city.

This is the street where I spent most of my time when I was in university (as an undergraduate). It is a place full of memories. I usually dined in these restaurants. The food was so yummy. And after having food, my friends and I usually hang out along the street as the after-dinner walk. Sometimes we went to small shops … My student life back then was so sweet and carefree. Even now, I like to dine in those small restaurants. (Lora, 28, female, Shanghai)

Lora did her undergraduate study at a university in Shanghai and postgraduate study overseas. While walking together along the streets, Lora recalled the warm and fuzzy

nostalgic memories of her student life in Shanghai, telling me stories happening in those places. Like Lora, some other participants I met in fieldwork, also took me to places to show me how they were emotionally attached to the city. The value participants placed on urban materialities exemplifies Sebastien's (2020, p. 204) emphasis on 'the importance of physical and concrete places in dynamic territorial attachments and meanings'. Participants' emotional attachment to certain urban materialities not only came from bodily experience but also from imagination derived from the description in literature and images in movies. For example, when explaining her choice of Beijing, Linda said:

> *I have liked Beijing since I was a child. When I was young, I was particularly interested in Qing palace stories and watched many TV dramas about the Qing Dynasty royal family. The yellow-glazed tiles and red-brick walls of the Forbidden City, and the grey-brick walls of Beijing Hutongs all attracted me deeply. At that time, I felt that I must go to Beijing when I grew up.* (Linda, 25, female, Beijing)

While, as discussed previously, the iconic urban places influence participants' identifying with the city, those urban places also represent meanings of the city to some participants. Hence, the same as social relations, urban materialities also differentiated the chosen city from others emotionally.

Socially constructed urban differences are also reflected in how participants distinguished cities by giving them distinctive characters. Beijing is believed to be frank, generous and blunt, because Beijing is a north city, and people in the north part of China

are stereotyped as 'frank', 'straight' and honest'. Shanghai is a southern city where people are 'cunning', 'crafty' and 'good in business'. Shenzhen is a new city composed of immigrants, so it is very 'open' and 'inclusive'. Participants' descriptions of different cities resonate with existing scholarly discussions of Chinese regional stereotypes (Eberhard, 1965; Morgan, 2000). Usually, participants compared the city's character with their own personalities and character:

> *I am a blunt person without a second thought, seldom hiding my opinions and attitudes in life. Beijing is a typical northern city, and northerners are more straightforward than people from the south. It is easier for me to live a simple life rather than guessing people's ideas in Beijing.* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

Finally, since cities are constitutive of social relations, changes in social relations influence people's sense of and emotion attached to cities. Thus, participants' emotions and attachment to the city also changes. While for some participants, their attachment to the city has been enhanced with strengthening local social networks, for others, their city attachment was weakened as a failure of establishing local social circles. In interviews, some participants also expressed negative emotion to the changing urban landscapes resulting from urbanisation and urban refurbishment. 'It is no longer the city I used to live in when I was a student', said Jack (39, male, Beijing). Hence, returnees' emotion also changes with experiences of changing social relations in the city.

4.5 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter shows how megacities meet returnees' aspiration of *cityzenship* as memberships of multiscalar communities. First, *cityzenship* refers to a politically territorialised Chinese identity, mainland Chinese. Participants interpreted Chinese as a politically territorialised identity mainly due to a series of encounters with both non-Chinese and non-mainland Chinese in the course of overseas study. Recognition and reconciliation of the fissures between Chinese as a cultural identity and mainland Chinese as a national and political identity motivate participants to return to China. Second, transnational education mobilities also influence students' imagination of world geographies. Their geographical imagination of the developed world is no longer exclusively comprised of specific countries, for example United States and the United Kingdom, but also includes cities in the developing world, for example Beijing, Shenzhen and Shanghai in China. Thus, returning to China does not mean a give-up of membership of the developed world, which is believed to be aspired by transnational Chinese students in conventional literature (Fong, 2011). Third, this chapter also suggests the importance of inter-city differences in the analysis of the *cityzenship* of returnees. To participants, megacities differ in terms of historical, political, social and economic contexts, geographical locations and emotions (see similar arguments made by Tuan, 1975; Massey, 2013). Thus, while suggesting that all the three megacities' *cityzenship* meet participants' aspiration of identity as mainland Chinese and a membership of developed communities, this chapter also stresses the importance of considering the localised urban contexts in the analysis of *cityzenship*.

This chapter contributes to existing scholarship on the migration of transnational Chinese students in three aspects. First, it challenges the methodological nationalism embedded in conventional research. In this chapter, cities replace nations and become the key sites for returnees to pursuit their aspired citizenship: a territorialised national and political identity as mainland Chinese and the membership of the developed world. The inter-city differences embedded in participants interpretation of *cityzenship* also requires a city-level of analysis of transnational migration. Thus, this study reinforces the importance of a city-level of analysis of transnationalism in existing scholarship (Ong, 2005; Smith, 2001). Second, this chapter also contributes to the literature by pointing out the complexities of *cityzenship*. Participants' aspirations and interpretations of *cityzenship* are shaped by various factors including their previous experiences, national and municipal discourses and inter-city differences. For example, *Suzhi* discourse plays a key role in participants' description of megacities as developed cities. Urban imaginaries constructed in city master plans and urban images by the municipal governments also influence participants' choice of a megacity. Third, this chapter also highlights the importance of time in studying the migration of transnational Chinese students to megacities. In this chapter, time is a recurring lens in the analysis of participants' return migration and their *cityzenship*. In interviews, their narratives were frequently related to their previous experiences and anticipations and aspirations for the future, for example, encounters with others during the course of overseas study, previous connections with a megacity, future career plans and so on. As recent scholarship has witnessed explicit research attention on time in studying transnational migration (King, 2012; Wright and Ellis, 2016; Mavroudi, Page and Christou, 2017), this chapter brings the migration of transnational Chinese students into the discussion. *Cityzenship* is thus situational and continuously constructed by experiences of and reflections on their everyday city life

after the return. In fieldwork, it was found that work pressure, high living standards and the Firewall of China were all reasons for further identity reflection. As said by Chun 'while I studied abroad, I was extremely patriotic, but when I really return to China, sometimes I felt that it might be better if I choose to stay abroad.' Therefore, this study calls for a further study on the political identity of transnational Chinese student after their return.

Finally, it should also be noted that participants' social backgrounds may influence their reflection of transnational study experiences and migration to megacities. In this study, as stated in Chapter 3, most participants came from middle-class and upper-middle-class families in China and were born after 1990, which means they are beneficiaries of China's economic development. As said by Jack (39, male, Beijing): 'there are definitely Chinese students think the US is way much better than China, for example those who came to the US in the 1990s or earlier. They have been greatly influenced by American culture, and their imagination of China still depends on their childhood experience.' Hence, this chapter does not aim to generalise the choice of citizenship and the identity construction of all transnational Chinese students.

Chapter 5 To live as a *cityzen*: class-based cosmopolitan *cityzenship*

5.1 Introduction

During fieldwork, I met up with some of my old friends who volunteered in this study as participants. Qi was one of them. She had returned to and worked in Shanghai for two years before our meeting in a roof garden restaurant. It was located on the top floor of a western-style building in the French Concession area[28]. Sitting at the table in a rooftop bar on the terrace, we chat with some wine in the gentle spring evening breeze. Like many other restaurants in the concession area, English was a common language here. Some waiters and waitresses in this restaurant were foreigners, or more precisely, foreigners with white faces. They spoke English, and the menu was written in both English and Chinese. Some customers chatted in English. Some looked Chinese, but as they spoke fluent English, it was difficult to tell where they came from. 'I feel cosmopolitan (*guojiahua* in Chinese) here. Just like every metropolis city I have been to, New York, London, Hong Kong, etc., Shanghai is super 'cosmopolitan'', Qi said. 'Not only because of the skyscrapers and the complex', however, she added, 'but also because of the smell in the tube, you know, the crowds of rushing commuters and relentless noise of the vehicles; at the same time, it attracts you. I can live a life constitutive of diversity in Shanghai'.

[28] land leased to the France during the period of the semi colonization of China

Qi's description of Shanghai as a 'cosmopolitan' city represents one way in which returnees describe their everyday life in megacities. In this chapter, cosmopolitanism is a useful theoretical concept in explaining graduates' narratives on city life and how they make sense of their everyday lived experience in megacities. In the existing literature, cosmopolitanism is a highly contested theoretical concept (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002; Delanty, 2009; Tyfield and Urry, 2010): while some literature analyses it as a socio-cultural condition (Appadurai, 1996), a mode of openness to other cultures and an orientation to world (Hannerz, 1990) or a key to solving problems at the global level (Beck and Sznaider, 2006), other studies critically voice that cosmopolitanism may be interlocked with social and economic inequalities around the world (Harvey, 2009; Delanty, 2012; Calhoun, 2020). Based on Bourdieu's theory of class and distinction, studies analyse cosmopolitanism as a new form of cultural capital, perpetuating social stratification at the global level (Weenink, 2008; Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Utilising Bourdieu's theories, Isin and Wood (1999) examine consumption practices of cosmopolitan citizens in globalised urban space and theorise cosmopolitan citizenship as a class-based identity (also see similar arguments made by Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Identifying cosmopolitan citizens as a new class, Isin and Wood (1999) imply that urban spaces in global cities are fields of cosmopolitanism lifestyles and practices of class habitus. As described by Beck:

> *Cosmopolitanism has itself become a commodity; the glitter of cultural difference fetches a good price. Images of an in-between world, of the black body, exotic beauty, exotic music, exotic food and so on, are globally cannibalised, re-staged and consumed as produces for mass markets* (Beck, 2004, p. 150).

Arguments over cosmopolitanism are also reflected in the literature on the identities of transnational students. There are two major streams of scholarship which have widely discussed the close association between transnational mobility of students and cosmopolitanism: one the one hand, study abroad is said to contribute to students' development of orientation of openness to cultural diversity (see for example, Grabowski *et al*., 2017); on the other hand, transnational educational mobilities are described 'as a marker of distinction' (Prazeres, 2019, p. 1), consolidating stratification on the global scale (see for example, Weenink, 2008; Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Researchers in the second camp also deploy Bourdieu's (2018) theory of capital and distinction to understand the close association between transnational education mobilities and obtaining and reproducing elite cosmopolitanism (Prazeres 2019). For example, Waters (2007) finds that transnational education produces transnational cultural and symbolic capital accessed to an 'exclusive' group of privileged individuals. King (2011) argues that transnational education travels are rites of passage for young people to attain social distinction to differentiate themselves from immobile peers. Findlay *et al*. (2012, p. 129) observe that 'simply by being 'different', they saw themselves as achieving 'distinction' through mobility'. Lee's (2020, p. 2) work studies transnational education mobilities from the global north to the global south and examines how Western-situated transnational students construct a 'bona fide' cosmopolitan identity from various 'Others', those immobile peers both at home and host countries.

Thus, the starting point of this chapter is to explore the potential of transnational education mobilities for the development of a global-oriented and supra-territorial identity. More specifically, the chapter asks whether *cityzenship* is an identity that goes beyond narrow ethno-cultural nationalism whilst highlighting one's openness to cultural

diversity (Hannerz, 1996) and recognising common humanity (Urry, 2000; Turner, 2002) and membership of a postnational and deterritorised community (Appadurai, 1996), and inclusive reformulations (Bauböck, 1994; Ong, 1999). Focusing on returnees' everyday practices of *cityzenship* in the three megacities, I present how they construct *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity in the following sections. Section 5.2 shows how returnees practised *cityzenship* as a privileged cosmopolitan identity through everyday consumption of international food, services and symbols in megacities. In this section, through the lens of distinction and capital (Bourdieu, 1990, 2018a), this section theorises *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity. Section 5.3 analyses *cityzenship* an area-rooted identity constructed in returnees' everyday consumption practices. To participants, distinction was not only determined by what they consume, for example the foreign food, but also how they consume it. This section elaborates how returnees' habitus situates their everyday city life in particular gentrifying urban spaces, especially places that represent China's modernisation and globalisation. Stressing the interdependence between the local and the global, Section 5.4 discusses how *cityzenship* was constructed as a localised global identity. In interviews, returnees emphasised the importance of local features in making the megacities global. This section further demonstrates how returnees' selection of the local features (re)produces gentrifying urban space.

5.2 Megacities on the move

As discussed in Section 5.1, transnational mobility is key to the practices of cosmopolitan citizenship and global-oriented elites (Ong, 1999; Binnie *et al*., 2006; Benson, 2010; Tindal *et al*., 2015; Benson and O'Reilly, 2016; Moret, 2017; Prazeres,

2019; Ní Laoire, 2020; Zhang and Xu, 2020). Bourdieu's theory of capital is a useful analytic lens for exploring the interplay between class and mobilities (Bourdieu 2018). Transnational mobilities and the competence of transnational mobilities are conditions of cosmopolitan status (Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye, 2004). While transnational mobilities are distinction and capital held by cosmopolitan classes, immobilities are related to non-cosmopolitan classes (Binnie *et al*., 2006). However, unlike globally mobile elites and professionals, returnees live less mobile life after the return, findings which I discuss in Chapter 6 on *hukou* and *cityzenship*. This section advances understanding of the interplay between (im)mobilities and cosmopolitan by exploring how returnees practice and interpret their immobile city life as a cosmopolitan one. Megacities were believed by returnees to be global hubs where transnationally mobile materialities, information, symbols and migrants converged. This section demonstrates how returnees lived a cosmopolitan life by consuming these transnational mobilities. In what follows, through the lens of distinction and capital (Bourdieu, 1990, 2018), I first present how transnational mobilities in megacities contribute to returnees' construction of *cityzenship* as cosmopolitan one. Second, analysing the pursuit of distinction and difference embedded within returnees' consumption of transnational mobilities, I show how *cityzenship* is practised as a class-based cosmopolitan identity.

First, megacities were described as converging centres of transnationally mobile commodities. Eating is one of the most frequently mentioned consumption practices by participants to describe their life in megacities as a cosmopolitan one. As Molz's (2007, p. 81) study points out, travelling around the world to eat a variety of foods is a symbolic performance of a cosmopolitan consumption of 'the global'. The importance of consumption of the world delicacies was also found in participants' construction of

identity as a cosmopolitan *cityzen*. In interviews, participants usually showed their openness to cultural diversity, the classic embodied practices of cosmopolitanism (Hannerz, 1990), by emphasising their willingness of consuming food from other parts of the world. However, unlike the cosmopolitan citizens in western countries to travel around the globe to have a taste of the exotic food (Molz, 2007), returnees constructed their cosmopolitan identity by elaborating how megacities assemble global delicacies to allow *cityzens* to encounter the world diversity without moving globally. To be more specific, megacities were described by returnees as places where *cityzens* can have a taste of all the world. Linking specific food to particular places, returnees' cosmopolitan identity is realised by consuming different food. As said by Jenney (27, female, Beijing),

> *I feel very close to the world. For example, I can enjoy the world food here. Living in Beijing then you can eat food from all over the world. Every day you eat different things, any kinds, and not only foreign food, but also food from other places in China. Life is very diverse here.* (Jenney, 27, female, Beijing)

Imported food ingredients in restaurants and imported snacks in supermarkets are examples of transnational mobilities of materialities. In addition to products, foreign chefs were also important to returnees' eating 'authentic' foreign food without leaving megacities. Participants' consumption of foreign food echoes Cook and Crang's (1996) findings that urban consumers' imaginative mobilities coming from visiting ethnic restaurants and shopping foreign food in local supermarkets rely on transnational mobilities of others, including ingredients, recipes, and foreign chefs. Hence, the life of *cityzens* is constructed as a cosmopolitan one as living in megacities means living a life full of diversities.

Second, returnees' construction of cosmopolitan identity also relies on the transnational mobilities of global elites and professionals. While as stated by Latham (2003, p. 1703) that 'individuals and groups go about building a world in the city', to participants, those individuals and groups are usually transnationally mobile elites and highly-educated professionals. Again, I take consumption of food as an example:

> *There is a Korean street in Shanghai, and when I stepped into the street I felt like my Korean studying life comes back to me. In my hometown (a three-tier city) one also can easily find Korean restaurants, but Korean streets are totally different, not only because of the decoration or taste of food but due to the authentic feeling of being in Korea. In restaurants, you can find that many customers are Koreans. They are not visitors but residents in Shanghai. In Shanghai, there* are *many Korean companies, and managers of those companies are usually Koreans, so there are many Korean customers. Eating together with them makes me feel like I am in Korea.* (Amy, 25, female, Shanghai)

Hence, the emplacement of transnational professionals enhances the sense of cosmopolitanism embedded in food consumption. This statement is also reflected in Jack's (39, male, Beijing) explanation of why Guangzhou is seldom regarded as a world city. Jack said:

> *Guangzhou is a city of low-end international migrants, for example, migrants from Africa and southeast Asia. They come to Guangzhou to do small business,*

buy cheap products and sell them to people in their home country. (Jack, 39, male, Beijing)

Jack's narrative resonates with Werbner's argument (1999, p. 17) that classed-based framing of cosmopolitan citizen is usually imagined as a highly-educated transnational elite, which 'separates [separation of] professional occupational transnational cultures from migrant or refugee transnational cultures'.

Third, the transnational mobilities of artworks and cultured commodities were also found to be essential to participants' cosmopolitan city life. Megacities were described as internationalised and globalised hubs in China, welcoming the globally touring art and cultural industries. During fieldwork, I noticed that global art exhibitions and shows, such as musicals from London's West End or Broadway musicals, Russian ballet shows and Vienna symphony performances, were consumed by participants as global cultural commodities. To participants, only by living in megacities can one enjoy these 'world-class' works of art:

Shanghai is the only city in China where you have the chance to visit those world-touring exhibitions. For example, I paid a visit to Mademoiselle Privé (an exhibition introducing the origin and creation of the brand Chanel). After London, Seoul and Hong Kong, Shanghai is the only city in Mainland China (to exhibit) … Similar to Tiffany's pop-up store in Shanghai ... (Alice, 26, female, Shanghai)

To consume art in order to feel cosmopolitan resonates with the scholarship on cultural consumption and class privileges. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, distinction and class (1990, 2018) is frequently utilised to analyse the interplay consumption of art and social reproduction. For example, Bennett, Emmison and Frow (1999) indicate how privileged classes regard displaying artwork at home as ways to show their taste, class and educational background. Chaney's (2002) work reveals how privileged groups consume art commodities as a way of showing their cultural taste (see also Bourdieu, 1984). Defining culture as 'a specific field in which symbols, ideas, knowledge, images and sounds are produced, exchanged and consumed', Isin and Wood (1999, p. 123) explain the interplay between the consumption of culture and social reproduction. According to Isin and Wood (1999), on the one hand, the consumption of distinctive symbols embedded within cultural commodities is structured by the new middle-class habitus; on the other hand, cultural commodities require the consumer's cultural capital to construct their meanings. Art thus becomes the field of struggle and conflict, in which the rights refers one's access to production, consumption and distribution of culture (Lash and Urry, 1993).

Following above arguments, this study also finds that Bourdieu's ideas are useful for examining the interplay between the consumption of global touring art and cultural commodities and the construction of *cityzenship* as a privileged class identity. To returnees, on the one hand, the benefits of being a *cityzen* in megacities include the opportunity to consume global cultural commodities as distinction and differences; on the other hand, consuming these cultured commodities requires a certain level of pre-existing cultural capital (to afford and appreciate them). To be more specific, returnees' emphasis on cultural consumption not only implies cultural rights of *cityzenship* but also

their cultural capital to interpret symbols and meanings embedded in cultural commodities. As argued by Kendall, Woodward and Skrbis (2009, p. 128), art commodities 'have a performative character. Not only do they signify cosmopolitan difference, but more importantly they are (or can be) interpreted by particular consumer audiences as affording cosmopolitan difference'. Hence, examining returnees' consumption of transnational mobile cultural commodities, I show that returnees' interpretation of rights embedded within *cityzenship* implies a class-based framing of their cosmopolitan identity.

The interplay between cosmopolitan consumption and the construction of *cityzenship* as a privileged class identity is also reflected in returnees' food consumption. In interviews, I noticed that returnees usually judged the *authenticity* of foreign food by referring to their previous mobilities. As stated in the story of Qi in the last section, restaurants, especially western ones, tend to hire foreigners, especially white ones, as waiters and chefs in Shanghai. However, the presence of a white face or exotic interior decoration did not always trigger a sense of 'whiteness and elite', but sometimes were interpreted by participants as 'superficial business strategies' (Jason, 29, male, Shenzhen). Usually, participants' judgement of restaurants' authenticity depended on whether the taste of ethnic food was the same as food they had eaten while studying abroad or traveling abroad. When I interviewed Jason, a returnee from the US, in a bar in CBD Shenzhen, he told me that:

> *Some (waiters) barely speak English nor Chinese. What they (owners of restaurants) want is only white faces to show restaurants' high standard and taste, which obviously does not influence my judgment on whether a restaurant is*

> *authentic or not. What I care is the taste of food. I come to this bar frequently not because I can see the white waiters and waitresses but because the food here is the same taste as what I had when I studied in the US.* (Jason, 29, male, Shenzhen)

Like Jason, many participants connected the cosmopolitan consumption of foreign food with their previous transnational mobilities. Moreover, the author also noticed that participants always went to the restaurants that served food they had eaten while studying abroad. For example, returnees who had studied in the UK liked to have continental European food, such as Spanish food and Italian food. They regarded such consumption as a reminder of the travelling experience in continental Europe during spring break and summer vacation. Similarly, returnees who had studied in the US preferred Mexican food. Hence, participants explicitly used their well-established cultural references from previous transnational mobilities as the cultural capital to articulate their consumption practices, which Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2004, p. 206) theorised as 'self-referential cosmopolitanism' (also see in Lee, 2020).

Resonating with the argument of Binnie *et al*. (2006, p. 25) that 'cosmopolitanism is grounded in everyday urban experiences rather than transnational encounters', this section contributes to the literature by discussing how returnees consumed the transnational mobilities in their everyday city life to negotiate with the tension between *cityzenship* as an immobilised identity and a class privileged one. To be more specific, this section discusses how the mobilities of food, symbols, information and other transnational elites in megacities play essential roles in participants' negotiation with their immobile life after the return. On the one hand, *cityzenship* is constructed as a

cosmopolitan identity by consuming those transnational mobile materialities and immaterialities; on the other hand, their cosmopolitan consumption is structured by their class privilege. Therefore, conceiving cityzenship as a class-based cosmopolitan identity, this section exemplifies the 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck, 2004) and 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' (Urry, 2002).

5.3 An area-rooted cosmopolitan identity

This section focuses on discussing how *cityzenship* is constructed as an identity rooted in particular urban areas. In interviews, I found that cosmopolitan consumption was emphasised by participants as 'ordinary' practices in their everyday life. Bourdieu's (2018) theoretical concept of distinction is again illustrative here, conceptualising 'ordinary' consumption practices as a class-based framing of identity. As stated by Prazeres (2018, p. 4), cosmopolitan classes usually 'distinguish themselves from these emerging competitors in the lower ranks' by consuming more 'exotic' and 'rare' commodities and experiences. To participants, distinction was not only determined by what they consume, for example the foreign food or designer clothes, but also how they consume them. When participants talked about their consumption of world food, they emphasised it as their ordinary daily food. Moreover, this section further pointed out that returnees' habitus also shaped the spatialization of their everyday city life and geographical imagination of the city. To be more specific, in interviews, it was found that returnees' description of their everyday city life was spatially rooted in particular urban areas, especially areas representing China's modernisation and globalisation. These specific areas play a crucial role in participants' everyday work and consumption, shaping their everyday mobilities and influencing their definition of the city. In what

follows, I will suggest how returnees' habitus structures *cityzenship* as an area-rooted identity.

Explanation of *cityzenship* as an area-rooted identity begins with an observation that, while transnationally mobile commodities were essential components in the construction of a cosmopolitan identity, they were not evenly distributed in megacities. These commodities usually concentrated in particular areas including CBDs (central business districts), world-class shopping malls and so on. Academics explain the concentration of global capital, commodities and services in particular urban areas in Chinese cities as an outcome of China's strategic urban development (F. Wu, 2007; Tyfield and Urry, 2010; Cartier, 2011; Shatkin, 2017; Jayne, 2018). Baring the responsibility of China's modernisation and globalisation, Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen create a particular type pf urban space, such as high-rise office blocks, grandeur exhibition centres and world-class shopping malls, to attract foreign investment and transnational professionals (Wu, 2003; Zhu, Qian and Gao, 2011; Shen and Wu, 2012; He and Qian, 2017). These areas are iconic spaces designed by both city governments and real estate development agents to promote the global identity of China (He and Wu, 2005; Shao, 2013; He and Qian, 2017). To participants, these government-planned CBDs, grandeur exhibition centres, world-class shopping malls and pedestrian malls indicated particular urban areas where 'ordinary' daily consumption took place. Hence, while 'it is not unusual to see writers on cosmopolitanism avoid discussion of the state' (Kendall, Woodward and Skrbis, 2009, p. 5), returnees root their cosmopolitan *cityzenship* in particular urban landscapes supported by the state government's global-oriented urban regeneration.

Moreover, cosmopolitan consumption is not only about eating or buying products but also about consuming *urban space*. As Urry (2002, p. 1) claims, 'places themselves are in a sense consumed, particularly visually'. To participants, those areas provide them with a cosy environment to enjoy city life:

> *I feel good to come and sit and to enjoy the environment here. Others (customers) around are very decent and so do the overall environment. The mall is like a park. Within the building you can find bookstores, theatres, gyms, restaurants, cafes, DIY shops and so on. You can spend the whole day in it. (*Liz, 24, female, Shenzhen*)*

During fieldwork, areas labelled places for 'ordinary' visits included both the western-style high-rise complexes and historic buildings converted to iconic spaces for consumption of nostalgia (for example, reuse of industrial buildings in Beijing's Factory 798). These urban landscapes, as researchers argue, are gentrification spaces in China (Cartier, 2002; Gaubatz, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Wu, 2011). Participants usually chose to live in the areas where they could easily live a cosmopolitan lifestyle, otherwise they would live a very 'inconvenient' life. Ted's words are very illustrative:

> *I chose to live in the city centre even the rent is more expensive. But it is worth the price. You can have everything you need within ten minutes' walk. The Starbucks is just downstairs. But it is not easy for you to find a cafe in districts a little farther away from the city centre. Then my life will be very inconvenient.* (Ted, 25, male, Shanghai)

Returnees' residential location choices exemplify Raghuram's (2013, p. 143) argument on class and living location, that places are 'symbolic capital', 'marked by individuality and distinction'. Participants' area-rooted city life was also reflected in their common choices of interview locations in fieldwork. When I contacted participants and invited them to an interview, I let participants decide the interview location. Because most of the interviews were conducted on weekdays after they got off work, they usually chose places near their home or office. I found that most interview locations were concentred in financial centres or Central Business Districts, such as the Lujiazui Financial and Trade Zone in Shanghai, the Chaoyang district and the Xidan financial street in Beijing, and the World Exhibition & Convention Center in Shenzhen. As for interviews at the weekends, participants tended to choose the coffee houses in shopping malls near home. I still remember that in Shanghai, I interviewed two participants one after another in one day and found that the distance between two interview locations was only five minutes' walk. However, since living in these areas means higher rents, participants had to bear financial pressure to support their cosmopolitan life. In Chapter 7, I will come back to the discussion of financial pressure experienced by returnees through the perspective of family and lifecourse.

I further noticed an imagined division of urban landscapes emerging from participants' narratives on their area-rooted cosmopolitan city life. In fieldwork in Shanghai, I received a map of Shanghai from one participant. He suggested that everything about Shanghai was on this map (Figure 5.1). It is a hand painted map in which Shanghai is constitutive of CDBs, concession areas, theme parks, Disney land, national transportation centre and EXP Shanghai conventional centres.



Figure 5.1 Hand painting Shanghai map (a gift from a participant)

But compared to the map of Shanghai (Figure 5.1), the hand-painted map only occupies a small part of the city, as shown in the red circle in Figure 5.1 To participants, this circled cosmopolitan urban space, as an amalgamation of diverse cultures, contrasts sharply with other areas outside the red circle. Those other areas were believed as less cosmopolitan and developed areas, as symbols of the past, and as marginalised areas for far less privileged locals and low-end migrants. In interviews, emerging from most participants' narratives, those other areas were areas outside the third ring in Beijing and districts outside the Shenzhen Pass in Shenzhen.

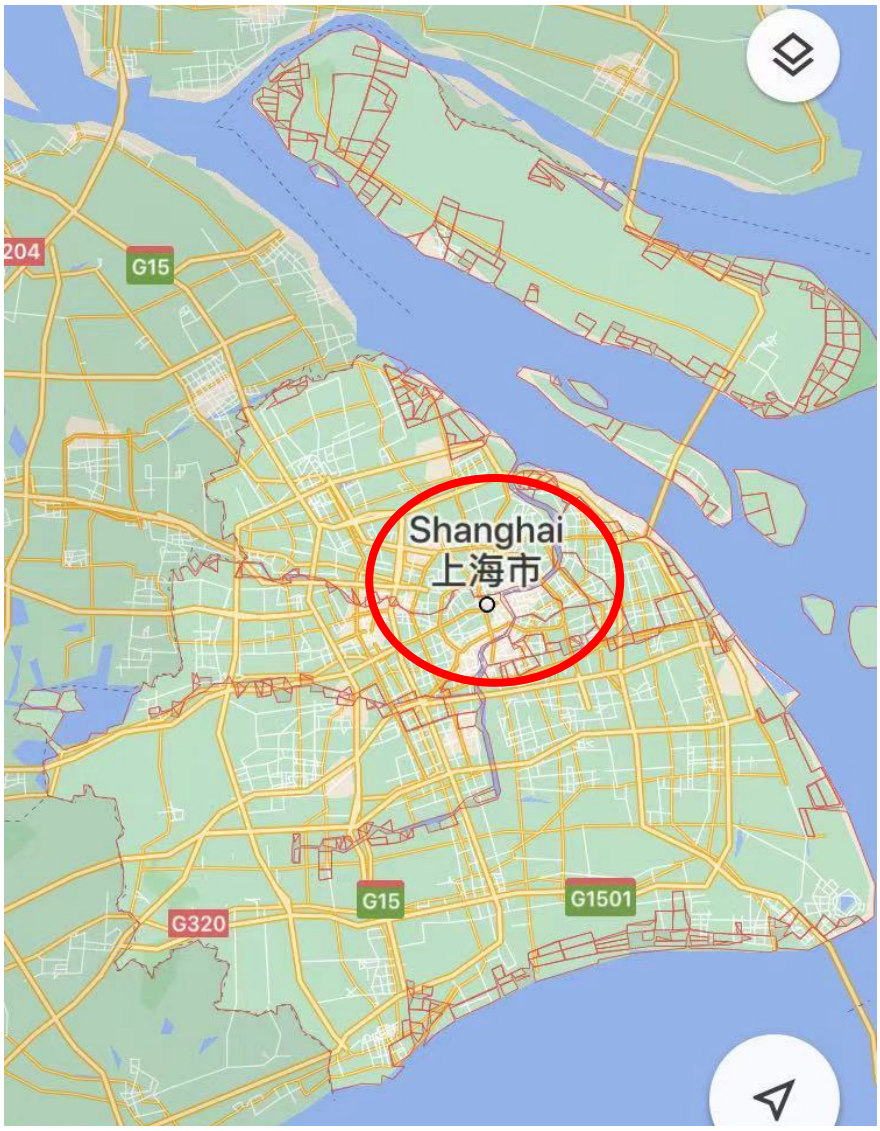


Figure 5.2 Shanghai Map

A similar urban imagination was also found in Tan and Yeoh's (2006) article on cosmopolitan urbanism in Singapore. In their article, they found that the urban landscape is 'divided into a city-cosmopolitan/suburb-heartland dichotomy' (Tan and Yeoh, 2006, p. 161). While global migrants live in the cosmopolitan areas, which represent the city's ethos as a mixture of cultures and nationalities, less-privileged ones stay in non-cosmopolitan heartland. In the similar vein, examining middle-class life in London, Butler (2003, p. 2469) found that while middle classes in London are 'in favour of multiculturalism and diversity', they 'huddle together into essentially White settlements

in the inner city. As Ley (2004, p. 161) describes, 'the expansiveness of inner-city cosmopolitanism becomes both more partisan and more parochial upon closer examination'. Binnie et al. (2006, p. 25) analyse the urban division as social inequalities reproduced by urban gentrification, a process which is supported by governments and urban authorities in pursuit of 'economic value in gentrifying city centres'. Creating a certain aesthetic cosmopolitan lifestyle (Lash and Urry, 1993; Rofe, 2003), these gentrifying landscapes are places where urban middle classes construct their privileged identity in encounters with locally grounded globality (Ley, 1980). Therefore, echoing these arguments, this section reinforces the class-based analysis of *cityzenship* by rooting returnees' practices in the gentrifying urban space in the megacities.

To sum up, this section discusses how returnees' everyday life in the three megacities is closely associated with the gentrifying urban space of cities that are explicitly branded and promoted as 'global', 'modern' and 'cosmopolitan'. Revealing how class-based framing of identity is interlocked with the gentrification of urban spaces, this section elaborates the identity of *cityzenship* as an area-rooted one.

5.4 Locally-made global cities

In previous sections, I showed how *cityzenship* in different megacities shares a range of similarities. However, in interviews with returnees, *cityzenship* was also constructed as a localised global identity by consuming the particularities of each megacity. Stressing the interdependence between the local and the global, this section discusses how the local was valued by returnees as an essential component in their construction of cosmopolitan *cityzenship* as a global identity. Two main findings are presented. The first half of this

section looks at how a global identity is made by returnees' cosmopolitan consumption of the local features. Second, 'challenging any simplistic reading of cosmopolitan consumption spaces' (Binnie *et al*. 2006, p. 25), this section further explores how the urban features were selected.

Returnees usually described the local features of each megacity in an attempt to illustrate how and why the megacity should be regarded as a global one. Participants' understanding of megacities as global ones produced 'locally' resonates with literature on the interdependence between the local and the global. For example, according to Hannerz (1990, p. 237), both the global and the local are parts of 'world culture' that is 'created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory' (also see in Hannerz, 1992, 1996). Stressing the value of interdependence between the global and local, this cosmopolitan attitude then allows researchers to examine how cosmopolitan urbanism differs in different countries and cities. Mary's (28, female, Shenzhen) narrative is quite illustrative. Emphasising the importance of the city's features, she used the concept of 'symbol' to make a comparison between megacities in China and the most famous world cities:

> *Each city has its own symbols to make it known to the world. For example, when we speak of New York, you will definitely think of Empire State Building, Central Park, Broadway; as for London, the symbols include Hyde Park, Thames, Big Ben and so on. Similarly, to be a world city, Chinese cities also need its localised symbols, especially ones with Chinese characteristics*. (Mary, 28, female, Shenzhen)

Mary's narrative echoes Urry's (2002) discussion of how cosmopolitan consumption is closely associated with images of places. According to Urry (2002, p. 28), the place is not only the 'symbolic location of products and services', such as 'capital cities (Paris), the countryside (the Cotswolds), the north of England and so on', but also imagined as distinctive symbols: 'examples including[e] Paris fashion items, seeing a Broadway musical, visually consuming the Matterhorn and so on'. Similarly, in this study, Forbidden City, Great Wall, Tiananmen Square in Beijing, French Concession areas and the financial centre of Lujiazui in Shanghai, Qianhai Development Zone in Shenzhen are all typical distinctive local symbols for a global taste of the city.

While it seems that different cities were imagined differently based on their respective features, I further noticed a boundary between acceptable differences and non-acceptable ones in participants' understanding of local features. In other words, while some local features were frequently recommended by participants as representations of traditional local culture, some were never mentioned. 'Challenging any simplistic reading of cosmopolitan consumption spaces' (Binnie *et al*., 2006, p. 25), this study asks how consumable features were selected. Examining participants' interpretation of their selection of local features, I found that the local features appreciated by participants are more notable for homogeneity than heterogeneity, and that participants' patterned selection of the local features is structured by their class and the discourses of modernisation and urbanisation in China. In what follows, I exemplify this argument by showing how participants selected the 'villages' as the local features to make the city global.

In Shanghai, two villages are usually ‘selected’ by participants: Qibao village and Zhujiaziu village as local features, both of which represent an idyllic image of water towns in the south of the lower reaches of the Yangze River in China (Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4). Those water towns are usually depicted as the historic and cultural heritages where visitors can seek a harmony between human and nature, and as a utopia where urban residents can escape from the stressful, noisy and polluted metropolis and find the peace in life (Fan, Wall and Mitchell, 2008).



Figure 5.3 Zhuajiajiao, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai



Figure 5.4 Zhuajiajiao, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai

Visiting Qibao village and Zhujiajiao villages, I found that both of them were commodified as commercial tourism projects for a global taste of vernacular dwelling. To begin with, most of the previous residential buildings were converted into restaurants, cafes and hotels to meet the consumption needs of tourists. Moreover, both towns were converted to create a sense of modernisation (Figure 5.5 newly built architectures) and globalisation (Figure 5.6 road signs translated into both English, Japanese and Korean)[29]. In addition, a sense of glocalisation was observed, a concept combining the words 'globalisation' and 'localisation' to describe how global business is adjusted to meet local needs (Robertson 1994), for example, Starbucks in Figure 5.7. Wandering in the town, I encountered some foreigners, like me, paying a visit to Zhujiajiao village to have an authentic taste of the transitional culture of the water towns in the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in China (Figure 5.8).

[29] Also see in Shuang's (2012) article on how the use of English constructs a 'global village' in China



Figure 5.5 The bookstore and souvenir shop in Zhuajiajiao, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai



Figure 5.6 The bookstore and souvenir shop in Zhuajiajiao, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai



Figure 5.7 Restaurants and Cafes in Zhuajiajiao, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai



Figure 5.8 Zhuajiajiao, foreign visitors, taken by the author in May 2019 in Shanghai

While returnees in Shanghai recommended villages as the local features, returnees in Shenzhen never mentioned villages in their description of Shenzhen as a global city. They regarded Shenzhen as a brand-new city without any local culture and history, famous for the Shenzhen miracle of rapid urbanisation. As for the local features, they usually mentioned Qianhai Development Zone as an image of 'Shenzhen speed'.

> *Shenzhen is a city without no history and lack of local cultural heritages. Unlike in Beijing and Shanghai, where you can see many historical buildings, in Shenzhen, everything is new, and every place are newly built.* (Sam, 30, male, Shenzhen)

However, though called a new city built by immigrants, Shenzhen has its local history and original residents (Zacharias and Tang, 2010; Cui, Song and Gao, 2020). Before founded as a special economic zone under China's 'open door' policy, the administrative area of Shenzhen had been under the jurisdiction of Bao'an County. Rather than a so-called 'small fishing village' as believed by participants, Bao'an had been a rural county with diverse agricultural industries (Yang, 2008). As discussed in Yang's article (2008), according to *Bao'an County Agricultural Statistics Annual Report 1978*, there were 23 communes, 333,500 residents (75852 households), and a labour force of 126,133 with 105,110 in agriculture, 1,591 in fishery, 3,049 in oyster industry, 3,584 in social industry, and 14,292 in team-run industry. Shenzhen was built on the farmland which had been owned by different villages and communes in Bao'an County, and with the dramatic urban development, originally residential areas became the urban villages in Shenzhen (Bach, 2010). These urban villages are closely interlocked with the urbanisation and modernisation of Shenzhen, as they provide the low-end migrants and migrant workers with cheap housing in Shenzhen (F. Wu, 2007). The living cost is also relatively low in the urban villages as there are comparatively affordable clinics, restaurants, street markets and kindergarten in urban villages (Figure 5.9, Figure 5.10, Figure 5.11).



Figure 5.9 The clinic and restaurants in Gangxiacun village, taken by the author in March 2019 in Shenzhen

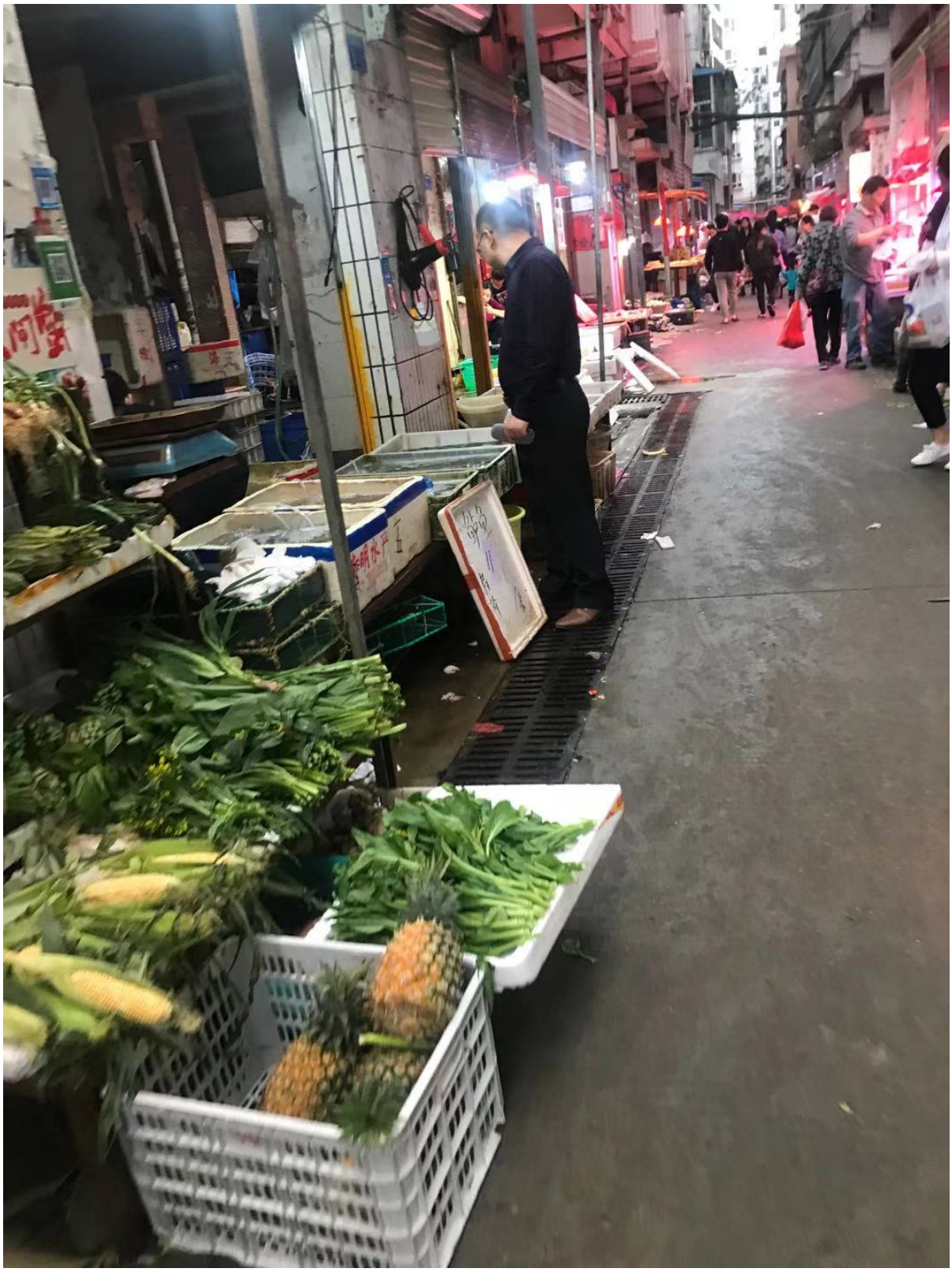


Figure 5.10 Street markets in Baishizhou village, taken by the author in April 2019 in Shenzhen



Figure 5.11 A kindergarten in Baishizhou village, taken by the author in April 2019 in Shenzhen

While it is difficult to measure how commodified water towns in Shanghai are related to Shanghai's contemporary modernisation and urbanisation, urban villages in Shenzhen definitely play an essential role in the city's development, and residents in urban villages contribute significantly to Shenzhen's modernisation and urbanisation (O'Donnell, Wong and Bach, 2017). Moreover, unlike the villages in Beijing and Shanghai which scatter on the outskirts of the cities, villages in Shenzhen are adjacent to the most prosperous areas in the city centre (Hao *et al.*, 2013; Wen and Hanley, 2016). This statement can be illustrated by photos I took in fieldwork. Figure 5.12 was taken in Gangxiacun, an urban village located in the downtown area and enclosed by high-rise office buildings, international business conference centres, shopping malls and world-famous hotels (Hilton). So, I was pretty surprised when I noticed that even though some

participants lived and worked near urban villages, they seldom stepped into any of those villages.

In interviews, no participants considered urban villages in Shenzhen as a local feature representing local history and culture. When asked to talk about their impression of urban villages, participants usually described them as the deteriorated urban areas that were 'dirty, messy and inferior', as in participants' words. This image echoes how urban villages in China are depicted in mainstream discourses: they are stigmatised as unsafe and unclean quasi-slum areas built by profit-pursuit local farmers for floating low-end migrants (F. Wu, 2007; Zhang and Zhao, 2007). However, this study aims neither to comment on the commodification of water towns to meet the demand of China's mission of modernisation and globalisation nor to suggest the renewal of urban villages to consider social inequalities. It is true that due to a lack of planning and landowners' desire for profit, these urban villages have severe security risks such as fire hazards (Zacharias and Tang, 2010). As shown in Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14 that I took during fieldwork, landowners built the buildings extremely densely to maximise the use-value of the land, sacrificing security and natural lighting.

In Beijing and Shanghai, there are also urban villages accommodating low-end floating migrants. The urban villages in Beijing and Shanghai, like urban villages in Shenzhen, were not regarded as local features by returnees. Hence, while some villages, such as water towns, are local features that make the local global, some are non-acceptable features, for example urban villages. Water towns were selected as local features because they were commodified as the localised cultural products for the global taste. Urban villages were not distinct enough for a global taste and treated by participants as the city

problems and obstacles for city's globalisation. Therefore, as stated in Section 5.3, urban space is consumed to construct the identity of *cityzen* as a cosmopolitan one, so do the local features.



Figure 5.12: Gangxiacun village, taken by the author in March 2019 in Shenzhen



Figure 5.13 Gangxiacun village, taken by the author in March 2019 in Shenzhen



Figure 5.14 Xinzhoucun village, taken by the author in February 2019 in Shenzhen

Therefore, while, as discussed in the previous sections, returnees' consumption practices construct *cityzenship* a cosmopolitan identity by liberating their everyday *cityzen* lives

from the constraints of the local, this section analyses *cityzenship* as a localised global identity. First, this section illustrates how returnees regarded local features as symbols for a global taste. Second, examining returnees' selection of the local features, this section discusses how returnees distinguished between the accepted features and the non-accepted ones. As discussed in Section 5.2 and Section 5.3, while participants emphasised their openness to cultural differences, they exclude urban villages, low-end domestic and transnational migrants from their *cityzen* life. Hence, participants' seeking local features in fact erases rather than celebrates urban differences.

5.5 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter contributes to the literature in three important ways by engaging with the existing debates on cosmopolitanism, social class and urban space. First, this chapter shows how everyday consumption practices construct *cityzenship* as a privileged cosmopolitan identity. In all three sections, class emerges as a key lens to understand the exclusive nature of *cityzenship*, findings which resonate with existing literature on urban citizenship and cosmopolitanism (Isin and Wood, 1999; Binnie *et al*., 2006; Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Through the lens of practice theory (Bourdieu, 1990), this chapter describes returnees' *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity, which is realised by everyday cosmopolitan middle-class consumption. Urban spaces are central to their construction of *cityzenship* as a privileged identity. For example, CBDs and shopping malls are arenas where their daily consumption of transnationally mobile commodities and services, global cultural products and symbols take place. Hence, this section illustrates how *cityzenship* is a class-based identity by examining returnees' everyday consumption, distinction and exclusion.

Conceptualising *cityzenship* as a class-based identity is closely related to the second contribution of this chapter: a discussion of *cityzenship* and urban gentrification in megacities. Lefebvre's (1991) spatial theory helps explain the interplay between practices of *cityzenship* and the reproduction of gentrifying urban space. On the one hand, megacities play an important role in returnees' everyday cosmopolitan consumption, for example, CBDs, commercial centres and development zones where globalised capital, transnational commodities, services and elites assemble. As in Cartier's (1999, p. 279) words, 'if the cosmopolitan has a geography, world cities are its primary nodes.' On the other hand, returnees' everyday consumption practices reproduce urban geographical and social inequalities. For example, the consumption of foreign commodities and services requires returnees' cultural and economic capital; returnees selection of local features exclude certain places and groups from their imagined urban space (migrants from the global south and low-end domestic floating population). Hence, this chapter exemplifies the argument made by Jayne on cosmopolitan consumption and urban gentrification (also see in Isin and Wood, 1999; Lizardo, 2005; Binnie *et al*., 2006; Igarashi and Saito, 2014):

> *This 'new', accelerated consumer culture based on individualised consumption and its symbolic and aesthetic relation to the emergence of the new middle class on the one hand, and mass unemployment, low wages and insecure employment on the other, has had a profound effect on every aspect of urban life*. (Jayne, 2006, p. 34)

Thus, as discussed in Chapter 2 on 'the rights to the city', *cityzenship* is a privileged membership and represents 'a superior form of rights': the class-based rights to live a cosmopolitan life and '[t]o exclude the *urban* from groups, classes, individuals' (Lefebvre, 1996, pp. 173, 195). Moreover, *cityzens'* access of the city-based rights, for example, the permission of buying local residential prosperities, depends the megacity's membership (*hukou*), and I will come back to the discussion of the *hukou*-based rights in Chapter 6.

Third, this chapter argues that to returnees, cosmopolitanism refers to distinction rather than globally-oriented responsibility. This chapter explains a paradox embedded within their consumption practices. On the one hand, they expressed their keen desire for diversities and willingness to learn about others. For example, eating foreign food and visiting international art shows were interpreted as ordinary consumption in everyday city life. On the other hand, their openness to others and embrace of the global do not show a sense of responsibility for foreign others (cosmopolitanism proposed by Hannerz, 1996) nor universal humanity of justices, equality and respect (cosmopolite depicted by Ley, 2004). Instead, in their everyday *cityzen* life, they exclude non-acceptable others geographically, culturally and socially. For example, in interviews, participants' global oriented willingness manifests as distinctive consumption practices, instead of a sense of global-oriented responsibility. In their narratives on being global as a *cityzen*, they seldom mentioned themes such as global warming and global human rights (Szerszynskiand and Urry, 2002; Turner, 2002; Ley, 2004). Their pursuit of cultural diversity, openness to differences and willingness to engage with others do not include African migrants, low-end domestic migrants and urban villages. Thus, the cosmopolitan identity of participants is more like 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck, 2004) and 'aesthetic

cosmopolitanism' (Urry, 2002). Similar arguments have been made by scholars interested in transnational education. For example, Caruana (2014), Prazeres (2019) and Lee (2020) all discuss international student mobility as a marker of distinction. As argued by Matthews and Sidhu:

> *Transnational education does not necessarily establish the conditions for unsettling ethno-cultural and nationalistic persuasions and practices and thus misses the opportunity to sponsor cosmopolitan identification and globally oriented subjectivity*. (2005, p. 50)

Therefore, *cityzenship* as a cosmopolitan identity is class-based. In the end, to tackle exclusivity embedded in transnational education, I suggest Turner's (2002) 'cosmopolitan virtue' to transnational students, transnational education institutions, the locals and media in studying countries: to maintain a cool and ironic distancing from one's own culture, to reflect and self-reflect distance from the homeland and to recognise human and cultural vulnerability.

Chapter 6 *cityzenship* and the *hukou* system

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the discussion of how the *hukou* system influences transnational Chinese students' migration to the three megacities and their *cityzenship*. As argued by Kam Wing Chan (2013, p. 2), 'any meaningful analysis of internal migration in China must begin by understanding the *hukou* system and its relationship to migration'. The *hukou* system, also known as the household registration system, has been a basic governmental technology since the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE). It mainly has two functions: serving as the census register recording a person's 'category' (agriculture/non-agriculture), residential location, birth date, state of marriage, degree of literacy, and occupation, and operating as a social management system. Recent scholarship draws insights from citizenship studies and uses the idea of social rights and membership to study how the *hukou* system regulates internal migration in China (Turner, 1993; Smart and Smart, 2001; Zhang, 2018). In a similar way to how passports regulate the flows of people on a nation-state level, the *hukou* system is regarded as a gatekeeper, controlling the flows of migrants within national borders and excluding migrants without local *hukou* (Chan, 2013).

This chapter examines how returnees' cityzenship is interlocked with *hukou* in megacities[30]. Focusing on how returnees attained *hukou* in megacities and why they valued it, this chapter shows how the *hukou* system institutionalises overseas degrees as cultural capital, converts them to localised social rights and stresses the importance of a culture analysis of *hukou*. Section 6.2 begins with a historical review of the formation and reforms of the *hukou* system and a discussion of why recent *hukou* reforms require a research focus on specific city contexts (Liang and Ma, 2004; Wang, 2005a; Chen and Fan, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2020). This section also explains the difficulties that migrants face in attaining megacity *hukou,* as mentioned in Chapter 2. Section 6.3 presents a detailed elaboration of how student returnees attain *hukou* in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. Section 6.4 discusses how returnees value the city-based *hukou* system in the three cities. Based on the findings of how returnees attain *hukou* (Section 6.3) and why they desire it (Section 6.4), Section 6.5 bridges the discussion about the city-based and culture-based (child-centred familism) *hukou* system and the internal/transnational (im)mobilities of the returnees. In Section 6.5, I further explain how the *hukou* system works with child-centred familism (Yan, 2016) and educational desire (Kipnis, 2011) to (re)produce social inequalities.

While conventionally scholarship considers how the *hukou* system regulates internal-urban migration by analysing individuals' access to the localised social rights (Cheng and Selden, 1994; Solinger, 1999b; Wang, 2005a; Fan, 2007; Zhang and Wang, 2010), this chapter argues that family is also a valuable lens to explore how the *hukou* system shapes and directs migration. Setting the family as the basic social unit in the analysis explains how child-centred culture (Yan, 2016) and educational desire (Kiplins, 2011)

[30] As mentioned in Chapter 1, since the *hukou* system is always under reformed, the *hukou* policies discussed in this thesis precede September 2019, the time my fieldwork trip ended.

lead to geographical variation in the value of *hukou*, with the first-tier cities at the top and rural areas at the bottom (Solinger, 1999a; X. Wu, 2007; Li, Li and Chen, 2010; Hao and Tang, 2018). Moreover, this chapter also uses the theoretical lens of capital theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Brooks and Waters, 2011) to explore the notion that highly selective *hukou* (re)produces social inequalities by institutionalising transnational education mobilities as cultural capital. The institutionalisation of overseas degrees as cultural capital (by the localised *hukou* system and a wider cultural phenomenon of child-centred familism) thus explains why privileged Chinese families, even lower middle-class families, are willing to send their child abroad to get an overseas degree even though it costs a lot. Hence, applying cultural and social logic to the analysis of *hukou*, this chapter contributes to internal-urban migration studies (Mallee, 1988; Chan and Zhang, 1999; Chan, 2010, 2013) by introducing a transnational perspective. Moreover, although there has been work on transnational migration and cities (Smith, 2005, 2017), there is a lack of discussion of the importance of overseas education. Therefore, this chapter also contributes to studies on transnational education mobilities by calling for research attention to be paid to a city-level of analysis.

6.2 A historical review of the *hukou* system and migration

To every citizen in China, *hukou* is a cradle-to-grave certificate. The *hukou* system, or the household registration system, is a family registration program in China. The *hukou* certificate is issued to each family as a booklet (one booklet per family), and each family member is registered in the family's *hukou* certificate. On the first page of the *hukou* certificate is the information pertaining to the head of the household[31] (the owner of the

[31] One *hukou* booklet has only one head of the household.

family's residential property), including his or her *hukou* location, *hukou* category, date of birth, occupation, and so on. The location and the category of the head of the household decide the categories of other people registered on the same *hukou* certificate, usually the spouse and children of the head of the household. A newly-born child is registered in the parents' booklet. This registration proscribes the city where the child is eligible to attend primary and secondary schools and take the *Gaokao* Examination[32]. After the *Gaokao* Examination, if one successfully gets a place at a university, then he or she could move his or her *hukou* from the parents' *hukou* booklet to the university's collective *hukou* booklet. After graduation, an individual's *hukou* has to be separate from the university's collective *hukou* booklet. If a graduate finds a job in the city other than their hometown and meets local *hukou* application requirements, then the graduate could be registered in the local collective *hukou* system (e.g., the company's collective *hukou* booklet). If the graduate cannot meet the requirements, they could still work in the city but will have to move their *hukou* back to their parents' *hukou* booklet. How and when could one be the head of the *hukou* booklet? Different cities have different policies. For example, in Beijing, for the Beijing *hukou* holder, when one has his or her own residential property in Beijing, then he or she could move his or her *hukou* to the residential property and be the head in the new *hukou* booklet. When he or she starts a new family, the other family members (e.g., the spouse and the children) can also be registered in his or her *hukou* booklet. In this sense, one's *hukou* is either registered in the family's *hukou* booklet or the collective *hukou* booklet, and the *hukou* certificate is present in every stage of one's life course.

[32] The *Gaokao*, also known as the college entrance examination, is a province-based examination, and see detailed description in Section 6.3.

This section reviews existing literature on the *hukou* system and its governance of population and explains how the *hukou* system serves as a fundamental institution in China. The first subsection discusses how the *hukou* system, also called the *huji* system in ancient China, has been institutionally interlocked with China as a nation-state throughout history. The second subsection reviews research on the *hukou* system after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. In Mao's era, 1949 to 1978, *hukou* bifurcated the domestic geography into the rural and the urban and strictly controlled internal migration (Chan, 2013). Since the opening-up of China in 1978, reforms have relaxed *hukou*'s control of the population and allowed internal migration, as a huge population of migrants flooded to big cities and the coastal area (Fan, 2007). Reviewing the literature on the reformed *hukou* system, the third subsection discusses how the city matters in studying internal-urban migration in contemporary China, and identifies research gaps in existing scholarship.

6.2.1 History of the huji system: the huji as an ancient governmental technique

This subsection explores the origin and development of the *huji* system and traces its far-reaching social consequences. Although the *hukou* system as the household registration system has its origin in the 1950s, the *huji* system has been used as a population registration and classification institution to govern the country and its population since the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE). The *huji* system has long been —and even remains today —the basic and central institutional mechanism controlling, scrutinising, and regulating the people, shaping the flows of population, and defining social hierarchies and relations in ancient China (Yao, 2004). It was designed, developed, and perfected

with the growth of the empire power, the establishment of feudal hierarchy, and the alternation of dynasties in China's history.

The origin of the *huji* system was accompanied by China's formation as a national state (Yao, 2004). In the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE), the *huji* system began to take shape, as the Zhou kings allocated a certain number of families to a particular area of land, and the families needed to farm in the allocated land for the monarch and his feudal lord[33] (Sima, 1993; also see in Yao, 2004). During this period, the *huji* system was closely interlocked with farmland and families (the character 'hu' in Chinese means family). In the year 375 BCE (Warring States Period in East Zhou Dynasty), the Qin State implemented the Shang Yang[34] reform, which introduced a series of institutional reforms including allocating the state farmland to the family and fixing each family to specific farmland (Yao 2004). The family became the only unit for the monarch to impose taxes and recruit the army. Any changes in the family, such as new births, deaths, missing members, and migration, had to be reported to the government. It is still widely accepted that it was this reform that unified China as an empire for the first time in the country's history (Yao, 2004). Since then, by registering, controlling, scrutinising, and regulating each person in the empire, the *huji* system has served as the most basic and central social management institution and as the fundamental administrative mechanism of ancient China's bureaucratic administration for the following two thousand years (Zhang, 2018).

There are three main distinctive characteristics of the *huji* system. First, the reforms of the ancient *huji* system were in accordance with the changes to the feudal systems in

[33] See in the chapter Offices of Earth and the chapter Office of the Autumn in the book *Rites of Zhou*.
[34] Shang Yang, also called Lord Shang, was a minister of the Qin State. He served the Duke Xiao of Qin (361 – 338 BCE) and he is considered to be the father of Qin's 'legalism'.

China. For example, in the Jin Dynasty (266AD-420AD), with the dichotomy of society, the *huji* system was classified into two categories: the *shihu* (the *huji* of the nobles) and *suhu* (the *huji* of the peasants). In the Tang Dynasty (618AD-907AD), with the emergence of the division of labours, the occupational *huji* was invented. Having the *shihu* (*hukou* of the upper class), the whole family could be freed from tax and military service. Second, the *huji* system set the family as the basic administrative unit and required the family's land to be registered in the family's *huji*. The empire conducted the census, conscripted, taxed, and recruited the people based on the family and the farmland registered with the family's *huji*. Third, bonding the family and farmland together, the *huji* system strictly limited the flows of populations throughout all dynasties in China's history. For example, in the Qin Dynasty, migration was illegal without the permission of governments, and any violation would bring severe punishment to both the violators and their neighbours and the local officers[35].

The *huji* system helped ancient China develop a centralised and uniform bureaucratic administration to govern a vast population across an expansive territory. Although emerging from different social and ideological structures, the ancient Chinese *huji* system is compared to 'modern/western' governmental technologies by recent scholarship (Zhang, 2018). Drawing on insights from Foucault's biopower theory, Zhang (2018, p. 8) comments that 'the existence of comprehensive systems of population registration, classification and census for exercising social control' in China could be featured as technologies of biopower, which used to be believed as 'exclusively a feature of European modernity'.

[35] See in the Book of Lord Shang.

6.2.2 The hukou system, internal-urban migration and urbanisation of China after 1949

The discussion of the *hukou* system after 1949 is usually situated in the context of the modernisation and urbanisation of China. During the first three decades of the People's Republic of China, the *hukou* system's main feature was a division of the national population into two categories: the non-agricultural *hukou* holders and the agricultural *hukou* holders. This division of the *hukou* status aimed to serve the forced industrialisation, a national project 'which required meticulous planning and control of all macro and micro facets of society, and pursuit of a Stalinist-type, Big Push industrialisation strategy premised on the unequal exchange of industry and agriculture' (Chan, 2009, p. 199). In 1951, the *hukou* system was first restored as the census register to record the urban population's residence. In 1955, the *hukou* system was expanded to record the rural population (Mallee, 1988, 1995; Cheng and Selden, 1994). In 1958, the division of the whole population into two *hukou* categories, agricultural *hukou*, and non-agricultural *hukou*, marked the final step of implementing the *hukou* system as a national institution. Each person was classified as either a non-agricultural *hukou* holder (urban resident) or an agricultural *hukou* holder (rural resident), and the new-borns followed that of the mother. As the national welfare programs heavily favoured urban *hukou* holders, while rural *hukou* holders hardly accessed the social welfare and benefits (Chan, 1999), the *hukou* system triggered a dichotomy between agricultural *hukou* holders and non-agricultural *hukou* holders (Chan and Zhang, 1999). During this period, migration was severely restricted in the sense that without moving *hukou* to the new residential places, migrants could not get access to food, clothing, places to live, schools, or work. Immobilising the *hukou* holders institutionally, the *hukou* system strictly controlled the flow of internal migration, especially migration from the rural area to the cities, as the

transfer of *hukou* status was severely restricted by the government with the conversion rate at about 1.5% (Chan, 2009).

The subsequent open-door era (since 1978) witnessed a relaxing of *hukou* and immobilised the population (Chan and Buckingham, 2008). The economic reform adopted the 'world-factory' strategy to replace the planned economic system as the new industrialisation program, and the end of the planned economy era, made the food, clothing, and commercial, residential properties largely available in the market (Chan, 2009). During this period (from 1978 till now), as a huge population of peasants flooded to the coastal area and worked in factories as cheap and temporal labourers, the *hukou* system has been gradually revised. The reform started with granting permission to rural migrants to stay and work in places different from where their *hukou* is registered (Lu, 2008). Moreover, city governments relaxed the issue of local *hukou* to migrants. At the same time, the introduction of temporary residence permit and the establishment of the social welfare system provided migrants without local *hukou* with more social rights than before. Third, the bifurcation between rural *hukou* and urban *hukou* had become less compelling. The provinces (31 out of 32) have eliminated the binary non-agricultural and agricultural classification of the *hukou* type (Government of China, 2016). In the second decade of the 21st century, a series of policies have been adopted by the central government to reform the *hukou* system. In March 2014, stating that the rural-urban division was still the main obstacle to the development of the country, the National New-type Urbanisation Plan, 2014–2020 (Government of China, 2014) planned to merge agricultural and non-agricultural *hukou* and to have 60% of the total population live in urban areas.

6.2.3 City-based hukou system and internal-urban migration

With the decentralisation of the *hukou* system, city governments have more authority in deciding how to issue *hukou* to migrants (Wu, 2013). According to the *Opinions on Further Promoting the Reform of the Hukou System* issued by the State Council (Council, 2014), the country adopts a multi-tiered, city-based, and differentiated approach to reforming the *hukou* system and the smaller the city, the easier it is to attain local *hukou* (see Table 6.1).

City size (based on city population)	**The corresponding principles for the issue of local *hukou***
Towns and small cities (county-level cities)	• Issue of *hukou* should be open to all migrants with legal and stable residences (including leases) and applicants' spouses, minor children, parents can also apply for local *hukou*.
Medium-sized cities (500 thousand to 1 million)	• Issue of *hukou* should be loosened up gradually so that migrants with legal and stable employment and residences (including leases) and paying social insurance for a certain period could apply for local *hukou*; • The required minimum time period for paying the social insurance should not exceed 3 years.
Large cities (1 to 5 million)	• Cities need moderately to control the scale and pace of the issue of local *hukou* but the requirements for the attainment of local *hukou* should be reasonable;

	• Stricter requirements of employment and residence (including leases) can be made but the required minimum period for paying social insurance should not exceed 5 years; • Cities are allowed to introduce point-based systems for *hukou* attainment.
Extra-large cities (over 5 million)	• Cities need to strictly control the population size; • Each city government is required to establish and improve its own point-based systems for *hukou* attainment; • Employment, residence (including lease), the years of paying social insurance and the years of continuous residence are the main indicators in the point-based schemes; • But the point-based schemes for *hukou* attainment should be in accordance with the city's comprehensive residential capacity and economic and social development needs.

Table 6.1 A differentiated approach to *hukou* attainment (State Council 2014).

This document classifies cities into different sizes based on their population and requires small cities, medium-sized cities and large cities to make it easier to attain local *hukou* while *hukou* in extra-large cities remains difficult to acquire. Extra-large cities are required to establish their individual point-based systems according to the city's overall residential capacity and economic and social development needs. The point-based *hukou* system gives privileges of *hukou* attainment to migrants who 'fit' the so-called urban

industrial transformation and who are competitive in employment, including university graduates, skilled workers, vocational college graduates, and overseas returnees to settle down.

Take Beijing as an example. In 2018, based on the *Beijing Municipal Administrative Measures for Point-based Hukou Registration (for Trial Implementation)* (People's Government of Beijing, 2016), the Beijing municipal government introduced a point-based *hukou* application system. Applicants applying should first meet all the following conditions:

(1) Hold a residence permit in this city;
(2) Not exceed the legal retirement age;
(3) Have paid social insurance for at least consecutive 7 years in Beijing;
(4) No criminal record.

The Beijing Residential Permit is given to any migrants who work and live and pay tax/social insurance in Beijing for more than six months. Legal retirement age is 60 for men and 55 for women. The social insurance system in China is a place-based/city-based welfare system, including endowment insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, employment injury insurance, and maternity insurance. Different city governments have different policies on paying social insurance, and usually, it is the employing company and the employee that share the payment. The social insurance system operates independently from the *hukou* system, which means that both local *hukou* holders and non-local *hukou* holders can join and benefit from the local social rights available. If one moves to another place, the social insurance paid in the previous

residential city can be transferred to the new residential place, regardless of the category and location of one's *hukou*. But it should be noted that the social insurance system usually provides local *hukou* holders with more social rights than it does non-local *hukou* holders. For example, in Shanghai, even if both Shanghai *hukou* holders and non-Shanghai *hukou* migrants can join the social insurance system, Shanghai *hukou* holders have higher endowment insurance. Moreover, migrants' application and attainment of *hukou* is closely interlocked with the social insurance in most megacities, as the local governments require migrants to pay the city social insurance for a certain amount of time and count as one of the *hukou* application requirements. Therefore, according to the *Beijing Municipal Administrative Measures for Point-based Hukou Registration (for Trial Implementation)* (People's Government of Beijing, 2016), Beijing *hukou* applicants need to pay social insurance in Beijing for at least consecutive 7 years.

If a migrant living in Beijing meets all the listed four requirements, then he or she could add the points for *hukou* application. The points settlement indicator system is composed of nine indexes, including: legal and stable employment, legal and stable residence, educational background, occupational and residence area, innovation and entrepreneurship, taxation, age and honour (see Appendix II). Among all nine indexes, educational background accounts for the largest segment: a college degree (including higher vocational education) is 10.5 points, a bachelor's degree is 15 points, a master's degree is 26 points, and a doctor's degree is 37 points. In total, 124,657 people applied, and only 6,019 attained Beijing *hukou* in 2018. The minimum score is 90.75 points, the highest score is 122.59 points, and the average score is 95.65 points. Most of the new *hukou* holders were professionals working in high-tech companies, model workers in high-end industries, and winners of innovative and entrepreneurial prizes (People's

Government of Beijing, 2018). It should be noted that the minimum score for the attainment of Beijing *hukou* varies every year. The point-based system operates in similar ways in Shanghai and Shenzhen, preferring 'elite' migrants who are well-educated and high taxpayers, professionals and entrepreneurs.

With the transition of the *hukou* system from the rural-urban dualism to a multi-tiered, differentiated, city-based one, recent scholarship has also paid increasing attention to the importance of the city in the discussion of the *hukou* system, and demonstrates inter-city differences in understanding internal-urban migration (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2018). Addressing that decreasing appeal of urban *hukou* to rural migrants, Chen and Fan (2016, p. 9) point out a 'mismatch between rural migrants' preference for large cities and *hukou* reforms' focus on medium-sized and small cities and towns'. Liu and Wang (2020, p. 1) also bring the lens of city size in understanding internal-urban migration and find 'the higher willingness of migrants in larger cities for *hukou* transfer, which is in sharp contradiction with the small-city orientation of the current *hukou* reform'. Also, they verify a concentration of talents in megacities as more well-educated internal migrants get local *hukou* while less-educated migrants settle down in smaller cities. Analysing the trend of internal-urban migration through the lens of city size, researchers believe that while megacities act as growth engines and appeal to migrants, the smaller cities are shrinking (Long, Wu and Wang, 2015; Long and Wu, 2016).

However, two research gaps are identifiable within the literature. First, there is scarce research on inter-(mega) city differences. Second, while all three city governments restrictedly control the in-flow of migrants by setting high *hukou* application requirements, application requirements and procedures for overseas student returnees are

comparatively more accessible than those for other migrants. Thus, the return migration of transnational students brings a transnational perspective in studying internal-urban migration and the city-based *hukou* system. Hence, the following sections provide empirical accounts on how the three megacities issue local *hukou* to returnees differently (Section 6.3); why, or why not, local *hukou* is desired by the returnees (Section 6.4); what political, social, and cultural implications are made by studying the internal-urban migration and transnational migration together (Section 6.5).

6.3 The application of *cityzenship*: attaining *hukou* in three cities

When returnees settled down in megacities, they usually moved their *hukou* there from their hometown. Some of my participants said they had chosen to study abroad because they had known an overseas degree would help them attain *hukou* in the three megacities. This section draws on the data to present how returnees apply for *hukou* in three landing cities, Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen. It was found that three city governments all adopted comparatively easier application requirements exclusively applying to overseas student returnees. By examining different application procedures, this section also shows the inter-city differences of the *hukou* systems in three cities.

6.3.1 Application of Beijing hukou

Beijing *hukou* has the strictest application requirements. As discussed in Subsection 3.2.3, the number of the Beijing *hukou* holders has been declining. The background of the decreasing number of *hukou* holders in Beijing is a series of campaigns launched by the Beijing government in 2016 to remove at least 158 thousand low-income migrants

from the city. The campaigns included shutting down 'low-end' manufacturing factories, the elimination of street-level businesses, and cracking down illegal settlements (Beijing News, 2016). According to the *Beijing City Master Plan (2016-2035)*, in 2020, the permanent population in the central urban area will be further reduced by 1.24 million (Government of China, 2017). A wider and far-reaching project behind those campaigns is called 'functional dispersal' (gongneng shujie), meaning to remove industries and residents that do not conform to the city's development goal (People's Government of Beijing, 2010). How, then, do overseas student returnees attain Beijing *hukou* in the context of these migrant-dispersal campaigns?

There is a void of official data on how many overseas returnees get Beijing *hukou* annually. Basic requirements are as follows: overseas student returnees must have an overseas master's degree or a doctoral degree and stay abroad no less than 360 days and apply for Beijing *hukou* within two years after return. As the waiting period for an appointment lasts almost six months, the total window period for application is under two years. *Hukou* quotas are assigned by the Minister of Education to specific departments in specific companies, and the departments' selection criteria are vague and vary annually. Quotas are almost always exclusively given to the departments of companies and institutions 'within-the-system'. Companies and institutions 'within-the-system' usually comprise governmental sectors, government-sponsored institutions, and state-owned enterprises. The company applies for *hukou* on behalf of the returnees as new employees in the company, so the returnees have to get a place in those specific departments to attain Beijing *hukou*. Since the window period is only two years, the overseas returnees need to ensure that their jobs guarantee Beijing *hukou*, otherwise they lose the chance of being a Beijing *hukou* holder. Hence, the *hukou* system in Beijing not

only directs the flow of returnees to state-owned companies but also to specific departments. Just as stated by Gorge, a male returnee who used to study in America:

> *We usually asked the HR (human resource) directly whether the occupation provides Beijing hukou or not. You have to know it in the first place. Usually, state-owned companies have quotas, but not every department. Only those high tech, research-oriented, or other important departments have quotas. You cannot have a quota if you work as a cleaner in the company*. (Gorge, 26, male, Beijing)

Then who can get a *hukou* quota? The selection procedures are competitive and opaque. Returnees believe that their university's ranking is essential in the process, but how universities are ranked varies among different companies. Usually, top universities, including Oxbridge (University of Oxford and University of Cambridge), the Ivy League, and Bei Qing Fu Jiao (Peking University, Tsinghua University, Fudan University, and Shanghai Jiaotong University) rank as first-tier universities, followed by other 985/211 universities[36], and the top-100 universities worldwide. Graduates from other universities seldom have the chance to pass the interview and get *hukou*, as in the words of Rose:

> *There are four rounds of interview. Everyone is watching. The HR will do the CV scrutinising and only the qualified ones could enter the written online test, followed*

[36] 985 universities refer to the universities in the Project 985, the name of which derives from the date of the announcement, May 1998. The project involves both national and local governments allocating large amounts of funding to 39 universities, most of which are considered as among the top 500 universities in the world. 211 universities are universities designated as being part of the 211 Project. The name 211 comes from an abbreviation of the slogan 'In preparation for the 21st century, successfully managing 100 universities'. The purpose of the project is to raise the research standards of universities. All 985 universities are 211 universities.

by the interview. Any mistake will cause your failure. I succeeded because I got my bachelor's degree at a 985 university and have a master's degree. But at the same time, you have to pass the written test, the group interview, and the department interview and most of the time you will be interviewed by the future department head. It is very difficult. (Rose, 25, female, Beijing)

Hence, the attainment of Beijing *hukou* is very difficult, and not all returnees are able to get it. At the same time, the application window is very short, only two years. So why are there so many returnees desiring Beijing *hukou*? This will be explained step by step later in the next section.

6.3.2 Application of Shanghai hukou

Compared with Beijing *hukou*, the application for Shanghai *hukou* is comparatively easier. Shanghai invites a points-based scheme to issue *hukou* to returnees, and the application requirements and procedures are open to the public. As long as returnees meet the requirements, they can apply for *hukou* directly (i.e. themselves). Applicants should stay abroad for at least 360 days and return within two years and meet one of the following requirements:

1. have obtained an overseas doctorate degree;
2. have a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in a 211 university and an overseas master's degree;
3. have a bachelor's degree or a master's degree in a non-211 university and an overseas master's degree in a top 500 university;
4. have both an overseas bachelor's degree and a master's degree;

5. have both a domestic bachelor's degree and a master's degree and study abroad for a year as a visiting scholar.

If the applicant meets any of the five criteria and pays social insurance higher than the 'required amount' in the same company for six consecutive months, then the returnee could apply for Shanghai *hukou*. The 'required amount' for the social insurance payment is the average social insurance base in Shanghai last year. For example, in 2018, to meet the required amount of the social insurance payment, the returnees' monthly salary needed to be higher than 7,832 RMB (approximately equal to 873.87 Pound). There are no specific requirements for the type of working companies, but the company is required to have at least one million registered capital in Shanghai[37]. During interviews with returnees, it was found that it is comparatively much easier for them to secure Shanghai *hukou* than Beijing *hukou*. But still there are some obstacles:

> *I had worked in Beijing before I moved to Shanghai. Since I paid my first social insurance in Beijing rather than in Shanghai after I returned, I could not apply for Shanghai hukou as a returnee. Only those who paid their first social insurance in Shanghai are legible to apply for Shanghai hukou. … I did not know any of the procedures and requirements at the time of return. I felt very regret…. So, anyone who wants to have hukou must need to do a lot of work on it before return.* (Harry, 25, male, Shanghai)

[37] Registered capital is the total amount of capital contributions subscribed by all shareholders of a Chinese company, and the company need to register the capital contributions with the State Administration for Market Regulation.

Interestingly, unlike Beijing, which requires applications to be submitted within two years after return, Shanghai requires applicants to work in Shanghai for two years after their return but does not have any limitation on the application period. However, this does not mean that Shanghai could be the backup plan for those who fail to have Beijing *hukou* and then move to Shanghai. Like Harry, some participants ignored the requirement that the first payment of social insurance should be made in Shanghai after the return. In this sense, any returnees who work in other cities before working in Shanghai will fail to meet the application criteria for Shanghai *hukou*. Some participants met the requirement of the first payment of social insurance in Shanghai but were still struggling to obtain Shanghai *hukou*:

> *I have worked in the company for two years, but my salary does not meet the requirements (her monthly salary was lower than 7,832 RMB). It is the hard time for the Korean company. Our average salary is lower than other companies. I have begged my manager to raise my salary to meet the requirement and I have to work overtime to make her a good impression. You know, I always do the most tedious work. She had promised me last year, but she failed to keep her promise.* (Tracy, 25, female, Shanghai)

Tracy used to study in Korea and now works in a Korean company in Shanghai. When I interviewed her, she was thinking about changing her job because her salary could not meet the requirement of the social insurance base. She graduated from a top Korean university but found it difficult to find a new job in Shanghai because 'other companies have stereotype on graduates from Korea, as they believe that Korean graduates are supposed to work in Korean companies'. In the field, it is interesting to note a relation

between overseas-studying countries and returning domestic cities. For example, as most Korean companies are in Shanghai, all Korean graduates work in Shanghai.

6.3.3 Application of Shenzhen hukou

The application requirements and procedures for Shenzhen *hukou* are the most accessible among the three cities. These are:

1. Pay social insurance in Shenzhen for six consecutive months.
2. Meet any of the following requirements:
    - have an overseas bachelor's degree and be younger than 35 years old;
    - have an overseas master's degree and be younger than 40 years old;
    - have an overseas doctorate and be younger than 45 years old.

As long as one returnee meets the requirements, he or she could apply for *hukou* online. Because of the comparative ease of application, moving *hukou* from their hometown to Shenzhen is not as urgent as in the case of Beijing and Shanghai. Some participants hesitated to move their *hukou* to Shenzhen because they think there are still possibilities of going back to their hometown. This belief is reflected in Che's narrative:

> *The application is time-consuming, and I could apply for hukou anytime when I need it. So maybe later when I am not that busy with my work, then I will do it (apply for Shenzhen hukou).* (Che, 24, female, Shenzhen)

Another reason mentioned by most of the participants who hesitated to transfer their *hukou* to Shenzhen is because they believed Shenzhen *hukou* to be less 'valued' than Beijing and Shanghai *hukou*. In the next section, I discuss how participants made sense of the 'value' of *hukou* and explain why they valued *hukou* of different cities differently.

Finally, no matter which city *hukou* the returnees attained, they were first registered in the companies' collective *hukou* booklet. There are usually two ways for returnees to move their *hukou* from the companies' collective *hukou* booklet to a family *hukou* booklet. The first way is to get married to someone who owns a local family booklet and a residential property, so that returnees can register their *hukou* in their spouse's booklet. The second way is to buy a residential property, and then they can create a new family *hukou* booklet and be the head of the household. In both cases, the family *hukou* booklet is closely interlocked with the residential property of the *hukou* holder.

This section explores how returnees attain *hukou* in the three megacities. As my data have shown, it is relatively easy for returnees to attain *hukou* in Shenzhen compared to the other two cities. Beijing has the strictest *hukou* policy as returnees have to graduate from top universities to then work in companies that have *hukou* quotas. Obtaining Shanghai *hukou* is also not that easy because it requires a minimal annual wage. Beijing *hukou* and Shanghai *hukou* are mutually exclusive, meaning that returnees have to decide between working in either of them.

6.4 Cultural logics in understanding social rights embedded in the *hukou* system

As discussed in Chapter 2, drawing on insights from citizenship and social rights, existing literature on Chinese citizenship and *hukou* argues that *hukou* is important to migrants, especially those in first-tier cities, because only local *hukou* holders could access city-sponsored social rights, including public education, healthcare, and low-rent housing (Zhang, 2018; Jensen, 2019). *Hukou* in first-tier cities provides the local *hukou* holders comparatively better city-sponsored social rights, so *hukou* in first-tier cities is the most desired in China (Wang, 2005b; Chen and Fan, 2016; Yang and Dunford, 2018). This section focuses on how returnees make sense of the social rights attached to *hukou* in the three megacities. It shows that although the application requirements for local *hukou* vary in different cities, how participants made sense of the social rights provided by *hukou* involved similarities across the three cities. In what follows, I will discuss two main social rights valued by the participants: city-sponsored educational opportunities and a permit to buy local residential properties. This study finds that the *hukou* system sets the family as the basic social unit for providing local *hukou* holders with city-based social rights. Drawing on insights from Yan's (2016) child-centred family culture (Yan, 2016) and Kipins' (2011) educational desire, this section reveals that the *hukou* system limits the rights of non-*hukou* migrants by limiting the social rights of their children, for example, excluding their children from city-sponsored schools.

6.4.1 The hukou system and education resources

When explaining the value of the *hukou* system, participants usually start with children and the educational resources provided by local (city) *hukou* to their (future) children. Without local *hukou*, their children could not have a place in local public schools, and public schools usually had better educational resources than private ones. More specifically, Beijing and Shanghai *hukou* was valued by the participants for its attached city-sponsored education recourses given to their children, as in the words of Chun:

> *If you don't have a child, then hukou is unnecessary, because the social welfare system (social insurance system) can protect you. You have the medical care, which means you don't need to worry about the money if you are ill. If you pay the social insurance for more than five years, you will also be given the permission of buying a real estate property in Beijing. But if you have a child, things are totally different. You must have Beijing hukou, or your child/children cannot study in the public school. So, I need hukou for my kid.* (Chun 27, female, Beijing)

Kipnis (2011) uses the concept of 'educational desire' to explain why Chinese people place great importance on education. According to Kipnis, educational desire in China is socially, politically, and culturally structured. Culturally, educational success is explained as an outcome of literary masculinity in the traditional Confucian culture, in the sense that educational success usually leads to life success. Politically, he finds that it is 'bolstered' by *suzhi*, a discourse to raise people's 'quality' in China (Kipnis 2011, p. 89). He also suggests that it is 'structured through the social organisation of lack'

(Kipnis, 2011, p. 133). Drawing on insights from Deleuze and Guattari, Kipnis describes educational desire as 'an abject fear of lacking something' (Gilles and Guattari, 1983, p. 27).

In this study, participants regarded the city-sponsored public educational resource which is exclusively given to the local *hukou* holders as the valuable and sparse resources, and believed that the city-sponsored public education resources were abundant in Beijing and Shanghai, whereas other parts of China 'lack' them. In other words, participants valued local *hukou* because they regarded it as a guarantee for their (unborn/future) children's educational success. In this study, only 9 participants had children but most of participants expressed their concerns and plans for their future children. Yan's (2010) use the theoretical concept of child-centred familism to explain Chinese family's concentration of resources to the child as a way to deal with social risks. I will come back to discuss why returnees concerned with and planed a lot about their children and unborn/future children in Section 7.1. Rose was a 25-year-old female who did her undergraduate study in China and postgraduate study in the UK. Right after she submitted her dissertation for her master's degree, she returned to Beijing and found a job which provided her with Beijing *hukou*. Single and young, she had no plan for getting married in the short term, but she still considered everything for her yet-to-come child:

> *The Gaokao Examination is much easier in Beijing than it in other parts of China. If my child has Beijing hukou, she/he will have more chance to study in the Tsinghua University and Beijing University. It is unfair. Take me as an example, if I had*

Beijing hukou back then, I would be an undergraduate in the Peking University. I don't want the same story happening to my child. (Rose, 25, female, Beijing)

The *Gaokao*, also known as the college entrance examination, is a province-based examination. One should take the *Gaokao* in the place where their *hukou* is registered. Both the difficulty of the *Gaokao* and the university enrolment rates vary differently across provinces. Generally speaking, the more universities one province has, the higher the enrolment rate. Local universities favour local students. In this sense, as Beijing has the largest number of top universities in China (985/211 universities), the enrolment rate is higher than in other provinces, which makes Beijing *hukou* highly appealing for parents who want their children to study in good domestic universities. Shanghai *hukou* also provides its holders with good public educational resources and Shanghai has higher enrolment rates than other parts of China. The child-centred family culture and the idea of 'lack' also explains why Shenzhen *hukou* is less appealing to returnees, as Shenzhen is comparatively lacking in educational resources compared to Beijing and Shanghai.

Educational desire and child-centred familism come together in productive ways to explain why *hukou* in megacities is aspired by returnees. Educational desire makes students travel abroad to study and return to megacities for the city-sponsored social rights provided to their children. As highly-educated returnees settle down and contribute to megacities' further urbanisation, their (im)mobilities then explain how 'high levels of educational desire intertwine with both rapid industrialisation and rapid socioeconomic differentiation in mutually reinforcing ways' (Kiplins, 2011, p. 161). On the one hand, megacities, as the developed, globalised and cosmopolitan cities, attracted the returnees by giving them aspired careers, life and *hukou*-based educational resources. On the other

hand, returnees, who are preferred by the *hukou* system as the talents, are the human capital contributing to the city's economic development.

6.4.2 The hukou system and residential properties

Apart from better educational resources for (unborn/future) children, participants valued *hukou* in megacities also because it provided the *hukou* holders with the permission to buy a(n) apartment/house and join a licence plate lottery[38]. In Section 6.2, the importance of a residential property was brought to the fore as a way to get a family booklet in the landing city. It emerged that buying a flat was regarded by the participants as necessary preparation for the future family and child, as stated by Gorge:

> *I will get married and give birth someday in the future anyway, so I have to prepare for it, you know, by buying a flat. People are following the same steps here in Beijing, attaining Beijing hukou and buying a flat.* (Gorge, male, 26, Beijing)

Gorge, a single male in his late 20s, attained Beijing *hukou* and worked in a state-owned institution. He bought a flat with help from his parents, who covered the down payment, and each month he had to use most of his salary to pay the loan. Like Rose, he also planned for his yet-to-come child. Gorge did not have a partner at that time and he believed that owning a property was a first step for starting a family. Like him, most participants told me that a residential property was a prerequisite to setting up families and giving birth. However, in China, the local government strictly controls who can buy local residential estates and how many residential estates one family can buy. It usually

[38] To limit the number of new car registration, city governments use the license plate lottery to control the release of license plates.

takes at least five years for non-*hukou* holders to get the permission to buy a residential property and strict rules apply. For example, in Beijing, the permission to buy residential properties is given to:

1. The family which has Beijing *hukou*: no more than two residential estates.
2. Single Beijing *hukou* holders: one residential estate.
3. Migrants who work in Beijing and pay the Beijing social insurance for five consecutive years: one residential estate.

In this sense, the *hukou* holders could buy a residential property immediately after they obtain *hukou* instead of waiting for years to get permission. Other participants interpreted buying a residential property as a family investment, as commented by Nancy (28, female, Beijing): 'the housing price is soaring. The earlier you buy the flat, the more money you save. You say how much value Beijing *hukou* could provide you with? *Hukou* is money!'

To conclude, examining how returnees valued *hukou* in megacities, this section exemplifies how family is the substratum of China's governance and grants individuals access to state-sponsored social rights (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005) and argues that the *hukou* system sets the family, rather than the individual, as a basic social unit. Returnees valued *hukou* because it was a prerequisite to setting up a family, giving birth, and raising the child. This may explain why the social insurance system and the *hukou* system work as two cooperative institutions in China. While the social insurance system gives social welfare at the individual level, *hukou* gives rights at the family level. More specifically, social rights, such as medical insurance and pension are forms of social

welfare given to a specific person, but the *hukou* system provides family-centred social rights. As stated by the participants, the national social insurance system is enough if one chooses to be single, but *hukou* is a necessity for setting up family and giving birth, e.g., buying a residential estate and ensuring their child has a place in the local public schools. In fieldwork, I found that child-centred familism not only influenced participants' aspiration of *hukou* but also their transnational education (im)mobilities. In Chapter 7, I will come back to explain how familism structures returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*.

6.5 The *hukou* system and *cityzens'* (im)mobilities

As reviewed in Section 6.1, existing literature on the city-based *hukou* system and its governance of migration mainly focuses on the discussion of migration within national borders (e.g. Fan, 2008; Chan, 2010, 2013, 2018). This section explores the interplay between the city-based *hukou* system and the transnational/internal mobilities and immobilities of overseas student returnees. First, this section examines how the city-based *hukou* system institutionalises transnational education mobilities as cultural capital and (re)produces social inequalities. Second, it shows how the *hukou* system immobilises returnees once they attain local *hukou*. Based on the findings presented in previous sections, in what follows, I will discuss how the *hukou* system in megacities shapes and structures the transnational/internal (im)mobilities of returnees both socially and culturally.

6.5.1 Transnational education mobilities and institutionalised reproduction of inequalities

> *I had wanted Beijing hukou before I decided to study abroad. I knew that an overseas degree could accelerate the process. In less than two years, I am a Beijing hukou holder. If I did not study in the UK, I will never have such a chance. It (studying in the UK) was a wise investment.* (Rose, female, 25, Beijing)

Like Rose, participants usually compared their megacity *hukou* to capital. Drawing on insights from Bourdieu's capital theory (2018b), this subsection discusses how the *hukou* system in megacities in China facilitates the conversion of forms of capital. Based on Bourdieu's capital theory, scholarship in this field has produced fruitful research on how transnational education mobilities reproduce social inequalities (Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters, 2012). First, researchers have found that the economic capital invested in international higher education can be regarded as a positional and professional investment (Tran, 2016). Students can cumulatively reinforce these forms of capital: human capital (an internationally prestigious university education), social capital (networks), cultural capital (intercultural awareness, languages), economic capital (well-paid employment), and finally, mobility capital (King, Findlay and Ahrens, 2010). To international students, their transnational education mobilities make conversions among different types of capital possible, and by travelling and studying abroad, students can accumulate the types of capital which they cannot have in their home country (Xiang and Shen, 2009; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters and Leung, 2012). Participants in this study told a similar story. Given the cost of studying abroad, most participants came from well-off families with parents working as professionals, civil servants, etc. They

travelled abroad to study, got overseas degrees, and returned to a megacity in China. The megacity governments regarded them as 'talents' and 'brains', who could contribute to the further development and globalisation of the city (Cao, 2008; Le Bail and Shen, 2008). Their overseas degrees were recognised as the basic requirement for the *hukou* application. In this sense, their overseas degrees were institutionalised as the cultural capital, which could be converted to local *hukou*. Since attaining the local *hukou* means gaining city-sponsored social rights, the *hukou* system institutionalises overseas degrees as the cultural capital. This further explains why so many lower-middle-class families are still willing to send their child abroad to get an overseas degree even it costs nearly all their savings.

However, getting an overseas degree is not easy for all Chinese families. Given the cost of studying abroad, transnational education is still an educational choice for well-off families in China (Xiang and Shen, 2009). In this study, among all 90 participants, 72 returnees were financially supported by their parents. Hence, their attainment of megacity *hukou* and city-sponsored social rights was determined by their families' financial investment in transnational education. As discussed in the previous sections, the restriction of net immigration in megacities makes 'the door to the big cities (mainly first- and second-tier cities) more tightly shut for the ordinary migrant' (Chan, 2019, p. 14). Therefore, while overseas returnees, as new city *hukou* holders, enjoy social rights sponsored by city governments, the less-educated floating population is excluded as unwanted and low-end migrants from city-sponsored social rights. In this sense, by institutionalising overseas degrees as cultural capital and easing returnees' attainment of local *hukou*, the highly selective *hukou* system deepens the polarisation of migrants in megacities and (re)produces social inequalities transnationally.

When the overseas degree (a form of cultural capital) is converted to institutionalised social rights (local *hukou*), local *hukou* then allows the holder to buy a residential property. As discussed in Section 6.4, the localised *hukou* system together with a child-centred family culture and widespread 'educational desire' not only draws returnees to megacities but also makes returnees and their parents invest in the local real estate markets (purchase of residential properties), which ushers in the influx of wealth into the city from other parts of China. As housing prices in megacities are extremely high, it is usually the returnees' parents who cover the down payment. Then, financial support from their parents triggers investment in the real-estate market in megacities and accelerates the processes of urbanisation (Shatkin, 2017). If we regard travelling overseas, getting a degree, returning to a domestic megacity, applying for local *hukou* and buying a residential property, giving birth, and sending the child to a public school as a family enterprise, then it vividly illustrates the statement made by Kipnis:

> *High levels of educational desire intertwine with both rapid industrialisation and rapid socioeconomic differentiation in mutually reinforcing ways. Industrialization feeds the desire for degrees, while the existence of a highly educated populace increases the potential for further industrialization. Success in education is pursuit as a way out of the feelings of lack generated by low socioeconomic status. Educational success, in turn, serves to legitimate the hierarchies that reproduce status differentiation* (Kipnis 2011, p. 161).

Hence, by institutionalising the overseas degree as a form of cultural capital, the highly-selective *hukou* system, working with educational desire and child-centred familism,

reproduces social inequalities transnationally. Moreover, as returnees' families invest in real estate market in megacities, a large amount of capital flows out of lower-tiered cities. In this sense, the city-based *hukou* system also deepens geographical inequalities among different tiers of cities (Chen and Fan, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2020).

6.5.2 A less mobile life of the hukou holders

While mobility is always a useful paradigm for understanding transnational migration and the practices of migrants, at the same time, scholarship also places great importance on immobilities (Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye, 2004; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Adey, 2017; Brooks and Waters, 2017). Usually, the concept of immobilities could be described as stability within movements, and settling down in a place is no longer the end of the migration process but an integral temporal component of mobilities (Sheller and Urry, 2006). In other words, rather than being constantly on the move, the idea of immobilities allows migrants to stop and settle down in a particular place at least for a while in the life course of mobilities (Cresswell, 2006). As stated by Gabriel Josipovici (1977, p. 180), 'We are all of us migrants ... Once we're in the world, we're on the move. And looking for a place to stop'. In this sense, instead of a dichotomy of temporal movements and permanent relocations of people in particular locations, immobilities are conceptualised by scholarship as essential stages in mobilities.

Echoing the arguments on immobilities, the theme immobilities also emerged in returnees' narratives on how the *hukou* system impacts their life after the return. First, if we take a closer look at the *hukou*/*huji* system, we can notice the immobilities it brings to the *hukou* holders. As we can see in Section 6.1, before 1949, the *huji* was a

mechanism used by the central government to impose tax and recruit, requiring people to remain in the same place, and strictly forbidding any migration (Yao, 2004). Even though the *hukou* reform relaxed the migration of the population, any migration without moving *hukou* still means a loss of localised social rights (Chan, 2009). Transferring one's *hukou* location has been comparatively easier since the *hukou* reform, but attainment of *hukou* in megacities, which is valued by migrants, is still difficult (Zhang, 2018; Liu and Wang, 2020). To participants, as social rights are associated with one's *hukou* location, moving to another city without moving *hukou* meant a loss of welfare in both cities, as stated by Lily:

> *If I move to another city, for example, Shanghai, my child then has no place to study. Moreover, I could not buy a residential property in Shanghai, because mine is Beijing hukou. Then my future child could only live in a rented flat, which is not an ideal living condition for a child to grow up*. (Lily, 27, female, Beijing)

Second, the theme of immobility was also found in their interpretation of growing up and being an adult. They usually described their returning and settling down in megacities as a transition from being a student to becoming an adult. To the participants, being a student meant to live a life full of adventures and uncertainties (also found by existing literature for example Waters and Brooks, 2013), while being an adult meant being stable and responsible. The first reason given by participants was that living a stable and immobilising life was regarded as filial piety by their parents. To the returnees' parents, a life full of mobilities was usually understood as an unsuccessful and turbulent life, which caused 'a lot of worries and troubles to their parents', as explained by Mark (29, male, Beijing), a returnee who used to study in Australia. Second, living a less mobile

life was the prerequisite of setting up a family and giving birth to a responsible adult and parent. As mentioned by Lily, moving across China without moving *hukou* meant of the family loses its city-sponsored social rights. To participants, local *hukou* holders and local residential property owners were those successful migrants who lived a stable life in the megacities, and migrants without *hukou* were stigmatised as floating population and unwanted migrants. Hence, the immobilised *hukou* system and an expectation of stable life usually make the first landing city the final stop in transnational education migration. Therefore, returnees usually lived a less mobile life after the return and presumed the megacities as the final stops in their transnational mobilities.

Finally, though the *hukou* system made their life less mobile, most returnees felt that there was no necessary to move to other places, as commented Lily when she reflected on immobilities brought by the *hukou* system:

> *But I have no reason to move to other cities because the Beijing is the best place in China. There are best educational resources for children, most career opportunities, best services, and I can buy everything I want in Beijing, including my hometown cuisine and imported commodities*. (Lily, female, 27, Beijing)

Lily's reflection on her immobilised life resonates with how *cityzenship* is discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. As shown in Section 4.3, returnees regarded megacity *cityzenship* the same as social citizenship of the developed world, for example, educational resources for children, career development and medical services. Moreover, the immobilities brought about by the localised *hukou* system did not influence returnees' cosmopolitan identity, because megacities were places to consume

transnationally mobile of commodities and services. Therefore, while the localised *hukou* system reduced returnees' mobilities after their attainment of *hukou* in megacities, in interviews, participants seldom showed negative attitudes towards this. However, another type of 'immobility' – a feeling of being trapped - emerged frequently in returnees' narratives. In fieldwork, I noticed that returnees usually felt 'being trapped' in their everyday life in megacities and that returnees' feeling of being trapped had little to do with the localised *hukou* system and geographical immobilities but resulted from the discourse of modernity in China. In Section 7.2, connecting the discussion of *cityzenship* and the discourse of modernity, I give a more detailed elaboration of returnees' feeling of being trapped.

6.6 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter contributes to the scholarship by bringing the lens of *hukou* into discussion on return migration of transnational Chinese students. First it explains how the *hukou* system institutionalises *cityzenship* as a city-based legal membership and facilitates the transnational reproduction of social inequalities. In Section 6.1, I first outline the formation and reforms of the *hukou* system. *Hukou* has been as the cradle-to-grave certificate to all Chinese citizens and used by central governments as a tool to control internal migration for thousands of years. Recent point-based and city-based *hukou* reform makes the *hukou* system operates as a localised, multi-tiered and differentiated institution, and local governments are granted more authority in issuing local *hukou* to new migrants (Chan, 2014; Zhang, 2018). Examining the requirements and operation of the point-based *hukou* system in megacities, I argue that *hukou* is used by megacity governments to attract the highly educated professionals and entrepreneurs as the new

migrants. As discussed in Chapter 2, while the megacity *hukou* is most desired by Chinese citizens (Chen and Fan, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2019), the attainment of megacity *hukou* is still difficult for most migrants, in spite of the reform of *hukou* application as a point-based one. However, it is comparatively easy for overseas student returnees to apply for *hukou* in one of the megacities. As shown in Section 6.3, the three megacity governments all adopted comparatively easier application requirements, which exclusively applied to overseas student returnees. In other words, the localised *hukou* system institutionalises overseas degrees as cultural capital. Therefore, exploring how overseas student returnees attain *hukou* in the three megacities, this chapter questions the methodological nationalism embedded within the studies on the return migration of overseas Chinese students, and contributes to literature on internal-urban migration by bringing a transnational perspective.

Second, this chapter also proposes to apply a cultural logic in the analysis of *cityzenship* and *hukou*. Examining how returnees valued the localised social rights granted by the local *hukou* and comparing the social insurance system and the *hukou* system, this chapter stresses the importance of child-centred familism embedded in returnees' valuing of the *hukou* system. Drawing on insights from the research on citizenship and social rights, current scholarship has criticised the *hukou* system as 'a major obstacle in China's path to becoming a modern, first-world nation and global leader' since its reform (e.g., Chan, 2009, p. 197). While the *hukou* system shares a range of similarities with the concept of modern citizenship, for example the point-based *hukou* schemes and the point-based immigration in western countries, there are distinctive features of the *hukou* system. By examining why and how the *hukou* system matters in discussing the return migration of transnational Chinese students to megacities, this chapter highlights the

importance of family in the analysis of the *hukou* system and *cityzenship*. It shows how the *hukou* system has been used as the basic mechanism and governmental technology since ancient China, and how it is culturally structured by setting the family rather than the individual as the basic social unit. This chapter illustrates how the city-based and familism-embedded *hukou* system draws the returnees to the megacities transnationally and then immobilises them once they get *hukou*.

Chapter 7 A 'modern' *cityzen*

7.1 Introduction

Modernity has long been a topic of discussion by scholars, drawing on insights from philosophical and social theories (Kipnis, 2012). These include, for example, second-order or reflexive modernity (Giddens, 1991), liquid modernity (Bauman, 2004) and second modernity or risk society (Beck, Lash and Wynne, 1992). Through the theoretical concepts of second modernity and reflexive modernisation proposed by Beck and Grande (2010), Han and Shim (2010) regard the East Asia countries' path to modernity as a distinctive process of individualisation in the neoliberal context. According to Han and Shim, on the one hand, modernity in East Asian countries is a result of 'side-effects' of governments' 'push-to-development' enterprises to cope with the perceived complex and intensive 'global risks' (Han and Shim, 2010, p. 465). On the other hand, they argue that the East Asia countries' modernity is usually 'expressed through the cultural–discursive articulation of collective desire and aspiration' (p. 465). Yan (2010) also emphasises the importance of considering the collective culture to understand modernity in China. Setting the family as the basic social unit to protect the individual from risks, he defines modernity in China as individualisation characterised by familism. In the fieldwork, the discourse of modernity also emerged in participants' narratives on their transnational education migration and *cityzenship*. Through the lenses of lifecourse and gender, this chapter agrees with Yan's (2016) theorisation of modernity in China as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism and elaborates how the

discourse of modernity structures returnees' practices and perceptions of migration and *cityzenship*.

In Section 7.2, drawing on insights from recent discussions on lifecourse and educational (im)mobilities (Holdsworth, 2009; Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo, 2015; Brooks and Waters, 2017; Findlay *et al*., 2017; Waters, 2017), I explain returnees' transnational/internal (im)mobilities as essential stages in the construction of their identity as an independent and industrious individual. This section further elaborates how (im)mobilities of transnational Chinese students are structured by the both discourses of modernity and the child-centred familism in China. On the one hand, returnees' pursuit of independence and industriousness, for example travelling abroad to study and settling down in megacities, as ways of individualisation, is supported by their parents. On the other hand, both participants and their parents regard (im)mobilities as a series of preparations for the third generation, e.g., attaining local *hukou* and buying residential properties discussed in Chapter 6. Yan (2016) uses the concept of 'descending familism' to describe this family enterprise for the third generation as Chinese individualisation structured by the child-centred family culture in modern era. Hence, this first subsection contributes to the literature on (im)mobilities of transnational Chinese students by conceptualising their spatialized lifecourse and *cityzen* life as a process of individualisation characterised by child-centred familism.

Section 7.3 discusses female returnees' *cityzen* life through the lens of gendered modernity, a concept bridging the discussion on gender, individualisation, and child-centred familism. More specifically, this section explores how female returnees experience marriage and mothering, both of which are believed by scholarship to be

traditional gendered practices conflicting with women's individualisation (Illouz, 2012; Ji, 2015; Feldshuh, 2018; Zhang and Sun, 2020). Instead of being seen as deprivation of personal independence and familial sacrifice as believed by existing scholarship (Ji, 2015; Zhang and Sun, 2020), getting married is viewed by female returnees as a method to control perceived risks and attain independence in megacities. Female returnees also believe that compared with getting married, giving birth and child caring poses more risks to their pursuit of independence. To control such risks, they usually receive great help from their own parents after giving birth. As most of female returnees' parents move to megacities to take care of the third generation, female returnees still stay close to their own parents both emotionally and spatially even after getting married and giving birth, which challenges the conventional belief that 'as it (marriage) generally requires a daughter's spatial separation from the natal household, it symbolizes both an end and a new beginning' (Gaetano, 2014, p. 48). Finally, this section emphasises on the importance of (im)mobilities and social class in women's practices of gendered modernity.

7.2 To be a modern *cityzen*

'I have to be independent and industrious'. This was a recurring phrase in all conversations with returnees during fieldwork. 'Migration' was widely accepted by returnees as a way to learn independence. Industriousness was also a theme embedded in returnees' interpretation of transnational education mobilities. They frequently invoked the idea that travelling abroad to study and moving to megacities are outcomes of industriousness. In this section, working with the lens of lifecourse (Holdsworth, 2009; Madge, Raghuram and Noxolo, 2015; Findlay *et al.*, 2017) and the discourse of

modernity in China (Yan, 2010), I suggest how space and (im)mobilities (studying abroad, returning, and settling down in big cities) matter in students' pursuit of independence. The second subsection focuses on discussing how their *cityzen* life is structured by modernity. Through the lens of 'risk' (Beck, Lash and Wynne, 1992), this section explains why returnees felt a strong sense of uncertainty and being 'trapped' after a few years living and working in megacities. Finally, noticing that their pursuit of independence was greatly supported by their family, I conclude the section by theorising the returnees' pursuit of independence and industriousness as embodied practices of individualisation characterised by child-centred familism.

7.2.1 Studying overseas to be independent

When reflecting on their transnational education mobilities, returnees told me that travelling overseas to study was their first step towards independence. Qi, a 24-year-old female returnee in Shanghai recounted how she had worried about her lack of ability to live independently before she studied overseas:

> *Actually, I always worried about whether I could be independent. They (parents) never asked me to do anything against my willingness. The only thing that they were concerned about was my study, and my study performance satisfied them. They would do everything for me. No matter how old I was, they always treated me as a little girl and this identity did not change with my age. I lacked the spirit of being independent. When I was a senior, I knew it was the time for me to change*. (Qi, female, 24 Shanghai)

Qi was born and grew up in Chengdu, a provincial capital city located in the southwest of China. Having studied a one-year master's program in the UK, she returned to China and landed in Shanghai immediately after she submitted her thesis, one year ago. We met each other when she did her master's study in the UK. Qi is the only child in her family. She described her family background as 'typical Chinese middle-class family', with both parents working as professionals in state-owned sectors. Before she went to university in another city, she had lived with her parents in Chengdu for 18 years. It took her two hours by train to travel from her hometown to her university, and she returned home on a monthly basis. According to Qi, even though she lived in another city at that time, she felt that she was not a grown-up and still very dependent on her parents. 'I felt my home was the centre of my world. I extremely relied on my parents that I even did not dare to imagine a life without them'.

Independence was a recurring theme in participants' reflections on the value of transnational education mobilities and regarded as an essential skill to learn before the study-to-work transition. Participants usually regarded the transition from a dependent student to a self-reliant adult as a period of time marked by uncertainties and risks. In order to control risks during this transition, they needed to prepare well when they were still students, and independence is one of the skills that needs to be acquired. Returnees frequently referred to 'living independently' and 'thinking independently' to illustrate how transnational education mobilities helped them become independent. They learnt how to be independent by experiencing loneliness and helplessness and by overcoming academic and life difficulties on their own. Such perceptions were captured in Emma's reflection on her student experience in the UK:

> *Unlike teachers in China who taught in detail and asked (students') absolute obedience, the UK teachers inspired you and encouraged you to think critically and independently … (Moreover) the educational system was quite different. Not only in terms of language but also teaching style. For most of the time, I had to rely on my own*. (Emma, 24, female, Beijing)

Independence was also achieved in everyday life. As told by Qi, she learned 'how to rent a room, how to pay the bills, how to cook, etc. I could still remember the first time I cooked a Chinese dish … At that time, I had the feeling of being an adult'. Their perception of transnational educational mobilities as preparation for their stepping into the society resonates with the scholarship on how educational mobilities are integral to students' independence and autonomy (Hopkins, 2006; Leathwood, 2006; Holdsworth, 2009; Findlay *et al*., 2017). Hence, returnees regard transnational education mobilities as a way to control potential after-study risks.

Transnational education mobilities were also chosen to cope with career risks by those who have already worked. This logic was presented in Yu's narratives on her decision to study in Hong Kong. Unlike most of the returnees interviewed in this study, who travelled abroad to study without any work experience, Yu had worked and lived in Shenzhen for three years before she chose to study in Hong Kong. In 2012, at the age of 25, after working in a private company for three years, Yu decided to study a master's program in Hong Kong as her way to control risk in the labour market. 'For a long time, I felt of a lot of uncertainties in my career. I was so exhausted, and when I was ill, I even did not have the time to see a doctor'. She also saw little hope in her career trajectory

back then. Working as a teacher in a private company, she received a lot of prejudice from students, their parents, and even her own parents because of her job.

> *Only teachers who work in the public schools are really teachers and worthy of respect. I was regarded as a temporary maid. They (students and their parents) paid, and I served them. My parents always reminded me that if I wanted to work as a teacher, then I should be a real one.* (Yu, 33, female, Shenzhen)

To control career risks and perceived uncertainties, she told me that her solution was to find a job 'within the system'. Working 'within the system' refers to working in the so-called state-owned sectors in China, e.g., public school, universities, research institutions, and state-owned companies. Like Yu, many returnees believe that 'the system' offers a strong sense of security, because 'you will receive respect and will never be fired' (Yu). Working in the public school also implied a clearer career path by achieving different professional ranks and titles recognised by the nation-state governments, e.g., from a teacher to the director and then to the headmaster. Hence, respectable and stable, working as a public-school teacher within the system was her way to address her gendered anxiety. But finding a job in the public school is never easy.

> *Usually, the application of within-the-system jobs are only open to the fresh postgraduates. Then you have to pass the recruitment examination of public institutions. Finally, there is an interview by the school you want to work in. So, the first thing I should do is to have a master's degree.* (Yu, 33, female, Shenzhen)

Studying a postgraduate program in Hong Kong was her way to overcome the risks perceived in her career. To Yu, a master's degree obtained from a Hong Kong university was comparatively cost-efficient and harboured a reputation in the mainland, which increased her chance of working as a public-school teacher within the system. Moreover, as commuting between the Hong Kong and Shenzhen was convenient, she could still work in Shenzhen as a part-time teacher to support her life and pay for her tuition fees.

This subsection illustrates the important role played by transnational education mobilities in returnees' pursuit of independence. Moreover, while scholarship in higher education has widely used late modernity and risk control to understand decision-making in higher education (Beck, Lash and Wynne, 1992; Harrison, 2019), this subsection demonstrates that transnational education is also regarded as a way to cope with the risks perceived by Chinese students. The next subsection continues to explore how the discourse of individualisation shapes the experience of returnees in later life stages.

7.2.2 To be a modern cityzen

This subsection traces the *cityzen* life of overseas student returnees in megacities to understand how modernity structures returnees' practices over their lifecourse. To returnees, similar to travelling and studying overseas, working and living in megacities is equally an opportunity to enhance and practice their independence. While the reasons for returning to megacities varied, for example attainment of local *hukou* and better employment (as discussed in the previous chapters), to be a self-reliant and professional *cityzen* in megacities was also mentioned as an essential part in their spatialized lifecourse. In what follows, I will focus on the discussion about how participants constructed their identity as a modern *cityzen*.

Megacities were usually described as places of modernity by the participants. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, one of the explanations of why megacities were 'developed areas in China' is that participants believed that the megacities were cities of *suzhi*, where participants did not have to use *guanxi* to get economic and social resources. While the meaning of *guanxi* varies in different social, cultural, and political contexts (Luo, 1997), in this study, '*guanxi'* was used by participants to refer to family's access to social networks and capital in their hometown. In interviews, participants always emphasised their distain of the *guanxi* society in their hometown, and frequently invoked the idea that megacities were more 'professional' and 'fair'. To them, returning to their hometown was viewed as giving up one's independent life and relying on their parents' social networks for personal career development. Compared with their hometown, megacities were perceived as sites for their pursuit of career development and success on their own. As explained by Liam (male, 33, Shanghai): 'Everyone here (in Shanghai) are migrants and don't have local *guanxi*, so it is much fairer'. The distinction between megacities and their hometowns in the participants' narratives resonates with Gaetano's (2004, p. 47) research on rural-to-urban female migrants' 'privileging the city as the site of modernity'. Hence, constructed as areas of modernity and independence, megacities are key sites to transnational Chinese student returnees' construction of an independent identity.

But returnees' negative attitudes towards *guanxi* does not mean that they regarded social networks and social capital as insignificant. Instead, they emphasised the importance of one's ability of establishing and access to social networks and capitals. Returnees used the word *quanzi* (circle) to refer to their personal social networks established in

megacities. Unlike *guanxi* which implied one's reliance on their family's social networks to secure their career success, *quanzi* emphasised one's own ability of establishing social networks and access to social and economic recourses. In other words, while both referring to social networks and capitals, *quanzi* distinguished from *guanxi* as the former emphasised on one's independence from family in acquiring social and economic resources. In fieldwork, the recruitment of participants heavily relied on key informants' *quanzi*(s), as their *quanzi*(s) were usually composed of overseas student returnees. Returnees with different educational, professional and family backgrounds often formed different *quanzi*(s), which made the overseas student returnees as heterogeneous groups. Sometimes returnees relied on *quanzi* to get social and economic resources, for example job and business opportunities. Most returnees had more than one *quanzi* and hanging out with friends from different *quanzi*(s) were the main ways to enjoy their life as megacity *cityzens*. Usually activities of *quanzi* are distinctive consumption practices, echoing how returnees practised *cityzenship* as a class-based identity discussed in Chapter 5. Therefore, I suggest interpreting returnees' distain of *guanxi* and preference of *quanzi* as a reflection of their pursuit of independence and a way to practice their class-based *cityzen* life.

Apart from independence, industriousness and diligence also emerged as virtues of modern *cityzens* in participants' narratives. Ong (1999) uses the idea of Confucian discipline to explain how the discourse of self-sacrificing to the family, especially parents and ancestors, disciplines overseas Chinese to be industrious and diligent. But in this study, returnees' industriousness and diligence mainly resulted from their desire for progress. Megacities is places of 'speed', where everything changes in every single day (see in Section 4.3). To returnees, it was both a virtue and necessity to keep up with the

pace of city development and to achieve progress in their life. In interviews, participants usually defined themselves as the learners of society and tried to learn new things and make progress constantly. This was described to me by Liz (female, 24, Shenzhen): 'I want to learn social roles, workplace rules, professional skills, interpersonal skills and so on'. The importance of constant learning and making progress in their *cityzen* life was also reflected in their negative comments on the '996' working system. In China, companies usually adopt the '996' working hour system whereby employees are required to work from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, six days per week (Beijing Review, 2019). Most of my participants worked '996', so I usually conducted the interviews late at night, at 10 pm. Even on weekends, some participants needed to rush back to the office to work overtime after the interviews. However, most participants disapproved of the overtime culture of '996'. The same findings are also found in the survey report on employment and entrepreneurship of overseas returnees in 2019 (Center for China&Globalization, 2019) suggesting that 76% of returnees think that working overtime should not become the norm. In explaining their constant pursuit of making progress, participants told me that keeping progress is essential to a successful *cityzen* life. As in the words of Liz, 'I have to make progress every day and become a competent person. Only then can I gain a foothold in society'.

Returnees' desire for progress also reflected in their feeling of being trapped. Usually after two years work in megacities, returnees started to feel their life was 'stagnant' many aspects (Chun female, 27, Beijing). This feeling usually started with a sense that they had 'stopped' learning and making progress in their career. On the one hand, they told me that they could not learn anything new from their workplace, while on the other

hand, too much work reduced their free time which was supposed to be used on learning new skills. As described by Chun and Mia:

> *It was good in the beginning that I could always learn new things in the work, so not matter how hard it was, it was worth it. But I haven't learnt anything new from my work for quite a long time. I'm so tired every day, repeating my daily routines without any rest. Beijing is squeezing me out. (*Chun, 27, female, Beijing*)*

> *I wanted to learn something new, but I don't know what to learn. But, anyway, I don't have the time. (*Mia, 27, female, Shenzhen*)*

Other participants told me that their wage was lower-than-expected, and they did not know how to increase their wages, which frustrated them a lot. Therefore, as the discourse of modernity and individualisation structures returnees' practices and perceptions of their identity as an independent, industrious and diligent modern *cityzen,* once they sensed that they made little progress, they would develop a feeling of being trapped. To returnees, their life in megacities was not always as ideal as expected. The next subsection then explores how participants coped with the frustrations and setbacks experienced in their *cityzen* life and brings child-centred familism in the discussion of modernity and individualisation in China.

7.2.3 Individualisation characterised by child-centred familism

This subsection discusses the importance of family in returnees' practices of modernity as individualisation in China. I argue that participants' pursuit of independence (travelling transnationally to study and settling down in their city of choice) was greatly supported by their parents, and both participants and their parents regarded transnational/internal (im)mobilities as a series of preparations for the third generation. This subsection explores the interplay between returnees' pursuit of independence and the support gained from their parents during their transnational/internal (im)mobilities and theorises modernity in China as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism (also see in Yan, 2016).

Among all 90 participants, 72 of them were financially supported by their parents. Some participants told me that even though they are from well-off families in China, studying abroad is still considered (by their parents) 'expensive', as in the narrative of Qi when she recalled how she persuaded her parents to help her study abroad:

> *This was the first 'big' decision I made on my own. Before I told them my plan of studying abroad, I had known that studying abroad was relatively expensive for my family. When they knew my plan, they agreed without thinking much. Their only concern was whether they were able to cover the total cost of studying abroad. They knew some acquaintances studying abroad but did not know the exact expense. Once they made sure that they could afford my study, they supported my decision. I am very lucky to have them as my parents. It was a huge amount of money, and they gave it to me just because I am their daughter. They would like to sacrifice everything for their daughter as long as it was good for*

me. Actually, they once doubted the value of studying abroad, but they trusted me, and they believed that it was a good opportunity for me to grow up. (Qi, 24, female, Shanghai)

Parents also believed that travelling abroad was an effective way to provide their children with opportunities to learn how to be an independent adult. Moreover, apart from learning to be independent, some parents also regarded overseas study as an economic investment, which could be converted into cultural capital and social capital, as discussed in Chapter 6 on *hukou*.

Parents' economic support is also provided later on in life. As discussed in the previous subsection, returnees' stagnant career development triggered a feeling of being trapped. This feeling was always accompanied by a sense of downward social mobility. Most participants came from middle class families in second-tier or third-tier cites, living in their parents' well-furnished flats. As the housing price in those cities was usually only one-third or one-fourth of the housing price in first-tier cities, their parents' flats were usually spacious and located in downtown areas. Their family background thus defined their expectation of living standards. However, I found that most participants did not live under the conditions that they had expected. On the one hand, their salaries could not afford them the same living condition as their parents provided with them. Most participants could only afford to rent a room in a shared flat in the city. According to the *Returnees Employment and Entrepreneurship Survey Report 2018* (Center for China & Globalization, 2018), the average salary of overseas returnees is 7,306 RMB (816 Pounds) per month, while the average monthly rent is 7,948 RMB (888 Pounds) per flat, 91.9 RMB (10 Pounds) per square meter in Beijing (City House, 2020). On the other

hand, as discussed, their pursuit of independence required them to be financially self-reliant and refuse their parents' help to pay for the rent. Chun told me that:

> *I don't want to ask for financial help from my parents, so this is the best room I could afford. The rent of this room costs almost one third of my salary. I could have worked within the second ring, if I want to live in a more decent room with a reasonable price, then it will cost me two hours to commute. The room is small, but it is quite near my office. I could have more time to sleep*. (Chun, female, 27, Beijing)

Chun lived in a room in a shared flat, which was in an old unit without proper maintenance. I paid a visit to her home once. The lighting in the corridor was so dim that climbing the stairs required particular caution. When I entered her room, I could hardly find a place to seat myself. It was a room in a shared flat, which was quite small and humbly furnished. Her room was stuffed with clothes, cans and bottles of skincare, shoe boxes and shopping paper bags. She put wallpaper on the mottled wall to hide the stains left by the previous tenants. Even though the windows were tightly closed, I could still hear the noise of the traffic. Chun's story shares a range of similarities with other returnees. In the interview, I found that they seldom called rented rooms their 'home' because the rooms could never meet their expectation of a home, as in Chun's words, 'only a place to sleep'.

Usually, returnees required parents' help to buy a residential property, as a way to improve their living conditions. Moreover, both participants and their parents regarded buying a residential property as a family investment and a material preparation for the

third generation (also see in Chapter 6 on *hukou* and child-centred familism). In interviews, more than a half of participants either purchased a residential property or planned to do so, and all of them financially relied on their parents for the initial payment.

Understanding transnational/internal (im)mobilities as a family enterprise, this section brings child-centred familism in the discussion of individualisation and modernity in China. Parents' support of their children's pursuit of independence exemplifies how Chinese individualisation is structured by the child-centred family culture in the modern era. The next section contributes to the discussion on individualisation and child-centred familism by inviting a gender perspective.

7.3 *Cityzenship* and gender

This section discusses female returnees' *cityzen* life through the lens of gendered modernity, a concept aiming to bring the concepts of gender, individualisation, and child-centred familism together. During fieldwork it was found that, to female returnees, 'being trapped' in megacities was intensified by a gendered discourse of 'leftover' women. In China, after reaching their mid to late 20s and not marrying, urban and well-educated women with a successful career are constructed as a modern social problem and stigmatised as 'leftover' women (Illouz, 2012; Lamont, 2020). The fear of being 'leftover' is analysed as modern pains derived from conflicts between individualisation and the traditional concern for family (Ji, 2015). Female overseas student returnees are no exception from this stigmatised discourse and the fear of being 'left over'. Moreover, I should note that a focus on women does not mean that men face no risks of being 'left

over'. The main reason why male participants in this study show less pressure is that the pressure of getting married happens earlier than for women than men (Fincer, 2014) and that most of my male participants were relatively young (under 35 years old). The sampling also resonates with gendered age distribution given by the (National Education Council, 2019). 95% returnees are between 22 and 34 years old, and nearly 70% of them are between 22 and 26 years old. Though men returnees' experiences of getting married and having a child are equally important, this thesis only focuses on the discussion of woman returnees' experiences.

The first three subsections discuss how female returnees understand and experience marriage and mothering, both of which are believed by scholarship to be traditional gendered practices conflicting with women's individualisation (Illouz, 2012; Ji, 2015; Feldshuh, 2018; Zhang and Sun, 2020). The first subsection discusses how female returnees were constructed as 'leftover' women after the age of 25 and the second subsection looks at how participants coped with the pressure of getting married and how they perceived marriage risks. This thesis argues that getting married is viewed as a method to control the perceived risks and realise independence in megacities by female returnees, rather than deprivation of independence as believed by existing literature (for example Ji, 2015). Female returnees made a distinction between marriage and mothering, and perceived much greater risks posed by giving birth and child caring than getting married. To control the risks of mothering and child care, they usually postponed giving birth, continued to work after giving birth, and received great help from their own parents in childcare (Subsection 7.3.3). Based on the discussion of gendered practices of female returnees in their negotiation with marriage and mothering, Subsection 7.3.4

concludes the discussion by emphasising the importance of (im)mobilities and social class in women's practices of gendered modernity.

7.3.1 The context: 'leftover' women in China

To female returnees, the age of 25 was usually described as a watershed age. Before the age of 25, they sensed little gendered difference, as both female and male returnees were expected to become independent and industrious social members, as discussed in the previous section. But after the age of 25, as told by female participants, they were urged to get married. 'Getting married' or 'marriage' are the most frequently mentioned themes in the interviews conducted with the female returnees:

> *I don't know why even my manager cares if I have a boyfriend or not. I am really tired of being asked by others about my personal life*. (Alice, 26, female, Shanghai)

> *My parents always urge me to find a boyfriend and get married. I want it too! But I seldom have time for dating or seeing someone, because I have to work overtime every day*. (Linda, 25, female, Beijing)

> *I graduated at 24 but I am supposed to get married before 30. How could I accomplish the task*? (Kate, 28, female, Shenzhen).

'Getting married' was also encouraged by their parents. Female returnees usually referred to filial piety to illustrate the dilemmas and difficulties they experienced in their

transitions from student to adult and subsequently to marriage and mothering. 'Filial piety' was a recurring phrase throughout my conversations with female returnees to explain the marriage pressure given by parents. In China, filial piety is a virtue for one's parents. To be a filial person means both to be good to one's parents and to bring a good name to one's parents (Chan and Tan, 2004). More specifically, filial piety requires females to engage in good conducts to bring a good name to their parents. To female returnees, good conduct at this life stage was 'to get married' (ideally before 30 years old). If they failed to do so, female returnees usually felt guilt towards their parents because their failure to get married shamed the whole family. With the increase of age, single female returnees and their parents experienced more pressure. Parents urged their daughters to get married by arranging blind dates for them and kept reminding them that there was not much time left for them to choose a 'suitable' husband. Feeling guilty and stressed, single female returnees showed great consideration towards their parents:

> *Actually, I understand my parents' anxiety and worries about my marriage. They receive much more social pressure than I do, because I am in Beijing and away from the relatives and old social networks. But they are at home, and they are questioned by others because of me. If I can get married, then they will be relieved from the social pressure. It is my fault.* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

However, male returnees received less social and family pressure with regard to marriage than female returnees. This gender difference was present in all the interviews conducted in the field. Although getting married was also important to male practices of filial piety, it was not as urgent as for women, as in Liam's (male, 33, Shanghai) case:

> *Career is the key to be good and bring a good name to their parent. I could get married later, because for men, it is not too late to get married at the age of 40. But for females, if they do not get married at 30, then it would be very difficult for them to find a husband after that, and their parents will lose face.* (Liam, male, 33, Shanghai)

Female returnees experience more marriage pressure than men, because with the increase of the age, the risk of losing their competiveness in the marriage market increases. The increasing marital pressure experienced by female returnees over time corresponds with the literature on singlehood, gender, and time. Feminist scholarship has indicated how time (e.g., the biological clock) works with gender to create discourses on singlehood and marriage (Lahad, 2017). Framed by the discourse of biological time, once women pass the age of 25, their value of 'being a woman' is discounted, and 30 is seen as an 'unacceptable' age for a single woman. The discourse on the biological clock not only implies a gendered, linear, and clock-driven aspect to women's lifecourse, but also constructs the singlehood of ageing women as a social problem (Ramdas, 2012). Theorising time as a social product, scholars reveal how the discourse on the biological clock reduces female identity in biological terms, disciplines women to engage in timely marriage, and constructs motherhood as women's primary life goals (see for example Amir, 2007; Lahad, 2017).

In China, overaged single women are usually referred to as 'leftover' women, a stigmatised identity of 'picky', urban, and highly-educated women, reaching their mid to late 20s (Illouz, 2012; Feldshuh, 2018; Zhang and Sun, 2020). Scholarship studying 'leftover women' approaches this issue from two perspectives. The first strand of studies

examines why single women in their late 20s are stigmatised as 'leftover' women, arguing that 'the source of the stigma of being unmarried is rooted in the concept of social risk' (Lamont, 2020, p. 8). Marriage is usually regarded as the conversion of personal sexual capital to familial social and economic capital, and the risk of conversion failure among capitals increases with age (Illouz, 2012). Hence, getting married earlier represents a female's contribution to her family. Moreover, Yan (2010) states that the state's discourse on modernity and individualisation links personal choices to national risks and requires individual sacrifice for the benefit of the country. Based on Yan's argument, Lamont (2020) claims that getting married and giving birth are represented as women's responsibility to help China control the risks of an ageing population and maintain social stability.

A second strand of studies, utilising perspectives of gender, marriage, and family, discusses how women experience being 'left over' (Gaetano, 2014; Luo and Sun, 2015; Luo, 2017), and finds that they usually experience pressure and anxiety caused by 'inherently contradictory expectations of work and family' (Lamont, 2020, p.6). More specifically, single, highly-educated, professional urban women usually regard the traditional expectation for filial daughters and conscientious wives as risks to their pursuit of an individualised, independent, and professional life (Ji, 2015; To, 2015; Zhang and Sun, 2020). Drawn on insights from both approaches, the next subsection explores how female transnational student returnees make sense, experience and cope with the risks perceived from marriage or being 'left over'.

7.3.2 The individualisation of marriage

As highly-educated and professional urban women, single female overseas student returnees also experienced the risks of being 'left over' in their late 20s. Drawing from in-depth interviews with single female returnees in Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, this subsection shows how they contest and negotiate with the gendered discourse of marriage. Through the lenses of individualisation (Yan, 2010), this subsection shows that, unlike existing research which regards marriage as threats to females' individualised life and identity (e.g., Ji, 2015), there is seldom conflict between marriage and the pursuit of personal independence. More specifically, marriage serves as their way to control perceived risks and to support their independence. Moreover, interrogating how female returnees define marriage, this section finds that singlehood is constructed as a 'waiting period' to negotiate with the discourse of the 'biological clock'. This subsection further argues that motherhood, rather than marriage, is believed to pose more threats to independence and career development by female returnees. The last part of this subsection discusses how space matters in their choices of both singlehood and marriage.

In fieldwork, it was found that marriage was regarded as a way to control emotional and financial risks in their megacity life by female returnees. Anxieties and uncertainties resulting from an 'unsuccessful' career and life, as discussed in Section 7.2, were intensified by the fear of 'devaluation' in the marriage market. After the age of 25, risk control for female returnees became much more expensive (for example, buying a residential property) and unpredictable (for example, stagnant career development). Financially speaking, it would be more possible for married women to buy a flat in the megacity as the purchase of a residential property would be financially supported by

both parents. Emotionally speaking, after getting married, female returnees would feel less guilty towards their parents. Moreover, they believed that getting old without the companionship of a spouse and children would be lonely and wretched and that marriage could decrease such emotional risks. Hence, getting married serves as a strategy helping female returnees control the risks perceived in their *cityzen* life.

The discourse of individualisation was also reflected in single female returnees' description of their future role in the new family. First, they believed that getting married would never change their identity as an independent and professional female. Independence would be as important as before because it provided females with a sense of security in marriage. Female participants referred to the increasing divorce rate to illustrate the risks perceived in marriage. For example, Wendy (23, female, Shenzhen) told me: 'I need to have my own career and will not rely on my future husband for a living. Things are changing so fast nowadays, and who knows if he (her future husband) can be with me forever'. Hence, being independent was their way to overcome uncertainties and risks after getting married. Moreover, apart from living an independent life, female returnees' individualisation in marriage was also found in how they made sense of the wife's role in a family. They refused the image of a traditional filial daughter-in-law who would do housework and serve the husband and parents-in-law. Kate's narrative about her future role in marriage is illustrative:

> *I have my own parents to take care of and the housework should be shared by spouses. I also refuse to live with parents-in-law because I will definitely have my own space. (*Kate, 28, female, Shenzhen*)*

Putting personal independence and career development before taking care of the husband and his parents, female returnees' understanding of the role of the wife in the family challenges the statement that: 'The difficulty of balancing family responsibilities with professional and personal goals lead career women to feel ambivalent about undertaking marriage, which almost inevitably entails starting a family' (Gaetano, 2014, p. 135).

Moreover, rather than accepting getting married and giving birth as a routinized transition path, female returnees usually regarded them as two separate life stages. Compared to getting married, giving birth and child caring were believed to pose more risks to their independence and autonomy, and giving birth was viewed as sacrificing their personal career. Perceiving potential deprivation of independence and personal life by giving birth and child caring, female returnees usually postponed childbearing to reduce these risks after getting married. Therefore, being independent in marriage and postponing childbearing, getting married is neither 'loss of freedom' nor 'end of idealism' to female returnees (Gaetano, 2004, p. 48).

While getting married was believed by female returnees to contribute enriching their *cityzen* life and posed little risk to their independence, they asserted that marriage should be an outcome of love rather than the fear of being 'left over', the obligation to parents or economic reward. But to 'find the true love is not easy' as described by Chun, which was the most stressful part of getting married. Participants told me that they preferred to wait rather than to get married for marriage's own sake. The megacities provided them with a space to wait. To female returnees, living away from the watchful eyes of their parents, family members, and neighbours in their hometown was a way to escape from the increasing marriage pressure:

> *My parents have already urged me to get married. But now I am in Beijing, so you are comparatively free from their control. You are away from your family and relatives. Everyone around you are migrants, and they are as new as you in Beijing. No one knows you nor cares about you. Even though it is not as free as the life in the UK, I could still be myself, at least part of myself.* (Chun, 27, female, Beijing)

At the same time, female returnees enjoyed their singlehood in megacities while waiting. Waiting, as interpreted by female participants, was not described as passively passing time until marriage but as actively enjoying singlehood in megacities. They told me that the single life in the megacities was fulfilling and enjoyable, as they could meet friends, shop in big malls, travel on holidays and so on. They also frequently referred to single women they knew in their 30s and 40s as examples to invoke the idea that being middle-aged single women in megacities means being happy and free. As told by Sophia, a 30-year-old female returnee working in Shanghai: 'My manager (almost 40 years old) is still single, but she enjoys her life and work in Shanghai. As she has no child, she does not have to worry about child caring as most of women in her age'. Female returnees' understanding of waiting as a period of time to enjoy singlehood exemplifies Ramdas' (2012, p. 845) research showing 'how it is possible to live lives and imagine life possibilities which do not necessarily end in marriage' and how space matters for female returnees 'to 'escape' to somewhere else or to become someone else' (Ramdas, 2012, p. 234).

This subsection discusses how female returnees' understanding of marriage is structured by the discourse of individualisation. Rather than threatening women's independence and autonomy, as described by the existing literature (for example, Ji, 2015), I found that marriage was regarded by female returnees as a way to help them live an independent *cityzen* life. On the one hand, getting married could effectively control the risks perceived in their *cityzen* life both financial and emotionally, while on the other hand, they insisted on living an independent life after marriage. At the same time, female returnees also showed autonomy in deciding when and with whom to get married, and geography was found to play an important role in their autonomy to stay single or get married. Moreover, female returnees made a clear distinction between marriage and mothering. Compared with getting married, child caring was believed to pose more threats to female returnees' independence and autonomy. Hence, in the next subsection, I look at how the returnees experienced mothering and how they coped with the risks of child care posed to their independence.

7.3.3 Independent mothering and family's control of risks

The importance of independence and autonomy to female returnees after giving birth was reflected in how they balance their family life and work. During fieldwork, four mothers were interviewed, and thirty-eight female returnees reflected on motherhood when I asked about their future plans, even they weren't mothers themselves. After giving birth, all four mothers had returned to their working positions even before the child was weaned. Other female returnees also highlighted the importance of continuing to work after giving birth. Two reasons were given by the participants. First, the increasing divorce rates made them feel uncertain towards marriage. Career development and financial independence are ways to control the risks brought about by divorce. The

second reason was that the payment of mortgage and their pursuit of a 'qualified' childhood for the child resulted in great financial burden to the family. As told by Yu, a 33-year-old mother in Shenzhen:

> *The cost of raising a child 'in a proper way' is very high in Shenzhen. As the child grows up, the cost increases. You need to prepare the money for your child's development and education. What we have is far from enough. (*Yu, 33, female, Shenzhen).

Although she had local Shenzhen *hukou*, which meant her son can study in the public school, the cost of interest class and tutoring classes still made her feel overwhelmed. Hence, the financial pressure made female returnees work just as hard as their husbands after giving birth. An old Chinese says that 'while women are incompetent, the mother is tough'. 'Being tough' was interpreted by female returnees not as a sacrifice for the family, their husbands, and their parents-in-law, but being independence and industriousness.

To balance working and taking care of the child/children at the same time, female returnees usually asked for help from the older generation. Traditionally, after getting married, the daughter will spatially separate from the natal household (Gaetano, 2004), and it is usually the husband's parents who participate in the rearing the third generation (Breengaard, 2016). However, in the fieldwork, I found that childcare made female returnees and their parents stay close. Usually, it was female returnees' own parents who helped raise the third generation. As the only child in their family, female returnees received great support from their own parents (Nyland *et al*., 2009; Chen, Liu and Mair,

2011). Their parents believed that sharing the burden of housework and childcare could help their daughter reduce the risks of giving birth, as female returnees could have more time to focus on their career. To take good care of the third generation, grandparents from the mother's side lived with the new couples and intensely participated in their everyday life, including picking up and dropping children to and from school, helping with housework, preparing the food, and so on.

Moreover, the changing intergenerational relations between daughters-in-law and parents-in-law also encouraged female returnees to seek help from their own parents. The first reason is that female returnees did not want to live with their parents-in-law. In interviews, the female participants told me that they valued their private space a lot and viewed their parents-in-law as unrelated outsiders (*wairen*) of the family. Female returnees regarded living with their parents-in-law as living a life without freedom, as explained by Yu:

> *I have to behave well as a good daughter-in-law, for example doing housework diligently. Moreover, I lose my private space, and all my actions are under the watchful eyes of my mother-in-law. I don't want to be so cautious at my own home*. (Yu, female, 33, Shenzhen)

Second, according to female participants, raising the third generation with parents-in-law, especially with the mother-in-law, would result in a lot of conflict (also seen in Breengaard, 2016). For example, female returnees and their mother-in-law often had different opinions on how to balance life and work. While the mother-in-law believed that the primary task of the daughter-in-law was to rear the child, female returnees

regarded career development to be of equal importance as child caring. Conflicts were also reflected in differing views about how the third generation should be raised. While the older generation 'followed the traditions' as in Yu's words, female returnees tended to raise the child by following expert-based knowledge, for example, the 'scientific' matching of food and nutrition for growth, games to enhance the child's brain development, interesting classes to cultivate the child's artistic talents, and so on. Female returnees told me that while their mother-in-law always commented on and questioned their decisions, their own mother respected and trusted them.

In this sense, on the one hand, female returnees' reliance on the experts' advice to take care of their children exemplifies the expert system in the era of modernity (Giddens, 1991). On the other hand, the autonomy found in their mothering practices reflects the changing intergenerational relations between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law (Breengaard, 2016). To sum up, to female returnees, the connection with their original families is enhanced during the child's growth, instead of being alienated after getting married and giving birth as believed by researchers (for example, Gaetano, 2004).

7.3.4 Summary of gendered modernity among female returnees

This section explores the gendered practices of modernity and individualisation, characterised by familism in China. First, this section shows how the discourse of independence and autonomy is embedded in female returnees' interpretation and practices of marriage and mothering. One the one hand, to female returnees, marriage is their way to control risks in their *cityzen* life, for example, increasing the likelihood of buying a residential property in megacities. On the other hand, living an independent life and pursing one's career development is regarded as a way to reduce the risks resulted

from getting married, giving birth, and child caring. The individualisation reflected in female returnees' interpretation and practices of marriage challenges the view describing marriage as a deprivation of independence as believed by scholars (for example, Ji, 2015). Second, this section elaborates how female returnees' pursuit of independence and autonomy in marriage is greatly supported by their parents. Female returnees usually receive great help from their parents throughout all life stages, from education to work, marriage, and motherhood. Parents not only financially support their daughters' transnational education and purchase of a residential property in megacities, but also help them raise the third generation and do household chores to support their daughter's career development. However, it should be also noted that receiving fully support from their own parents and being comparatively independent in family life does not mean that their lives are free from gender inequality. In working places, for example, single women still receive gender discrimination from colleagues on a frequent basis even though it is much lighter than in their hometowns. Within the home, housework and childcare are still believed to be the duties of women, both female returnees and their mothers, and men are only supposed to offer 'kind' help.

Moreover, the fact that female returnees receive significant help from their parents resonates with the literature on the changing social structure and gender equality in urban areas in China (Fong, 2002; Lee, 2012). To begin with, as discussed in the previous section, families' support could be explained by modernity with Chinese characteristics, which sets the family as the basic social unit to protect individuals from the social vicissitudes and risks (Yan, 2016). Moreover, the one-child policy is believed unintentionally to promote gender equality for girls in one-child families in cities in modern China (Tsui and Rich, 2002; Lee, 2012). In this study, among the 49 female

participants, 43 of them are the only child in their families. Only one female participant used to be a rural *hukou* holder and she received much less help from her parents. Therefore, I suggest that the studies on gendered modernity in China take women's original family background and their lifecourse into consideration.

7.4 Discussion and conclusion

Unlike individualisation in western countries, where the welfare system makes it theoretically possible for individuals to detach themselves from traditional structures (the family) (Giddens, 1991), in China, the personal control of risks is highly reliant on one's family, and the family has become the key means by which individuals are protected from the precariousness of the job market (Greenhalgh and Winckler, 2005; Yan, 2010). Exploring the spatialized lifecourse and gendered practices of transnational student returnees, this chapter discusses how their transnational/internal mobilities and afterwards *cityzen* life are structured by modernity in China, or individualisation characterised by child-centred familism in China. It is found that independence and industrious are recurring themes throughout their lifecourse, from being a student to becoming an adult and in subsequent marriage and family life. (Im)mobilities and space are integral to their identity construction, as studying overseas and working in domestic megacities are both regarded by participants as opportunities to learn and to become an independent and industrious modern *cityzen*. To female returnees, living in megacities could help free them from the watchful eyes of their parents and relatives, and enjoy their singlehood. Hence, rather than a passive, meaningless and static context where the human practice occurs, space actively engages in the social practices of the returnees.

Moreover, while independence is structured by a discourse of individualisation, returnees' pursuit of independence is greatly supported by their family, findings which resonate with Yan's (2016) conceptualise modernity in China as individuality characterised by child-centred familism. Moreover, through the lens of risk control (Beck, Lash and Wynne, 1992), this chapter also illustrates how family protect individuals from risks and uncertainties within society (see similar discussion in Barbalet, 2016; Lamont, 2020). But it is also crucial to noting that placing child as the centre of the family does mean that returnees receive immense family's pressure. In Fong's (2004) book Only Hope, being at the centre of the family not only means opportunities of gaining family's resources but also responsibilities of raising the status of the entire family with the child. Different from Fong's findings, in firework I found that participants received much less pressure from their parents. For example, most of parents sent participants to study abroad only because their parents wanted their children to see the world and learn to be independent, such as Qi's parents. Some participants even told me that their parents never counted on them to 'earn a lot money in megacities', and 'they only hope me to live a life I want' (Jason, 29, male, Shenzhen). My explanation for this is: compared with Fong's research sampling and time, first, most of participants recruited in this thesis came from relatively privileged families, and their parents were more capable of resisting perceived social risks; second, as mentioned in Chapter 4, I found that China's stable economic development have reduced returnees' and their parents' worries about social risks to some extent.

The gendered perspective of modernity also allows me to further explore how the 'family' is constructed in China in the era of individualisation. To female returnees, marriage, instead of being perceived as a threat to their pursuit of independent life and

career development as discussed in existing literature (for example, Ji, 2015), is embedded with the discourse of individualisation. Being financially independent and receiving help from their own parents are female returnees' ways to control perceived risks in marriage and mothering. Taking social class and family background in consideration, this chapter suggests that getting married does not always result in an alienation with the original family. In this sense, while Yan (2016, p. 245) defined this child-centred familism as 'descending familism whereby the trinity of the three generations adapts to a new and flexible form of family structure, family resources of all sorts flow downward, and, most important, the focus of the existential meanings of life has shifted from the ancestors to the grandchildren', this study contributes to the discussion on intergeneration relations and family risk control by inviting lenses of gender and class.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This research set out to explore the return migration of transnational Chinese students, following their graduation from universities overseas, to three megacities in China through the lens of *cityzenship*. Drawing on a multisited ethnographic case of transnational Chinese student returnees migrating to and living in megacities, I explored how they practised and made sense of *cityzenship* in their everyday life. In my survey of the literature, I have found that dominant arguments about transnational Chinese student returnees are often informed by methodological nationalism, without recognising that many students seldom return to their place of birth but migrate from overseas to another place in China (see similar argument on return migration of overseas citizens in Xiang, Yeoh and Toyota, 2013). Furthermore, in these writings, researchers have dominantly undertaken studies through the perspectives of brain drain and brain gain, and brain circulation, returnees' employability and their contribution to China's economic and technological development (Saxenian, 2005; Wang, Zweig and Lin, 2011; Pieke, 2012; Hao, Wen and Welch, 2016). Although many of these studies have provided valuable insights into the migration of transnational Chinese student returnees, several issues remain under-examined. First, transnational Chinese students' return trip to China represents *multiscalar* migration. Returnees are concentrated in three megacities, Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen, which makes their transnational return trip also a distinctive type of internal-urban (im)migration. In addition to the contemporaneous internal urban migration, their return migration also takes place at other geographical imaginary scales, for example, from 'the developed world/countries' to 'China as a

developing country'. Second, the existing literature pays little attention to transnational Chinese student returnees' experiences, feelings, imaginations and reflections of their transnational education mobilities and everyday life after the return. Therefore, based on the research gaps identified in the existing literature, this thesis, sought to answer some of these queries as framed in the following key research questions:

> Why do participants choose to land in Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen?
>
> How do they choose among three cities?
>
> How do returnees experience and interpret their everyday life in Beijing, Shanghai, or Shenzhen after their return?

To answer these research questions, I developed the concept of *cityzenship* to weave key research materials into four empirical chapters, with each chapter providing a nuanced discussion of a particular aspect of returnees' c*ityzenship*. Each paper focuses on a particular form of *cityzenship* found in returnees' embodied practices as well as their interpretations. Taken together, four empirical chapters provide a detailed analysis of returnees' *cityzenship* as a series of city-based rights and identities, which are attached to multiscalar memberships. Chapter 4 describes *cityzenship* as multiscalar memberships. To returnees, being a megacity *cityzen* meant being a member of the developed world and a citizen in China as a developing country at the same time; *cityzenship* also represented a localised and regionalised identities, such as Beijing *cityzens* as the northerners. Chapter 5 analyses how returnees practised *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity by consuming the globalised commodities and symbols. Chapter 6 examines *cityzenship* as institutionalised city-based membership and rights and implies how participants' evaluation of rights attached to megacity *hukou* is culturally structured.

Following the cultural logics, Chapter 7 establishes the link between returnees' pursuit of independence and their reliance on their family's support for their study abroad and subsequent (mega)city life. Theorising the discourse of modernity as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism, Chapter 7 illustrates how the discourse of modernity structures returnees' aspirations and practices of *cityzenship*.

8.1 Summary of returnees' *cityzenship*

This section summarises returnees' *cityzenship* from three aspects. The first subsection focuses on the discussion of multiscalar thinking of *cityzenship*. Theorising cities as located assemblages where multiscalar social networks layer and interact, this subsection recaps how this thesis analyses returnees' perceptions and practices of *cityzenship* as rights and identities attached to memberships of different communities. This subsection also reinforces how a poststructuralist ontology of city is useful in the city-based analysis of contemporaneous multiscalar migration. The second subsection stresses the importance of culture in understanding returnees' *cityzenship*. Child-centred familism is not only embedded in participants' evaluation of megacity *hukou*, but also shapes their lifecourse (im)mobilities as well as gendered practices. The theoretical concept of individualisation also emerged from participants' narratives on and reflections of their overseas studying experience and *cityzen* life in megacities. Theorising modernity as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism, the second subsection shows how returnees' aspiration and practices of *cityzenship* is culturally structured. The third subsection unravels transnationally (re)produced social and geographical inequalities by examining the interplay between China's central governments, megacity governments,

returnees' migration to megacities and *cityzenship* as memberships attached to multiscalar communities, class-based identities and rights.

8.1.1 Multiscalar thinking of cityzenship

This subsection recapitulates the multiscalar thinking of returnees' *cityzenship*. The concept of scale frequently emerged in the analysis of *cityzenship* throughout the thesis. For example, the thesis begins with exploring the multiscalar migrations contemporaneously taking place when transnational Chinese students return from overseas studying country to China. In addition to multiscalar migration, embedded within returnees' practices and interpretations of their *cityzenship* are rights and identities attached to memberships of different communities. *Cityzenship* is a city-based legal status and localised social rights, a national and political identity as mainland Chinese, a membership of the developed world, a cosmopolitan and globalised identity and a modern identity. In other words, returnees' *cityzenship* is layered, operating simultaneously at the local, city, regional, nation and global levels (see similar arguments on layered citizenship in Osler and Starkey, 2005; Beck, 2007; Heater, 2013; Wood and Black, 2018).

Based on a theoretical review of transnational space, local places and transnational migration in the existing scholarship, Chapter 2 proposes a relational view on cities and scales. To be more specific, this thesis conceptualises megacities as located assemblages where multiscalar networks of relations, both within and stretch over the urban space, layer and interact, and theorises scales as the effects of scaling, produced and reproduced by de/reterritorialising practices and discourses across different places. Thus, this study emphasises a humanistic account of different scales embedded in returnees' practices

and perceptions of *cityzenship* and migration, as the denotation of scales changes with shifting political, social and cultural power relations (see similar arguments made by Dicken *et al*., 2001; Bulkeley, 2005; Isin, 2007; Leitner and Miller, 2007; Jessop, Brenner and Jones, 2008; Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008). To be more specific, to understand returnees' multiscalar *cityzenship*, I observed how returnees' everyday life and practices were embedded in diverse forms of networks assembling in megacities, as well as their feelings of and reflections on their lived experiences.

The empirical chapters exemplify how returnees' multiscalar *cityzenship* are structured by different networks of power relations assembling in megacities. Megacities are sites full of mobilities, and are hubs for converging materialities, information, symbols and migrants coming from overseas or other parts of China. Those mobilities are essential to returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*. For example, through the lenses of practice, distinction and capital (Bourdieu, 1990, 2018b, 2018a), returnees' construction of *cityzenship* as cosmopolitan is practised in their consumption of such mobilities as distinction. Megacities are also main agents to realise the national enterprises of urbanisation and modernisation. Both the central government and municipal governments concentrate resources to promote the economic development of megacities. For example, CBDs, shopping malls, business streets, theme parks are all urban landscapes symbolising China's globalisation and modernisation; the localised social insurance system and the *hukou* system grant *cityzens* localised social rights and welfare including quality educational resources and advanced medical care. The concentration of resources was the main reason given by participants in their explanation of the decision of return, as *cityzenship* met their aspiration of membership in the developed world. Moreover, returnees' choices of megacities and everyday city life were also shaped by

inter-city differences, including different urban economic and industrial structures, regional features such as climate, as well as city images and city master plans designed and promoted by municipal governments. *Cityzenship* is attached to different geographical scales: specific urban areas (for example CBDs), the city (localised urban characteristics such as *hukou* and climate), the nation (an ethnic and political identity), the world (membership in the developed world) and the global (rights of interconnectedness to transnational mobilities).

Finally, poststructuralist ontology also frames returnees' multiscalar migration as forces (re)producing spatial networks and social structures. Drawing on insight from Lefebvre (1991), as discussed in Chapter 2, I discuss how returnees' multiscalar migration and everyday *cityzen* life (re)produce social inequalities in the third subsection.

8.1.2 Cultural logics in cityzenship

Placing embodiment at the centre of discussing (im)mobilities of returnees, this study sorts out the cultural logics embedded in *cityzenship* and how cultures structure transnational Chinese students' practices, values, beliefs, feelings and aspirations.

In most of this thesis, I use the concept of culture to refer to structural discourses. To begin with, through the lens of lifecourse, this thesis indicates how returnees' transnational and internal (im)mobilities are embedded within a discourse of individualisation. To be more specific, travelling abroad to study, returning, and settling down in megacities are regarded by returnees as essential spatialized life stages in their construction of an independent and industrious identity. Moreover, their pursuit of independence and industriousness is characterised by child-oriented familism (also see

discussion of Yan, 2016). On the one hand, their overseas study and purchase of residential property in megacities are financially supported by their parents; on the other hand, both returnees and their parents place the third generation at the very core of the family unit (for example, returnees' attainment of megacity *hukou*). Moreover, the discourse of modernity as individualisation characterised by child-centred familism is also reflected in gendered practices of *cityzenship*. To cope with the risks perceived in life, for example risks of being 'leftover' and risks to career development posed by giving birth and child caring, female returnees relied on their own parents' emotional and economic support and labouring help. In addition to the discourse of modernity, structural discourses also include the geographical imagination dividing the world into developed and developing countries, the national discourse of *suzhi* and China's mission of modernisation. Therefore, a cultural lens of analysis of *cityzenship* involves examining how these discourses embed and structure returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*.

In addition to structural discourses, the concept of culture also refers to the urban contexts. In Chapter 4, returnees elucidated the different cultures within different megacities as distinctive localised histories, traits of urban landscapes and characters of local residents. Moreover, returnees also regarded foreign food, services and symbols as culture, which they consumed in their everyday *cityzen* life and commodified local features such as water towns and historical landscapes. This thesis analyses returnees' interpretations of culture as products and commodities through Bourdieu's theory of distinction (2018) and proposes to understand *cityzenship* as a class-based cosmopolitan identity. Therefore, after s Barker (2003) who has written that the concept of culture is interdisciplinary, this thesis exemplifies how the cultural logics contribute to the analysis

of *cityzenship* by considering forms of power embedded in returnees' practices, values, beliefs, feelings and aspirations.

8.1.3 Cityzenship and transnationally reproduced geographical and social inequalities

This thesis investigates the dialectical relationship between returnees' embodied practices of *cityzenship* and (re)production of geographical and social inequalities. As discussed in Chapter 2, Lefebvre's philosophy of 'spatial practices', 'representations of space' and 'space of representations' stresses the dialectical nature of social space and social practices. Drawing on insights from Lefebvre's spatial theory (1991), in this thesis I illustrate how returnees' everyday practices (re)produce and sustain the social spaces.

First, the topological analysis of *cityzenship* shows how returnees' multiscalar migration reproduces domestic geographical and social inequalities. As mentioned in the previous subsection, on the one hand, participants' transnational education mobilities are directed by representations of megacities, including geographical knowledge of the developed/developing world, national discourses such as the *suzhi* discourse and urban images promoted by municipal governments and so on. On the other hand, as new *cityzens* desired by megacity governments, returnees' multiscalar migration to megacities and practices of *cityzenship* deepens the unequal development among different tiers of domestic cities. For example, accompanied by returnees' immigration and settlement is the influx of a series of cultural and economic resources to megacities. Returnees are not only high skilled labours but also investors in local real estate markets as well as consumers who have strong purchasing desire and power. Thus, their migration to megacities and everyday practices after the return in megacities are all 'spatial practices' reproducing the unequal geographies between megacities and other parts of China (Chen

and Fan, 2016; Liu and Wang, 2019). Moreover, returnees' 'spatial practices' also reinforces the geographically stratified social structure. While the localised *hukou* system institutionalises transnational education mobilities as cultural capital which can be converted to the localised social rights granted to the local *hukou* holders, it excludes other domestic migrants from *cityzenship*, for example domestic graduates whose family are unable to afford transnational education.

Second, returnees' practices of *cityzenship* also reproduce gentrifying urban space. To returnees, the rights to the city and the identity of *cityzenship* are rooted in particular urban spaces including CBDs, shopping malls and development areas. This thesis interprets these urban spaces as lived spaces of representations, which are produced by knowledges and discourses including geographical imagination of the developed world, globalised cosmopolitan culture, the national discourse of *suzhi* and municipal governments' economic development plans. Returnees, as embodied social actors, reproduce the gentrifying urban space through their everyday spatial practices, including their middle-class cosmopolitan consumption activities, choices of home locations and exclusion of less cosmopolitan areas in the urban space.

8.2 Contributions

The research makes three key contributions to geographical and social scientific writing about migration and citizenship.

This thesis first contributes to scholarship by proposing a city-level of analysis of the return migration of transnational Chinese students. Examining returnees' aspiration,

interpretation and practices of *cityzenship*, this thesis shows how megacities influence returnees' migration and after return life. Megacities were described by returnees as the developed places in the developing countries, places where they pursue an independent and industrious life, cities where their children can have better education recourses, and global hubs where transnationally mobile commodities, capital, services, talents and symbols converge. This study also highlights the importance of considering inter-city differences embedded in returnees' preference and interpretation of *cityzenship*, for example climate and localised cultural features and industrial structures. Empirically, a city-level of analysis challenges the methodological nationalism embedded in the existing research on the migration of transnational Chinese student returnees. Theoretically, conceiving cities as assembled networks of power relations, this study exemplifies the analysis of *cityzenship* as rights and identities attached to multiscalar memberships.

Second, this thesis accentuates the importance of the humanistic account of returnees' migration and everyday life after the return. Through the lenses of embodiment and practice, this thesis illustrates how returnees' *cityzenship* is social and culturally structured. While conventional literature mainly focuses on the employability of overseas student returnees, this thesis places returnees' everyday experiences, practices, perceptions, feelings and aspirations at the centre of discussion. Examining returnees' transnational education mobilities, immobilities after return, everyday *cityzen* life as well as their feelings, aspirations and interpretation of the lived experiences, this thesis demonstrates how returnees' practices and perceptions are structured by different discourses and powers and highlights how returnees' embodied practices reproduce the structures in their everyday life.

Third, an emphasis on the city-level of analysis does not attenuate the importance of the nation. Instead, throughout this thesis, the nation plays a significant role in directing the flows of transnational Chinese students, their choices of megacities and returnees' practices and perceptions of *cityzenship*. For example, national discourses including modernisation and globalisation and *suzhi* structure their aspiration and imaginaries of the developed world, and global citizenries. This is not to suggest that returnees' practices aspirations of *cityzenship* equate to these national discourses, but instead to emphasise the role that the nation plays in their transnational education (im)mobilities and practices of *cityzenship*. From the Qing Dynasty, transnational students, as the agents carrying the advanced culture and knowledge, have been an essential contributor to the state's agenda of building a modernised China (Xiang and Shen, 2009; Ma and Pan, 2015). This thesis exemplifies their arguments by showing how they are desired as talents by the *hukou* system, and further indicates how their transnational education (im)mobilities are interlocked with China's urbanisation and modernisation.

8.3 Limitations and future research developments

First, since the municipal governments in the three cities have been carrying out *hukou* reforms, I set September 2019, the time I went out of the field, as the last date for data collection. But acknowledging that the criteria for *hukou* in all three cities will have changed since the data doesn't impact on the significance of the arguments on *cityzenship*. Second, it is important to note that although the thesis focuses, in Chapter 7 on the experiences of women, men may face similar pressures to get married and have a child, since men have the responsibility to continue the family line in Chinese family

culture (Das Gupta *et al*., 2003). But as stated in Chapter 7, the pressure for women to get married happens earlier than for men, and as most of my male participants are under 35's, male returnees recruited in this study felt less pressure than women in the case of getting married and giving birth because they thought themselves were still 'young'. But it should be noted that the gendered age distribution of this study is in accordance with statistics given by the National Education Council (2019), as 95% of returnees are between 22 and 34 years old, and nearly 70% of them are between 22 and 26 years old. Thus, men's gendered practices of *cityzenship* when they turn older is also worth research attention.

Third, as I understand transnational education space as the sphere in which distinct practices and trajectories coexist, as networks composed of contemporaneous plurality and coexisting heterogeneity, I propose that future research on returnees who returned to their hometown, returnees who used to live in but left the megacities as well as returnees who had already had *hukou* before studying aboard, would also demonstrate the complexities of transnational education space.

Appendix I Interview questions

Where is your hometown?

Could you please tell me something about your education backgrounds?

When did you decide to study abroad?

Why did you make such a choice?

How many countries or overseas universities did you consider?

Why did you choose XX university in XX country in the end?

What did you experience your study there?

When did you decide to return China?

When did you decide to return to Shanghai/Beijing/Shenzhen?

Why did you make such a choice?

How did you find your job?

What did/do you plan for your career life in Beijing/ Shanghai/Shenzhen?

How did you think about Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen before you work here?

Who do you leave with?

How often do you travel back to your hometown?

How did you think about *hukou* in Beijing Shanghai and/or Shenzhen?

Had you planned to have *hukou* in Beijing Shanghai and/or Shenzhen before you decided to work here? If yes, then why?

How did you plan to have *hukou* in Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen?

Do you have *hukou* in Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen now? If yes, then how did you get (procedures and durations)? If no, then how will you plan?

What do you think *hukou* will bring you in the future?

For how long you plan to stay in Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen or do you plan to settle down in the future?

Could you tell me about plans for your family life (e.g. parents, (future) partner and (future) kids)?

How do you like Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen?

What are your favorite places in Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen?

What do you dislike about Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen?

Compared with the time before you came to Beijing/Shanghai/Shenzhen, now do you have different opinions and feelings about this place?

How do the overseas study experiences influence your life in this city?

Would you like to list the most similarities and differences between two places (overseas studying place and domestic working place)?

How do you think of your hometown?

How do you think about the relationship between those three places?

How do you think about the migrations and settling among those places?

How do you think about places in the process of the migration?

Appendix II *Beijing Municipal Administrative Measures for Point-based Hukou Registration (for Trial Implementation)*

(1) legal and stable employment: three points for every consecutive year of social insurance payment;

(2) legal and stable residence: applicants must have lived continuously for one year and above. One point for each consecutive year of residence in self-owned residences, and half a point for each consecutive year of residence in legally leased residences and unit dormitories. When the continuous residence period is more than the social insurance period, the continuous social insurance period shall be regarded as the continuous residence period;

(3) educational background: a college degree (including higher vocational education) is 10.5 points, a bachelor's degree is 15 points, a master's degree is 26 points, and a doctor's degree is 37 points. The recognition of academic qualifications (degrees) is based on the highest academic qualifications (degrees) obtained by the applicant and is not cumulative. Points for continuous payment of social insurance and continuous residence during the period of obtaining academic qualifications (degree) and academic (degree) points are not accumulated;

(4) occupation and residence area: if the applicant's place of residence is transferred from the six districts of the city (Dongcheng District, Xicheng District, Chaoyang District, Haidian District, Fengtai District, Shijingshan District) to other administrative areas of this city, an additional two will be added every one year, up to a maximum of 6 points. If the applicant's place of employment and residence are transferred from the

sixth district of the city to other administrative regions of this city, four points will be added for every full year, up to a maximum of 12 points;

(5) innovation and entrepreneurship: applicants who have won national or municipal awards in the fields of science and technology, culture, and innovation and entrepreneurship competitions will receive corresponding bonus points. Among them, a maximum of 12 points will be added to the national awards, and a maximum of six points will be added to the municipal awards of this city. Only the highest score is counted, no extra points are accumulated. Applicants who serve as senior managers or core technicians in national high-tech enterprises and meet certain requirements in terms of shareholding ratio and salary income will be given two points for each full year of work, up to six points;

applicants who meet certain conditions for investment or employment in startups that meet certain conditions in the recognized technology business incubators and crowd-creation spaces, and meet certain conditions in terms of investment amount, shareholding ratio, salary income, etc., the investment or employment will be increased every one year two points, up to six points are added. Applicants who have invested or employed in recognized technology business incubators and crowd-creation spaces, technology transfer service agencies, professional technology service agencies, and meet certain conditions in terms of investment amount, shareholding ratio, salary income, etc., investment or employment one point per year, up to three points. The bonus points for the above innovation and entrepreneurship indicators are not accumulated, and only the highest points are counted if they meet multiple bonus points;

(6) taxation: applicants who have paid taxes continuously for the past three years and meet one of the following conditions will receive six points: the average individual income tax on wages, salaries, and remuneration is 100,000 RMB or more per year;

investors, registered sole proprietorships, the natural person shareholders of a limited liability company and the investor of a partnership enterprise calculate the tax amount based on the tax paid by the enterprise and the proportion of their capital contribution, and pay an average annual tax of 200,000 yuan or more. Points are not accumulated in the above cases;

(7) age: if the applicant is under 45 years old, 20 points will be added.

(8) honour: applicants who receive one of the following government recognised honours will be awarded 20 points: being selected as a labour model at or above the provincial and ministerial level; a national moral model or a capital moral model; a national hero model or a good citizen of the capital.

Appendix III Chinese glossary

Beijing 北京

Gaokao 高考

Gongmin 公民

Guanxi 关系

Guomin 国民

Haidai 海带

Haigui 海归

Huji 户籍

Hukou 户口

Quanzi 圈子

Renmin 人民

Shanghai 上海

Shenzhen 深圳

Shimin 市民

Suzhi 素质

Wairen 外人

Xiaozi 小资

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