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自发来华的外籍人士如何把深圳变成自己的家
The homemaking process of Self-Initiated Expatriates living in Shenzhen

Master Thesis Sociology

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"Wherever you go, go with all your heart"

-Confucius-

Abstract 摘要

Shenzhen is one of China's new cities which has grown into an archetypal megacity in only three decades. The existing literature about expatriates has predominantly investigated the influence of expatriates at the global level, paying less attention to the local experiences of these mobile employees. Furthermore, the current literature uses a vague definition of 'expat', as nowadays they can be divided into several sub-groups. This study focusses on the everyday practices of Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs). Drawing on an empirical study of SIEs living in Shenzhen, China, this paper investigates the ways in which SIEs create their 'home' and how this is influenced by activities, places and social networks. In particular, this study brings together literatures on expatriates, homemaking, adjustment and globalization to provide insight into the local homemaking process of SIEs in a Chinese context. The aim of this study is to gain better understanding of how the context of reception challenges the homemaking process of SIEs living in Shenzhen.

Keywords: self-initiated expatriate, home, attachment, place, social network, globalization, Shenzhen, China

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1. Introduction 引言

In everyday life the term 'home' (家） is often used without outlining what it really means. We leave 'home' in the morning to go to work, with friends we talk about things 'back home' and many singers sing nostalgically about 'coming back home'. Home is a complex concept since every person gives a distinctive meaning to the idea of home, filling it with behavior, symbols and ideas from their personal context (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002). The fact that nowadays people's lives are becoming increasingly mobile also influences the notion of home. Mobility has always played a part in everyday life, but due to the growing interconnectedness of the world, people are now able to move farther and faster than before. Whenever a person leaves a place that he has called 'home' for many years and settles in a new country this person is challenged to reflect on his definition of 'home' (Philip & Ho, 2010).

1.1 Problem Definition

Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs) are a subgroup of migrants who are highly mobile. They have the privilege of voluntarily replacing their home country with another place in the world (Croucher, 2012). However, mobility brings challenges that SIEs have to face as they move into an unfamiliar place. This research studies the homemaking process of SIEs in Shenzhen (深圳) and documents learnings from their experiences as SIEs. Shenzhen is located in the Pearl River Delta in South China (Figure 1) and is a famous example of the implementation of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). In order to compete within the worldwide economy, the Chinese government created free market-oriented economic policies and flexible governmental measures for the SEZ to which Shenzhen belongs (Ng, 2003). This made it possible for foreign and domestic companies to trade and invest without the same controlled regulations found in other parts of China (Ng, 2003). To further build on the reputation of Shenzhen as a global city, it needs to attract foreigners and especially expatriates who resettle in Shenzhen for a long period of time. Therefore, it is in the interest of Shenzhen to gain a better understanding of the daily activities, routines, places, and social networks of SIEs to make it a more welcoming city. This study aims to develop a better insight into how SIEs in Shenzhen manage their daily lives in order to make themselves feel at home. Additionally, a list of recommendations from the interviewees on how to make Shenzhen more accessible for expatriates is included as supplement.

1.2 Scientific and Social Relevance

At the end of 2014, a news article from the Shenzhen Daily ("Measures proposed to improve lives of expats," 2014) claimed there were about 22,574 expatriates living long-term and over one million expatriates staying temporarily in Shenzhen. Results of a survey by expat platform InterNations (2014) among expatriates in China point out that they are critical about the general quality of life including the ease of settling in which is reported as being difficult. The exact reason for this is not given, but the research further notes that only one in ten (12%) expatriates in China feels at home. The social relevance of this study is therefore to look with more detail at this homemaking process within Shenzhen to make the ease of settling smoother. Scientifically, the general trend of worldwide mobility, as an integral part of globalization, has increased worldwide immigration (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999, p. 2). The effect of immigration at the macro-level and in theoretic works has been important in sociology and related disciplines. Lamb (2002, p. 301) and Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006) have called for empirical studies that examine migration of expatriates on a more micro-level perspective to give a better, more intimate insight into the lives of expatriates. This study aims to build on these works by looking closely at the personal lives of expatriates in the specific context of Shenzhen. By doing so, this empirical study can contribute to the theoretical understanding of settling, migration and globalization.

Figure 1: Location of Shenzhen within China.

2. Theoretical Framework 理论框架

In this chapter, the process of globalization and the global position of Shenzhen will be described followed by a detailed description of Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE). The concept of 'home' will also be discussed in detail highlighting the varying definitions of the word 'home' in the scientific literature. Furthermore, the relevance of place attachment and social networks in relation to homemaking will be described. Lastly, the level of adjustment will be discussed.

2.1 Globalization

In order to compete with other countries, states have opened up their borders and deregulated their markets to be part of the globalized economy. National borders have become less important and people such as high-skilled migrants or expatriates have become key since creating a world-class knowledge base is crucial for achieving global economic success (Ewers, 2007). The concentration of talent, innovation and creativity has a powerful effect on the economic growth of a city (Florida, 2008).

Through this globalization, the mobility of people, services and objects has grown exponentially. A higher mobility gives people opportunities to move abroad in order to gain international work experience. International careers belonged to an exclusive group of Company Assigned Expatriates (CAE) for a long time, but nowadays an increasing group of Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs) seek job opportunities for themselves outside of their country of origin. Company assigned or self-initiated, expatriates are the 'mobile employees' as they travel through the world in search of better personal and professional development opportunities. They are not tourists, nor are they migrants or backpackers, but a unique group of people who challenge their notions of home and belongingness by living a mobile lifestyle. It is therefore important to understand how expatriates identify themselves with the places they live in during their expatriation experience. Studying their perceptions and activities can give better understanding of how they thrive and survive in this globalized world. Furthermore, it is important to understand the reasons behind their motivation to expatriate to Shenzhen.

2.2 China and Shenzhen

The development of China over the past thirty years is arguably one of the most important international developments of our time. By the end of the 1970s, China needed to prevent the collapse of their centrally planned economy and demoralized society. China's Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping designated Shenzhen as China's first Special

Economic Zone (SEZ). Xiaoping chose Shenzhen because of its strategic location in the Pearl River Delta close to Hong Kong.

''This is the century of China, that's why I chose to start a business and live in Shenzhen'' (Interview MN).

Thirty-five years ago Shenzhen was a small fishing village which rapidly expanded into the 'factory of the world' consisting of huge malls and high skyscrapers. Its strategic position made Shenzhen an ideal site for developing an export-oriented economy. Within this SEZ, foreign investments and export were stimulated and both foreign and domestic companies could trade and invest without the controlled regulations enforced in other parts of China (Ng, 2003). A demographic change shifted the rural population to the city and Shenzhen expanded into an enormous city within only three decades. The speed of Shenzhen's development has been called the 'Shenzhen speed', as not only the city itself expanded quickly, but also the economy developed rapidly with a focus on international relations (Wang & Meng, 2004). While many economies collapsed in the West after the global economic crisis in 2008, China was one of the fastest-growing economies and the Chinese were overwhelmingly confident in their nation's increasing power on the world stage (Nye 2010).

Cities such as Shanghai or London are often discussed in sociological literature as 'global cities', a concept created by Saskia Sassen (2001). Due to globalization, production networks are scattered on a global basis and to manage these complex financial flows, new financial and producer services are needed which one can find clustered together in these global cities (Sassen, 2001). The leadership of Shenzhen has the desire to be included in this exclusive club of global cities (Zacharias & Tang, 2010). This is a big challenge for Shenzhen as it lacks a distinctive character like the other Chinese global cities: Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai. These Chinese cities embody sites and stories that represent the history of China's 5,000 years of civilization. Furthermore, they have a long history of foreign traders and business people in the city along with established expatriate communities and associations. Shenzhen is different as it is a new city that has grown beyond imagination in only a few decades. In order to become a recognized global city, Shenzhen needs to work on the qualities a global city needs as it now only has a few corporate headquarters and a minor international community living inside the city (Zacharias & Tang, 2010). Shenzhen needs to attract global investors and expatriates to play a significant role in the global economy.

To make Shenzhen attractive for foreigners, Zacharias and Tang (2010) suggest that the city needs to improve its basic social, economic and educational infrastructure. Currently,

Shenzhen is full of Chinese working migrants and Ngai (2010) mentions that the Chinese government is but minimally involved in the provision of social services, housing or education for them. The result is that many migrants do not live in good conditions. In the same manner as Chinese migrants, expatriates have to deal with the situation of the receiving country and manage their own life, work and social contacts. Additionally, expatriates have to adapt to a complete and often for them unknown new culture. This has consequences for their daily lives, mostly because they cannot, as newcomers, develop a feeling of being in control of their life while living in Shenzhen (Killian & Johnson, 2006). It is therefore important to find out the accessibility of Shenzhen in terms of a good economic climate and being able to build social networks whenever an expat decides to choose to live and work in Shenzhen.

2.3 Self-Initiated Expatriates

During the past decades scholars have been challenged by how best to measure and manage the values that can be gained from the risks and uncertainties that are related to globalization. Through globalization, where people live and work has become less place-bound, and this has affected the literature that studies concepts such as travelers, migrants or expatriates. "Expatriate" (further shortened to expat) is an ambiguous concept, which is often used in literature without properly explaining what it really means. Originally the term is derived from the Latin words ex 'out of' and patria 'country'. Expats are regularly defined as traditional Company Assigned Expats (CAEs) by whom their international experiences are initiated by an internationally operating company they work for (Biemann & Andresen, 2010). However, as a result of the 'global war for talent', a new type of expat has derived: Self-Initiated Expats (SIEs). According to Carr, Inkson and Thron (2005), this group of SIEs is nowadays much bigger and an ultimately more significant group than CAEs. In order to clarify this construct of SIEs, the evolution of the term will first be explained.

Doherty, Richardson and Thorn (2013) performed research on the origin of the concept of SIE and point out that mention of another 'type of expat' first appeared in the study by Inkson, Arthur, Pringle and Barry (1997). They researched the differences between CAEs and young professionals who independently chose to leave New Zealand temporarily to have an overseas experience. Having 'overseas' in the terminology was not appropriate in the European context, so Suutari and Brewster (2000) refined the concept to 'Self-Initiated Foreign Experiences' (SIFE). As this definition lacked linguistic coherency numerous scientists developed other terms to describe people who decide to relocate across international borders. From 'independent internationally mobile professionals' (McKenna & Richardson, 2007,

p.307) to 'Self-Directed Expatriates (Richardson and Mallon, 2005, p.409), the term 'Self-Initiated Expatriates ' first appeared in papers by Doherty and Dickman (2008) and Jokinen, Brewster and Suutari (2008) and has been used in the literature ever since.

SIE: Understanding Their Origin

In order to provide a clear understanding of SIEs in this study, it is necessary to distinguish SIEs from other types of people who are highly mobile such as CAEs and migrants. CAEs are often seen as synonymous to the SIEs. However, there are two components that are central to distinguishing between SIEs and CAEs. Firstly, SIEs must relocate across a national border and CAEs do not necessarily have to. Secondly, SIEs are individuals who undertake their international experience on their own initiative (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013). So expats who are sponsored by a company do not take the initiative themselves to move to another country, while SIEs do.

The other type of people who are seen as close to SIEs are the highly mobile group of people called migrants. Following Al Ariss (2010), three characteristics explain why SIEs are a different group of people from migrants. First, in literature the term 'migrant' is often used to imply a necessity to travel to another country, while SIEs decide for themselves where they want to relocate. Secondly, the term migrant is used in literature when a person moves from a developing country to a developed country, while SIEs primarily relocate from developed countries to engage in an 'exploration across international boundaries' for the experience. Lastly, the host society receives these two groups differently. The term migrant implies negative connotations, while SIEs are referred to in more positive terms. Peltokorpi and Froese explain this with the example that migrants are often unwelcome in the host country, while SIEs are described as persons 'who are motivated to interact with host country nationals' (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009, p. 1106).

Finally, the duration of stay is used in literature to explain differences between highly mobile groups: travelers stay short-term, CAEs stay temporarily, migrants stay (unwillingly) permanently, and SIEs are the group of people who often have no definite time frame in mind (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

In conclusion, since there is no absolute definition for SIEs, this study defines SIEs with the following characteristics:

o   They have freedom of choice
o   They cross a national border

- o   They have internal motivation
- o   Their duration of stay is not fixed

SIE: Understanding Their Motivation

To understand more about why SIEs choose to internationalize their lives and careers, it is important to understand more about the range of issues they need to consider before they decide when, whether and where to expatriate. Inkson (2005) gives five categories for this: economic, political, career, family and cultural factors. Economic factors can be motivational when the SIEs relocate to a country that promises to provide them better economic opportunities. Political factors can include confidence in the current political regime promoting growth . Corporate opportunities or family occasions can also be motivations to move abroad. Lastly, cultural factors can be a compelling reason to expatriate to a place which has either the same culture or is culturally diverse.

SIEs are often motivated to live and work abroad by the desire for adventure. This can either be planned or unplanned; the study of Richardson and Mallon (2005) points out that the role of serendipity regularly plays a role in the expatriate experience of SIEs as opportunities arise by chance, rather than as a result of an exact plan. An explanation of why SIEs are seeking adventure is that they are searching for a private challenge rather than a professional challenge. Crowley-Henry (2010) typifies SIEs as people who are actively pursuing and realizing their personal goals, and therefore are motivated by the quality of living rather than by a need to move for economic reasons (Crowley-Henry, 2010). This awareness of self-development can facilitate an ability to overcome the contextual constraints of living in a new place while not feeling at home and no longer feeling connected to the home country (Richardson & McKenna, 2003). SIEs who are more focused on their self-development and therefore more self-directed during their expat experience, influence their social and living environment in the host country. Thus, for achieving a successful 'overseas experience', SIEs themselves play an active role in their own experiences (Cao, Hirschi & Deller, 2013).

2.4 Home

Every time we leave, we come back home without ever thinking what 'home' really means. People often articulate this in terms of 'feeling at home'. There is no agreed single definition of the word 'home' as it is a subjective matter. However, in literature 'home' is understood as a complex concept since every person gives a distinctive meaning to the idea of

"home," filling it with behavior, symbols and ideas from their personal context (Hedetoft & Hjort, 2002). Home has long been defined as a fixed place:

"Home [was] regarded as a stable, unmoving center from which the world around can be perceived, conceived and experienced, and thanks to which ethnic and nation identities can develop… It is considered to be a fixed environment; being at home means stationary, centered, bounded, fitted, engaged and grounded." (Nowicka, 2007, p. 72).

The fact that nowadays people's lives are becoming increasingly mobile influences the notion of "home". The result of being highly mobile is that it takes people out of their places of origin, they become rootless. Some studies are concerned about this rootlessness within Western communities as this can lead to living nomadic lives (see for example, Bauman, 1996). Others have recognized that the idea of becoming rootless frees people from their local constraints, without losing their local attachments, and that they become able to shape their own lives (Beck, 1983, p. 38). Nevertheless, each time a person leaves a place that he has called 'home' and settles in a new country he is challenged to reflect on his meaning of home (Philip & Ho, 2010). The question 'where do I belong?' comes up as this is often related to the notion of 'feeling at home' since both concepts are about feeling safe and secure.

Although the concept of home is no longer fixed and is different for every person, everybody has to feel at home in one way or the other. As Duyvendak (2011) claims that not everybody needs a specific place to feel at home, people nowadays can also evoke feelings of home in generic places. He conceptualizes home as having three components: familiarity, haven, and heaven. The first condition 'familiarity' has to do with being familiar with people and things around you. The second element 'haven' consists of security, exclusivity and privacy, which can often be ascribed to the private spheres. The third and last element is 'heaven' and this is about a 'symbolic home' where people can freely express who they are (Duyvendak, 2011). These three factors contribute positively towards the homemaking process of SIEs.

Familiarity

One condition for feeling at home is familiarity. People need to make sense of their environment to feel secure. For expats this can be a struggle as they already face tension or stress because they have just left their home country. Suddenly they have to adapt to a completely new and often for them unknown culture. Killian and Johnson (2006) argue that the

first months of living in a new environment generate a feeling of not being in control, since the expat needs to define what it means to be an expat in this new place. Familiarity is not only important as seen from the perspective of the expat, but also from the perspective of the host society. When the host society does not have knowledge about expats living in their country, expats can be seen as strangers and treated as outsiders by the locals, which is not effective for the homemaking process of expats. Lehmann (2014) explains: *"As a result, strangers will not be treated as individuals but as abstractions of a certain type."* Being objectified because the host society is unfamiliar with the expat can lead to anger and misunderstanding. Familiarity is therefore key for both sides in order for expats to gain understanding of their new place.

Haven

When people are familiar with a place in which they have the feeling they are in control, they can feel at ease. Mallett (2004) makes the distinction between public and private, where home can be seen as the private sphere with feeling of security and intimacy whereas the public sphere is less personal and thus more difficult to attach to. Duyvendak adds that feelings of safety and privacy, often related to the micro level of the house, are essential for the feeling of home (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 39). Ahmed (1999) has written about traveling and home and is of the opinion that the contradictions of being home and away are not opposite concepts since home as a haven can be created anywhere in the world.

Heaven

Home as a heaven is about the symbolic home of people. Home can be seen as heaven when the person can express openly and freely who he or she is. In this condition, home is about the shared values and histories which together create an 'ideal home' (Duyvendak, 2011). Tucker describes that:

"Most people spend their lives in search of home, at the gap between the natural home [conceived as the home environment conducive to human existence] and the particular ideal home where they would be fully fulfilled." (Tucker in Mallett, 2004).

Duyvendak (2011) has put the three components which are discussed above into four strategies of how people feel at home in a mobile world (Table 1). Distinctions are made between generic and particular places and between people who see mobility negatively or positively. Since SIEs themselves choose to cross national borders, they see mobility as

positive. Firstly, expats can be chronically mobile according to the *hotel chain strategy*. They feel at home in generic places with a standardized design all over the world. They feel at home in places such as McDonalds or airports because these places look similar wherever they are in the world. Secondly, the expat can feel at home according to the *mobile home strategy*. Then they are attached to particular places and they recreate their home by taking their own belongings when expatriating.

	Mobility seen negatively	Mobility seen positively
Generic places	1. People lost in space: *No strategies available*	2. Chronically mobile: *The hotel chain strategy*
Particular places	3. Defensive localists: *My house is my home strategy*	4. Elective belongers: *The mobile home strategy*

Table 1: Strategies to Feel at Home in a Mobile World - Duyvendak (2011).

2.5 Place Attachment

In the past decades Sociology has been interested in how people create emotional bonds with their places of residence (Gieryn, 2000; Gustafson, 2001). The reason for this interest is a reaction to the interconnectedness in the world. People give meanings to places as part of their need to discover and evolve their identity. Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal (2005) point out that places can awake certain feelings, such as comfort, security, and belonging, the same feelings which belong to the concept of home. These feelings can thus play a role in forming and maintaining place connections and the attachment of place. People themselves actively play a role in giving space they call home a meaning (Massey, 1995). The attachment of place is highly influenced by the personal experiences of the individual. Through activities and daily routines, places can get this emotional or symbolic meaning (Van Riemsdijk, 2014). A place like a random café for example becomes meaningful to a person when he has a weekly drink in the same café; suddenly it becomes 'his café'.

Lewicka (2010) developed three categories in which the predictors of place-attachment can be categorized, namely: *social, socio-demographic, and environmental*. First are *social* factors, which relate to the social relations one has with other people who live in the same place (Gustafson, 2001). Secondly, *socio-demographic* factors play a role in the variation of how people feel attached to a place. However, there is a lack of coherence in empirical studies about the actual effects of such factors. This study concentrates on socio-demographic factors that contribute to a higher level of place attachment. These are: having children, marriage with a local and a high socio-economic status. Thirdly are *environmental factors* which are not about

the 'type of people', but about the 'type of place' (Bolan, 1997). A study by Conradson and Latham (2007) shows that practices and experience of relocation to a new environment are connected to the affective possibilities the new environment offers. To find out which physical predictors play a role in place attachment, scholars need to ask about evaluations of the new environment in terms of architectural features or aesthetic satisfaction (Ng, Kam, & Pong, 2005; Wilson-Doenges, 2000). In a study by Gieryn (2000) it was observed that there was a positive relationship between place attachment and the closeness to prominent landmarks in a city. When living in a new type of place such environmental features could improve or hinder the place attachment of expats. In order to build understanding about the factors that makes SIEs feel attached to the new environment and the factors that makes them want to leave, it is important to analyze the social, demographic and physical factors that play a role in their homemaking process.

2.6 Social Network

Social scientists believe the consequences of human behavior, such as expatriating, can only be understood in the context of social relationships in which persons are embedded (Massey, 1992; Portes, 1995). From a social network perspective, social relations can contribute to the establishment of a sense of home in the country of destination. When SIEs need to construct their new home, social relations are essential in helping to construct, maintain and develop this home (Easthope, 2004; Massey, 1992). Social relations are generally seen as social ties. These social ties consist of any type of social relationship between two members of any kind of network. Because of this complexity, social ties can differ in strength, as one relationship can be less intense than the other. When a social network consists of both weak and strong ties, it gives people different social resources (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter (1973) adds the importance of having weak ties, as they can serve as bridging ties which bring novel information into the network and connect different networks with each other (Figure 2). A variety of social resources is thus not only important for the provision of emotional support but also helps expats to adapt into a new and unknown culture and make it feel more at home.
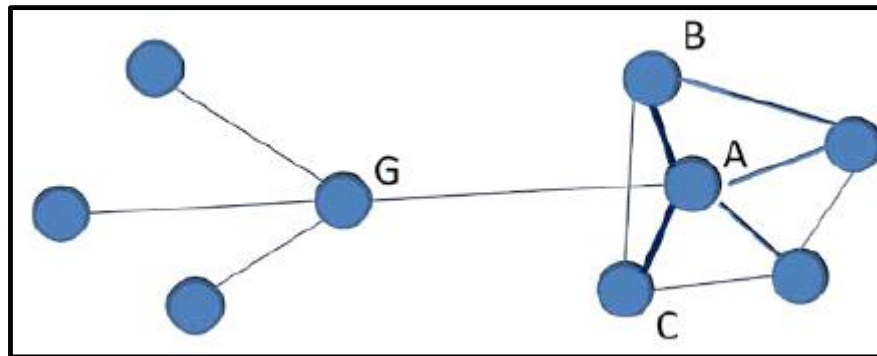
Figure 2: Bridging Tie from A to G. Removing the Tie Disconnects the Network.

Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese (2009) studied expats living in Japan and argue that creating social ties with Japanese is challenging for expats from Western countries. They point out that Japan has a limited integration and deferential treatment of foreigners. They attribute the lack of integration to the tendency of Japanese to give foreigners the 'red-carpet treatment' by being polite on the surface but distinguishing them as out-group members. In homogeneous countries such as Japan, interactions with locals are not easily achieved. However, Jintae Froese (2012) states that whenever an expat is married with a local, the expat becomes more satisfied with his social interactions because his spouse opens up social networks with locals.

Irrespective of whether a marriage takes place or not, differences are found between CAEs and SIEs based on their motivations to interact with locals (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). Because SIEs are often more motivated out of personal interest, they seek more interaction with locals than CAEs. Peltokorpi and Froese also argue that SIEs are better informed about the challenges in social interactions with locals compared to CAEs since SIEs are often well informed before they arrive in the host country. The expats not only depend on social networks, but also create new networks while living abroad as SIEs. When expats just arrive, they often search within the new country for communities where the members share the same country of origin or a shared identity (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002, p. 10; Ahmed, 1999, p. 336). It is thus essential that the social network of SIEs consist of both other expats and locals and both strong and weak ties. When SIEs lack such a variety in their social network their attachment to the new place can be hindered (Wang, 2002) because they stay in their 'expat bubble' where it is comfortable and safe (Fechter, 2007).

2.7 Level of Adjustment

Expats need to adjust to a certain level in order to feel at home in their new environment. Although expats live a particular lifestyle because of their mobility, literature gives two

conflicting images of them. The first image portrays expats as living inside an 'expat bubble', while the second image portrays them as 'cosmopolitans'. The two images are contradictory in terms of adjustment of the expat in the host country.

The level of adjustment can differ when there are large differences between the host country and country of origin (Olsen & Martins, 2009). Scholars developed the term 'expat bubble', which is a certain level of adjustment and can be described as an environmental bubble of the home country, or as Cohen describes: ''An enclave that shelters expats off from the environment of the host society'' (Cohen, 1977, p. 16). In expat literature CAEs live in an expat bubble mostly because they try to keep living in a place that is somewhat similar to 'back home' (Olsen & Martins, 2009). Expats in general do not have the goal to stay permanently in the country they live in and therefore they can afford the privilege of not assimilating. This expat bubble is an imagined geographic construction created by themselves to express where they live, work and network. Choosing to live in an expat bubble provides safety and security, even though this bubble is fluid and not fixed (Fechter, 2007). When living in an expat bubble, only a part of the city is used, instead of the entire city. Fechter (2007) argues that living in such a bubble is nothing like the 'normal' world and expats can develop an uneasiness with the 'outside world' when they leave their safe bubble.

There is not a uniform interpretation of cosmopolitanism in the literature. The trend of cosmopolitanism started in 1990 after the cold war when globalization intensified. Cosmopolitanism can be explained as universal, where all humans are equal in their moral standing and this moral standing applies to everyone everywhere, as if everybody is a citizen of the world (Brown & Held, 2010). Hannerz describes cosmopolitanism as:

"On the one hand it has to do with a knowledge and even appreciation of human diversity, and may be broadly termed cultural. On the other hand it has to do with community, society, and citizenship at a more or less global level" (Hannerz, 2004, p. 70).

Craig Calhoun (2008) explains that cosmopolitanism offers 'an ethics for globalization'. He argues that not everyone can be cosmopolitan since this is mainly accessible to the elite. This can further be related to the fact they have the correct passports, credit cards and cultural credentials. Therefore cosmopolitanism is often criticized that it is used to explain the behavior and practices of upper and middle classes. In contrast to Calhoun, this study typifies cosmopolitanism as whenever a person feels at ease wherever they are situated in the world; they are 'world citizens'.

In terms of adjustment, cosmopolitanism can be related to cross-cultural adjustment. Peltokorpi and Froese (2009) explain cross-cultural adjustment as the degree to which expats are psychologically comfortable and familiar with different aspects of a foreign environment. In their study they demonstrated that SIEs tend to be better cross-culturally adjusted than CAEs. They find that SIEs are more open to the host culture and thus able to add new behaviors, norms and rules to the foundation provided by (their) home cultures than CAEs (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009, p.1097). Another study by Tung (1998) points out that the preparation and training of expatriates depend on whether an expat is more or less "cosmopolitan," as it is dependent on previous experience abroad and on existing knowledge of other languages and cultures (Tung, 1998).

The contradiction between the two concepts of bubble and cosmopolitism points out that the expats struggle to create their home in order to survive and deal with the newness and obstacles of everyday life in a foreign place. Ley (2004) and Conradson and Latham (2005) argue that more research needs to be performed on the everyday practices of expats to better understand how expats relate to these concepts in their homemaking process. Investigating their daily rituals, networks and activities can provide useful information to make clear which barriers they face and to better understand how they identify themselves with their new environment.

In conclusion, each time a person leaves a place that he calls 'home' and settles in a new place, he is challenged to redefine and reflect on his meaning of home. Expats are faced with several challenges as they change the course of their life by moving into an unfamiliar and seemingly insecure new environment. In order to feel secure and familiar with the new environment the expat has to manage his life again. Factors such as social networks, routines, and socio-economic and environmental features can contribute to or hinder this homemaking process of SIEs. The next chapter will discuss the research design of this study to find out how SIEs do this in Shenzhen.

3. Research Design 研究设计

In this chapter, the design of the study will be discussed. The major objective of this thesis is to assess the performance of Shenzhen as a place to live in according to the experiences and perceptions of SIEs who are currently living in this city. Firstly, the research questions will be given followed by the conceptual model of the relationships and definitions of the main concepts. Lastly, the aim of the research will be discussed.

3.1 Research Questions

The research question of this study is: *how accessible is Shenzhen for Self-Initiated Expatriates to establish their home and how does the context of reception challenge this notion of home?* This research question is further divided into six research sub-questions, which are nested into each other:

1. *What are the personal characteristics of SIEs living in Shenzhen?*
2. *How do activities and routines contribute to the homemaking process of SIEs?*
3. *What are the ways in which social networks of SIEs are organized?*
4. *Which elements play a role in the place-attachment of SIEs with Shenzhen?*
5. *Are there shared characteristics in the various ways Shenzhen SIEs feel at home?*
6. *What advice would SIEs give to make Shenzhen more accessible for them to live in?*

3.2 Conceptual Model

These research questions and theoretical framework are elaborated in the following conceptual model:
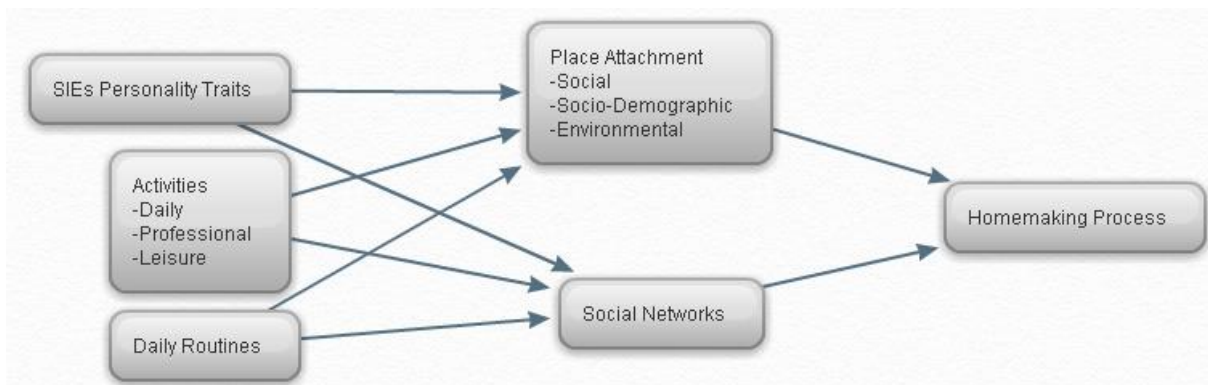

Figure 3: Conceptual Model of the Relationships between SIEs Personality Traits, Activities, Daily Routines, Place Attachment, Social Networks and the Homemaking Process.

3.3 Definition of the Main Concepts

Activity (Daily, Professional and Leisure)	Variety of activities SIEs carry out in their professional and leisure time.
Home	There is no agreed single definition of the word 'home' as it deemed to be a subjective matter. Three elements however contribute to the homemaking process of SIEs: - Familiarity - Haven - Heaven
Personality Trait	Individual differences in the way people behave, feel and think.
Place Attachment	The extent to which people voluntarily become actively attached to their new environment and its population.
Routine	A regular way of doing things in a particular order.
Self-Initiated Expat	As there is no 'absolute' definition, this study defines SIEs with the following characteristics: - They have freedom of choice - They cross a national border - They have internal motivation - Their duration of stay is not fixed
Social Network	Set of social relations, containing both strong and weak ties.

3.4 Research Aim

This paper has a deductive approach, since it builds on literature about expats, home and social networks. The aim of the study is to get a broad overview of how SIEs make themselves feel at home by exploring their daily activities, behavior patterns, social connections and kind of challenges they face in order to become familiar with the city. The unit of analysis is Shenzhen as a whole, since SIEs can be located anywhere in the city. As Shenzhen aims to become a qualified global city it needs to be accessible for internationals to settle in. This case study provides insights about the everyday lives of SIEs to understand which opportunities and challenges they experience while living in Shenzhen.

4. Research Methodology 研究方法

In this chapter, the research methodology of this study will be discussed. Firstly, the method of data collection will be described, followed by a description of the two methods which are used to collect the data. Furthermore, the research sample of this case study will be described. Lastly, the procedure in analyzing data will be discussed.

4.1 Data Collection

The research has a descriptive character to gain further knowledge about the daily lives of SIEs in order to contribute to the already existing information and theories of expatriates and their homemaking process. This research draws on findings from in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The qualitative approach of this research enables better understanding of the personal experiences of individuals and issues from the participants' own perspective. Similar approaches are used in other empirical studies about related topics (Van Riemsdijk, 2014; Nowicka, 2007). This current study combines narratives and observations to provide sufficient information to illustrate the ideas of home, attachment and social networks of SIEs and how they deal with opportunities and challenges while living in Shenzhen.

4.1.1 In-Depth Interviews

The first method that is used in this study are in-depth interviews. Given the qualitative nature of this research, this type of interviewing is used to explore in detail the respondent's own perceptions and experiences about living in Shenzhen as an expat. The interviews were semi-structured interviews and a topic list was used as a guideline. This topic list consisted of several themes which were directly related to the research questions (Appendix 1). Based on the preferences of the respondents, the interviews were held in either formal or informal settings. The duration of the interviews varied from 40 minutes to two hours.

Getting access to the expat community in Shenzhen was made possible by utilizing different channels, primarily social network websites, to find respondents for this research (see Figure 4). These websites gave opportunities to get in contact with expats before even starting the fieldwork in Shenzhen. The contact was made via WeChat, Facebook and email with several respondents who were willing to participate in this study. As this research does not limit the research sample to merely respondents who are active on the internet, the snowball technique was used while being in Shenzhen to find other contacts. Furthermore, through participating at

several expat events SIEs from diverse networks were located. Additionally, some respondents were found while doing fieldwork on the streets.

Figure 4: Logos of Diverse Expat Websites.

4.1.2 Participant Observation

The participant observation technique has also been applied in this research. To have a broad overview of the variety of expats living in Shenzhen, different types of events were chosen for observation. The way the events were promoted was used as an indicator to decide which events would be used for this study. Some events were formally organized and were promoted as exclusive events, while others were more informally promoted. Also events which were organized through different organizations were sought out in order to explore which groups of expats participate at which event. Further reasons for the choice of activities were based on the constraints such as the limited amount of time of conducting the fieldwork, location of the event, costs of the event and accessibility of the event. Five activities were used: (1) a movie night organized by Love, Shenzhen at 'Whatever Coffee House' in OCT Loft area, (2) a social gathering with English teachers in COCO Park, (3) SWIC Tuesday Coffee Morning at the Hilton Hotel in Shekou, (4) a rooftop party organized by That's PRD Magazine at the Hilton Hotel in Shekou and (5) a Mojito Street Party organized by shenzhenparty.com in Baishizhou (白石洲站) (Figure 5). All these events were organized by different expat or local organizations and were targeted to the total expat community.

Figure 5: Invitation for the Baishizhou Mojito Street Party.

4.2 Research Sample

This sample focusses only on SIEs, but it was not always easy to be certain whether respondents fulfilled requirements for belonging to this specific expat group. Eventually 23 semi-structured interviews were held with 18 SIEs, 1 CAE and 4 housewives (HWs). The expats who did not fit in the category of SIE were used as benchmarks along with the data of the five participant observations. In Table 2, the demographics of the respondents are displayed. A percentage of 43% were female and the age of the respondents ranged from 25 to 60 plus. A total of 44% reported Shenzhen was their first expatriate experience. The average length of expatriation was 4.6 years as a number of respondents had already lived for a long period of time in Shenzhen. Their professions differed greatly as they had careers in entrepreneurship and teaching or were vice-presidents, managers or restaurant owners. Lastly, four of the respondents had a relationship with a Chinese local.

4.3 Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed in Microsoft Word with observations and field notes documented and included in the analysis. All data was coded per theme, to search for common answers. Through highlighting, relevant excerpts about their activities, routines, social networks, and attachment to Shenzhen were used to illustrate their ideas of homemaking in Shenzhen. Demographic information was inserted in Microsoft Excel to make table 2.

Table 2.

Demographics – SIEs by Region of Origin, Gender, Age, Profession, Year of Arrival and Location of Residence in Shenzhen.

Respondent	Region of Origin	Gender	Age (Years)	Profession	Year of Arrival	Location of Residence
1- NZ	West & Central Asia	Male	n/a	Teacher	2014 & 2015	Luohu & Shekou
2- HN	Europe	Male	40-50	Vice president	2012	Shekou
3- VU	North America	Female	n/a	Housewife	2007 & 2013	Shekou & Shekou
4- AI	Europe	Male	30-40	Business owner	2006 & 2010	Shekou & Shekou
5- NS	Europe east	Female	25-30	Architect	2013	Shekou
6- VR	North Asia	Male	25-30	Architect	2013	Shekou
7- RU	North America	Female	30-35	Teacher	2009	Nanshan
8- EU	North America	Male	30-35	College counselor	2013	Luohu
9- CB	Europe	Female	60-65	Housewife	2012	Shekou
10-AA	Oceania	Female	60-65	Housewife	2004	Shekou
11-EF	Europe	Female	35-40	Housewife	2008 & 2015	Shekou & Shekou
12-JI	Europe	Male	45-50	Vice president	2012	Shekou
13-FB	South America	Male	25-30	Software developer	2013	Shekou
14-PD	Europe	Male	30-35	Software developer	2012	Shekou
15-MT	West & Central Asia	Male	25-30	Software developer	2014	Luohu
16-MN	Europe	Male	40-50	Business owner	2010	Shekou
17-TC	North America	Female	50-60	Housewife	2005	Shekou
18-CE	Western Europe	Male	30-35	Business owner	2012	Nanshan
19-MU	North America	Male	30-35	Internet marketer	2010	Futian
20-NU	North America	Female	30-35	Product manager	2010	Futian
21-JU	North America	Male	25-30	Technical writer	2011	Baisizhou
22-CU	North America	Female	25-30	Magazine editor	2011	OCT Loft
23-SU	North America	Female	25-30	Teacher	2012	Nanshan

5. Results 调查结果

In this chapter the results of the exploratory interviews with the members of the SIE community in Shenzhen are discussed. Each sub-question is treated in one section. Throughout this chapter, the different barriers that SIEs face while living in Shenzhen will be discussed.

5.1 Personality Traits

Each individual possesses different personality traits which play a determining role in the experience that the person has when the environment around him/her changes. In this section the personality traits that the SIEs need in order to make themselves feel at home in Shenzhen are discussed. Their decision to expatriate to Shenzhen reflects the personalities of the SIEs who are poised to make the best of their expat experience. However, their experience with the surroundings, including activities and social life, depend on the extent to which they themselves utilize them. In this study, several key personality traits were identified and observed when expats were asked about enablers for survival in Shenzhen. The following personality traits that occurred multiple times are:

- ✓ Be open for adventure
- ✓ Be adaptable
- ✓ Be open-minded
- ✓ Be willing to learn new things
- ✓ Be patient

Findings indicate that these traits are typical for SIEs living in Shenzhen. However, it should be noted that internal and external factors have an influence on these traits and therefore are stronger for some SIEs than for others.

A key trait is that one must be open for adventure, as reported by most of the respondents (Interviews TC, RU, JI, NU, VU and CU). These respondents replied that their decision of moving to Shenzhen, or 'adventurous China', is a choice they made because they wanted to do 'something different':

"I am very adventurous and I am very curious. I wanted to do something different. I love to travel and meet new people. Thought it is a good experience for the kids. Which it has been, because we moved over to Shenzhen because of them" (Interview VU).

'Adventure seekers' is how one respondent describes herself and the other SIEs she knows. One of the female respondents interviewed explains the different expat groups that live in Shenzhen and the type of expat the 'adventure seeker' is:

"There definitely are different subgroups of expats. One of the obvious subgroups are older white males who come to China and end up marrying a Chinese women quite a bit younger than themselves. Another group are the ones who are here to party. Mostly English teachers, sorry to give English teachers a bad reputation but here they do. But there is another group I have found and this group are the 'adventure seekers.' People who are ambitious and often entrepreneurs. It is interesting because when you meet those people you find you already have a lot of things in common. So you already are the type of person; a little bit odd, a little bit strange, usually you are laid back because living in China is not easy. Although Shenzhen is in my opinion 'the' most comfortable place in China to live in as a foreigner" (Interview NU).

This search for adventure is often mentioned in the interviews as something one must have when deciding to expatriate to Shenzhen. The role of serendipity (Richardson & Mallon, 2005) stimulates the sense of adventure in many of the SIE arrivals of this study. Several interviewees (Interviews EU, VU, SU and MN) describe how randomly they came to be living in Shenzhen when they searched for adventure somewhere else:

"I moved to Shenzhen in the middle of working on my graduate degree in teaching English as a second language. At that time I figured out in just studying how to teach English, I wanted to do it and this opportunity presented itself. I am the only one of my family who travelled outside the US. I never imagined myself living in China ever" (Interview SU).

Adaptation is another important personality trait SIEs need in order to survive in Shenzhen. Due to cultural differences the expat life in Shenzhen differs greatly from the life that was left behind in their home country. Almost all respondents explain that in order to deal most effectively with China, one should adapt to the set of unique rules that is the reality in China:

"You have to adapt in this country. If you are not open minded, if you do not know what happens in this country you will never succeed. Especially the culture, you have to work with Chinese in one way or another so you must adapt. Not everybody can handle that. Some are too used in how they live in their home country" (Interview AI).

There is a shared understanding that although the respondents choose themselves to live in Shenzhen, with this decision comes the challenge to make this new place as comfortable as possible to live in. The issues of daily life suddenly become a struggle and SIEs need to understand how to manage their lives again in a different and new setting. Holding tight to the things they know from their country of origin becomes increasingly challenging. Being open-minded to the new life they have got themselves into in order to adapt at a certain level is needed. Therefore they all agree that adaptation is key in the process of making Shenzhen their new home.

Only one person is found who completely adapts himself with the Chinese lifestyle (Interview JU). For others, a paradox is found in most of their answers (Interviews AI, JI, NS, RU, EU and CB) about their degree of adaptation. The interviewees are of the opinion that they adapt to the Chinese lifestyle, but without stepping too far outside their comfort zone. One respondent who has been living in Shenzhen since 2006, explains that he is adapting while at the same time he is frequently frustrated about cultural differences:

"Newcomers think everything is very exciting. They think everything is so cute. But things as the spitting are something I get really frustrated with every day. You do not have to write this down. But I just give you an example how we get frustrated in this country. We do not see the beautiful things from this country anymore because it became part of our life. We got so used to it. We adapted to this kind of life" (Interview AI).

Barrier: Our Standards

Why SIEs believe Shenzhen is difficult to live in is in the words of one respondent: 'our Western standards'. The previous excerpt reflects this, as the respondent views Chinese behavior as socially unconventional and unacceptable based on his own cultural standards. Chinese culture has some remarkable differences from Western culture. The ability to cope with these differences influences whether the Chinese behavior is perceived as stressful or not. Several respondents (Interviews VU, AI, HN, JU and SU), especially those who have settled for longer than two years, did find a way to cope with this barrier by patiently trying to constantly understand the, for them, unknown behavior. For example, one respondent talks about how he copes with his own realization about the differences in behavior between himself and the Chinese:

"We are the barrier, we expect too much. When you go to the Starbucks they always ask you if you want it cold. Of course not! But it is the standard to ask here, but if you say you want it hot

they stare at you as 'why, it is so hot outside?' You feel like wait a minute, you are selling me European stuff, you should not tell me what to do. We expect our standards but they do not know our standards or how to treat right. This is when you need to adapt, understand, analyze and then act" (Interview AI).

This respondent explains how the local cultural perception of the global standards can lead to a different customer experience even when the customer has a good understanding of the local culture. This was characterized by the reaction the respondent received while ordering a coffee at Starbucks in Shenzhen despite having a good cultural awareness. An individual always carries his 'own standards' as part of his personality with him wherever he goes and stays. It requires significant awareness to realize that globally rolled out standards can be interpreted differently by people with different cultural backgrounds. Although this barrier can prevent people from coming to live in China, the respondents recognize that the barrier created by the local culture needs to be dealt with as part of their homemaking process in Shenzhen. As the literature suggested, the respondents facilitate an ability to overcome contextual constraints of living (Richardson & McKenna, 2003). However, for some of the respondents it remains difficult to adjust to new and different ways of living. But when a person overcomes this barrier, new things can be learned from each other:

"I think people from the West in many cases look down on Chinese people. I do not understand why. I think that for sure Western people have things to teach Chinese. I am here working because I have a certain skill that does not exist in China. But I also think that we have a lot to learn from Chinese. But if you are not open to that idea you will not learn anything" (Interview JI).

One respondent (Interview NI) was negative about his expat experience in Shenzhen. During the interview it became clear that he was not open or willing to adapt to acceptable Chinese social norms and behavior. He believed that it was impossible to survive in Shenzhen due to the large number of barriers that were posed against him in his day to day life ranging from unhealthy food, dirty people, bad behavior and pollution. Although he has a good salary and can afford to live in a nice apartment near the Kingkey Tower in Luohu district, he is of the opinion that he, and other expats, cannot live a meaningful life in Shenzhen. This comment shows that the respondent experiences his mobility as negative and would rather live in the country where he finished his studies, but is prohibited due to visa issues. According to

Duyvendak (2011) the respondent is 'lost in space' and as the respondent himself explains he cannot become attached to Shenzhen since he has the idea that everything is too unfamiliar. He attributed it to the fact that the Chinese perception is so different from his (Western) perception. However, considering one criteria in this study for SIEs is the voluntary decision to expatriate to their current country, it can be questioned if this respondent meets this criteria.

> **Box 1** – PRD Rooftop Party - The rooftop party had a limited number of tickets, which made it an exclusive event for expats with money. The entrance payment was 150 RMB. Of all types of expats, SIEs were least represented. Most attendees were business men, HWs and CAEs, with a complete lack of Chinese locals. The interior, music and atmosphere was Western style. Canapés were served consisting of non-Asian dishes which made the guests for a moment believe they were not in China while they could order glasses of wine at the bar.

The lack of adaptation is also found during participant observations at two expat events in this study; namely 'That's PRD Rooftop Party' and the 'SWIC Tuesday Coffee Morning', both located at the Hilton Hotel. This hotel is situated in Shekou (蛇口), the area with the highest concentration of expats and where most of the Western chains are represented. In Box 1 the PRD Rooftop Party is described. In the third chapter where the social networks are discussed, the SWIC Tuesday Coffee Morning will be discussed in further detail.

The description of the rooftop party suggests that a particular group of expats is attracted to such events, as few SIEs were found to be present. As Duyvendak explains one strategy of mobile people is to make themselves feel at home visiting generic places with a standardized design all over the world (Duyvendak, 2011). Places such as this rooftop of the Hilton Hotel have a standard recognizable design and the particular group of expats who come to this event probably enjoy this lack of uniqueness as they are familiar with it.

Unlike the single respondent who does not want to adapt to the Shenzhen lifestyle and unlike the expats of the Rooftop Party, other SIEs try their best to adapt by using their effort in adaptation as a strategy to survive in Shenzhen. Their ability and effort to adapt makes this expat group unique as one respondent explains:

"You have to adapt to many things. If you are not open minded to many things then whoever tells me he has problems, he creates them himself I think" (Interview AI).

Another essential personality trait is the willingness to learn. Especially newcomers face the challenge of settling into a new city and need to (re)organize their daily lives again and learn to adapt to a different environment. The mundane life activities and known issues can become

challenging. Some of the challenges can be exemplified as SIEs needing to explore the city to find out where the supermarket is located, where they can buy cheese, or which bank they can best choose to open an account with. According to the interviewees (Interviews SU, CU, VU, NS, JI, JU, MN and HN), the willingness to learn how to (re)organize life was essential to make their expatriation to Shenzhen successful:

"When I first came here I thought every Chinese person was wrong. I thought, why are you doing this, why are you spitting, why are you raising your kid like this, all of these things. And then I realized it was not them doing something wrong, it was just challenging something in me. It took me a second to realize and change why do I believe what I believe. Living in America all my life I was accustomed to believing in one thing. And that was not really being challenged because that is what my community was doing. But coming here, outside of that community, I do not have anybody here to bounce that information off. So I was left to my own understanding. So it was at that moment I made the decision I want to be open because I want to learn" (Interview SU).

In order to learn new things, patience is essential. The excerpts below exemplify how participants use their patience as a survival technique in order to combat the obstacles and newness of their Shenzhen life.

"You have to be very adaptable and get to be very patient. My sister visited me after the first year I was here and she said you have gotten really laid back. Either you get really laid back or you get really angry. And it is not healthy to be angry all the time" (Interview CU).

"A lot of people come here and think 'I will do what I want to do for a year' and then they leave but maybe they do not stay for long because they cannot take the rush of emotion that sometimes happens here. You have to bring your emotions back, you have to bring it all in" (Interview SU).

Being patient and step-by-step figuring out how to live the 'Shenzhen life' is how most of the respondents try to make sense of their new place. To sum up, it was found that the respondents believe numerous personality traits are needed in order to survive in Shenzhen. Although being adventurous is the main trait they all believe they possess, most of them live an adventurous life in Shenzhen without stepping too far outside their comfort zone. As the city is enormous with plenty of activities available, the next chapter will look at what kinds of activities SIEs do to make themselves at home in Shenzhen while living there.

5.2 Role of Activities and Routines

This section discusses the day to day life of SIEs and the activities they perform in order to feel 'at home' in Shenzhen. The type of activities undertaken plays an important role in determining the level of difficulty in creating home in a new place. An expat who is able to easily carry out activities that he is used to doing in his home country develops a sense of belongingness in his new environment more quickly. Several activities that the SIEs perform as part of their routine in order to make sense of Shenzhen were identified in the interviews.

Many of the respondents replied that much of their life in Shenzhen is centered on work (Interviews CE, MN, NS, VR, JI, FB, PD, MT and NU). They do not have a lot of free time, but when they do, SIEs prefer to spend time with friends and family. They often meet-up in specific places such as their favorite bar or café (Interviews HN, NS, VR, RU, EU, JI, FB, PD, MT, CU and MN) or go out for dinner (all interviews). Many respondents express a desire to recreate their home in such 'favorite' places as they find a sense of familiarity or belongingness in them (Wiles, 2008). 'Sarah's' is for example a bar which was named in four interviews (Interviews NS, FB, PD and MT). This place attracts similar minded people and according to the respondents the staff is 'foreign friendly' which attracts a big proportion of SIEs. Another interesting fact is that all visitors are able to provide input for the music to be played on the music stereo. Playing your own music helps SIEs in experiencing the bar as a more personal place which, as Mallett (2004) argues, contributes to the attachment of the space.

'Panini Station' (Figure 6) is another example of a place which is mentioned by several respondents (Interviews NS, SU, CU and VR) because of its familial and communal associations (Wiles, 2008). The place is a small European style café where visitors can eat sandwiches and salads. All visitors know each other and greet each other warmly in a very relaxing environment. There are hardly any Chinese speakers that come to this place and therefore not many Chinese visit it. The other reasons behind respondents' preference for these cafés are the location and the quality of food:

"The sandwiches and coffee are really good. It is in the block where my apartment building is (Shekou). The owner is one of the first people I met when I came to Shenzhen and she is really friendly. Always a lot of friendly people come there to hang out" (Interview VS).

Figure 6: Impression of 'Panini Station'.

Places such as 'Sarah's' and 'Panini Station' are situated in Shekou where most of the expats live. These places are created for foreigners as not many Chinese visit these places. Shekou is a sub-district and belongs to Nanshan district situated in the southwest area of Shenzhen. Besides Nanshan, are the regions Luohu (罗湖) and Futian (福田区) (Figure 7) the only regions mentioned by the SIEs in which they live, work and spend their leisure time.
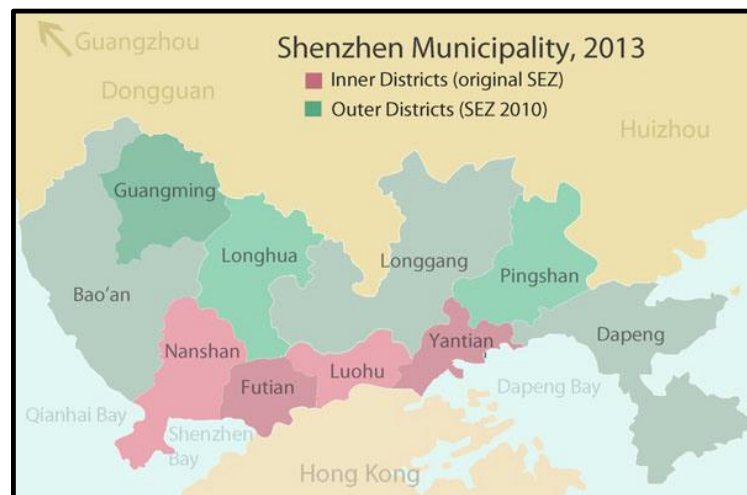
Figure 7: Districts of Shenzhen.

It is important that the SIEs are mobile when they live in Shenzhen in order to facilitate the homemaking process. Mobility can be described as the ability of people to move around an area to access the essential facilities, communities and other destinations that are required to support a decent quality of life (ARUP, 2014). Since the SIE is new to the city, he needs to explore and discover the best routes to his destinations, such as to work, gym and airport. Most respondents did not own a car and were dependent on the public transportation system for moving from one point to the other. Only one respondent (Interview MN) mentioned his car

which he used quite a lot. He also expressed that the traffic is safe in Shenzhen contrary to the perception that most expats have who feel it is dangerous:

"I have never had any troubles caused by traffic. If you drive yourself you understand the logic. I always say: 'if you drive on the round way in Rome, I do not see any differences with China and there'. One advantage here is the fact people drive unpredictably, so they drive more slow. I love it" (Interview MN).

His optimism about the traffic is not shared by most respondents as some consciously avoid driving themselves. They use the metro system rather than drive themselves because of the dangerous traffic (Interviews VR, FB, VU, CU, SU, TC, NU and EU). The metro system of Shenzhen is used by all respondents and is perceived to be extremely useful and safe. As some districts have cycle paths, some of the respondents also use a bicycle as a means of transport. Others use taxis which are also a popular mode of transportation to get to a specific place, especially when one is new in the city, since the addresses are "weird". The response supporting this characterization, as per one of the respondents was:

"All streets here have no numbers, so you just need to figure it out yourself. When you have an appointment, it just says: 'Central Nanshan Road' but you do not know where on the road. Now I have been here long enough so I know how it works" (Interview VU).

Lastly, "walking" appeared as the most recurring theme as a means of transportation that the SIEs use to move around. It is also observed that the respondents mostly stay inside their neighborhood as one respondent explains that everything a person needs can be found within her neighborhood (Interview TC).

Barrier: Geographic Distance

The key reason that deters SIEs from moving around the city a lot and staying in their neighborhood is the large geographic stretch of Shenzhen. The city is spread over an area of 17,573 km^2 (Figure 8) and although there is good transport, the mobility of most respondents seems limited. Most respondents are content with the possibilities their neighborhood has to offer (Interviews TC, JI, HN, EU, VR, FB, PD, MT, NS and MN). Upon asking if the respondents visit other neighborhoods in Shenzhen, most of them replied they sometimes do daytrips to other parts of the city, but most daily life activities revolve around work and inside

their neighborhood (Interviews AI, NU, FB, PD, MT and CE). Therefore, they only explore the area where their company is located to find 'their favorite coffee place'. To exemplify this, one respondent explains how she often visits her favorite bagel bakery: *"I can go there and sit there for hours, I walk in and they already know what I want"* (Interview SU).

Even when the SIEs have time and desire to explore other parts of Shenzhen, the long distance to reach other areas poses a barrier which limits the mobility of SIEs. One respondent living in Shekou explains:

"I live in a pretty good area. It is not far for me to get to the things I want, I do not live far from places such as my favorite bar, or it takes only two minutes to reach the metro. So everything I need is pretty much a walking distance. When I hear there is new bar opened in Luohu I am like 'all the way in Luohu, not a chance" (Interview FB).
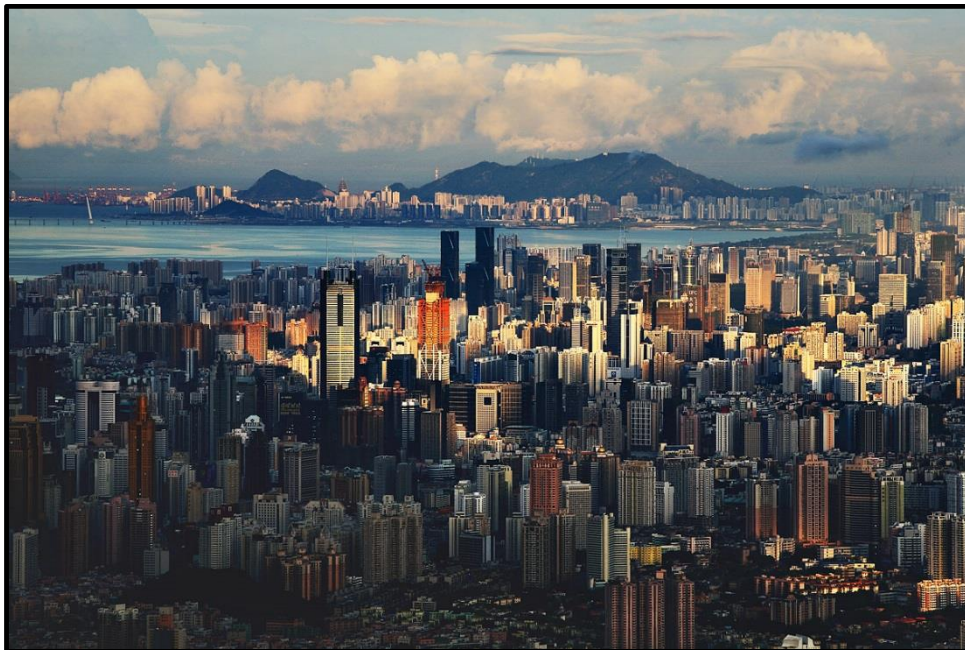
Figure 8: Cityscape of Shenzhen.

Some of the respondents resolve the distance barrier by deliberately living in a specific neighborhood in Shenzhen (Interviews JU and CE). They strategically choose to live around "Windows of the World" as this is in the middle of the city and therefore helps them in increasing their mobility around the city without losing much effort and time:

"I decided when I moved to Shenzhen I do not want to live with other foreigners. I did it 100% Chinese as I moved in with Chinese people. The area, Baishizhou, I did not know much about

it, but it was a great apartment and in terms of transportation this is the perfect spot. Come on, Windows of the World, you can go to Futian or Shekou. It is the best place to be in terms of transportation. When I was changing jobs this was very strategic because now I could be flexible" (Interview JU).

Although these two respondents do not live in an expat neighborhood, their activities are still comparable to the other respondents: working in combination with leisure activities such as meeting friends, visiting bars and going out for dinner.

Quite a few sport activities were also mentioned by the respondents. This can be attributed to the fact that there is a lot of open space in Shenzhen creating possibilities to do outdoor sport activities supported by the relatively clean air. Several respondents are active in hiking (Interviews CB, AA, TC and JU), while others do sports such as running, cycling or swimming (Interviews VR, JI, SU, CU and CE). The channels via which they get information about the desired sports are advertisements and social ties. One respondent (Interview SU) teaches yoga and is planning to organize a healthy movement retreat in the fall where people can do several styles of yoga, Pilates and dance. Yoga is relatively new for the Chinese culture and therefore the respondent believes that she can create a platform for it and there will be a demand. This is a key finding of this study as a majority of the respondents are aware that avenues for nonexistent activities and hobbies must be created by the expats themselves (SU, CU, MN, RU, CE, JU and VU). Shenzhen is a new city without much competition and the expats living in Shenzhen can benefit from this. One respondent explains that "everything is possible, if you create it yourself" (Interview MN). This is also an indirect answer to the people who complain Shenzhen has no culture and lacks activities to keep SIEs interested:

"Shenzhen is a great place to have a hobby or discover a hobby. You have to create it. It is like looking at this white wall, it is literally just a white wall unless you decorate it. Somebody has to see that vision and think: 'I want to put some colors on this white wall'. That is what people are missing. They are looking for somebody else for doing this. But if you come over here to develop a hobby such as yoga I think there are three others I know who teach yoga in the entire city. CU developed her own lane and that is the drive you have to have to see it come alive. If you do not have that drive and wait for somebody else to do it you will sit frustrated all day" (Interview SU).

This idea of creating it yourself is a key finding about the role of expats in Shenzhen. As Shenzhen is a new city much has to be done to make it a good place to live in. Subcultures flourish because of the need for people to belong. One example found in this study is Shenzhen's growing music community.Apart from most bars with in-house bands that provide evening entertainment every night, some of the expats have started to perform at venues. Some SIEs have also teamed up with locals and perform on stages at open mics or jam nights throughout Shenzhen. Shenzhen is not known for its music scene. It has only been recognized as a transient business city, and remains in its infancy. However, more bars are introducing their own open mic night and it has reached the point where one can find an open mic almost every night, mostly in Shekou and in Coco Park areas. Places such as Rapscallions (Figure 9) or McCawley's are crowded with expats (and several locals) in the weekends. These locations serve as places where beautiful unforgettable memories can be created together and where professional players can network with other musicians. One of the respondents (Interview CU) even came back to Shenzhen because she missed the supportive musical community. Another respondent discovered her talent for singing in Shenzhen and explains this changed her life forever as she never expected to stay that long in China and become a singer.

Figure 9: Poster of Open Mic Night in Rapscallions.

This idea of creating it yourself is also mentioned in relation to other topics, for example the hunt for good food, which plays a big part in their managing of life. To illustrate, one respondent (Interview CU) realized that there is no efficient food delivery website in Shenzhen in English, started one on his own and is currently running a good business. Food can be key in someone's sense of feeling 'at home' somewhere else (Fenster, 2005). Food turned out to be an

important issue for all interviewees as food primarily was observed as a barrier. Many spoke about the big differences between Chinese and Western food, the quality of Western food, or the dilemma of where to buy groceries.

Barrier: Food

The main reason behind "food" acting as a barrier in the homemaking process is the lack of preference for Chinese food as part of the daily diet (Figure 10). The exception of this is the respondents who have a relationship with a Chinese person (Interviews MN, MU, CE and EU). They eat Chinese food more often because it is cooked for them. Because SIEs are searching for some adventure, they try not to limit their food to merely Western food. One respondent told about his rule of eating a minimum of 70% Chinese food each week. When asked the reason behind this, he mentioned eating Chinese food as primary food as a way to understand and connect with 'their life'. However, the use of gutter oil makes respondents reluctant to try street food. To stay healthy, all the SIEs need to find their choice of food and ways to identify what to eat and where. The common arguments given as barriers to eat well in Shenzhen are the expensive food in China and the lack of knowledge in restaurants of how to cook Western dishes such as pizza (Interviews NU, HN, AI, EU and CU). SIEs with money to spare on food go out for dinner quite often. They go to Western restaurants and are of the opinion that as long as one is willing to pay a little more and can search for it, there are some very good restaurants to find, even better than in Europe (Interviews MN, HN and JI). In addition to enjoying good meals, going out for dinner is also a social activity for most of the SIEs:

"Those who live in Shekou all live quite close to each other. So everywhere you want to go it is just a short walk. And if you go in the evening to a restaurant you meet people you know. Because very few of us cook here. We all eat out all the time" (Interview JI).

Not all respondents have enough money to spend on eating outside frequently, so they create their own way of dealing with the food issue. The following respondent explains that the primary source of food is home cooked food and the secondary source is restaurants where healthy food is assured. She also mentions going to Hong Kong to buy groceries as it is cheaper there:

"I do not eat street food anymore I do not want to mess around with it because of the gutter oil. I used to eat it but now I usually do not eat it. I try to eat pretty healthy. If I am going to pay for

food I go to Element Fresh (restaurant in Shekou) because they have fresh salads. I cook a lot myself. Also I go to Hong Kong to get different healthy food that I cannot get here or because it is too expensive because of the import prices. So I bring it in from Hong Kong once a month" (CU).

Figure 10: Typical Chinese Food.

For many expats, the absence of particular food and flavors from their country of origin to create a sense of 'home' (Wiles, 2008) is a reason to actively import them from other places. A majority of SIEs interviewed make it a regular practice to buy Western groceries every time they visit Hong Kong due to significant price differences. For example, one respondent visits Hong Kong regularly to buy good ham (Interview RU). Another respondent imported her own waffle maker so she does not miss her favorite Belgian waffles (Interview CB). This respondent's answer is typical:

"I definitely miss food from the region where my parents come from. I miss good Caribbean food, the flavors and so forth. So when I come back from (...) I will bring a lot of spices with me, things to be able to season the food. I buy meat always at expensive western supermarkets because you can trust the quality. Vegetables I buy on the street and that is how I balance it out" (Interview EU).

The SIEs have developed their own survival techniques in terms of where to get what type of food. Every SIE has his/her own way of conducting the mundane activities such as buying groceries. As explained above, some put effort into a journey to Hong Kong, while others have a supermarket they visit to buy groceries. A common element in the responses that were collected is that a majority of respondents buy their vegetables at the local market, while meat and fish is bought in big retail supermarkets. The reason for this split is the questionable quality of certain food products according to SIEs (Interview EU, CU, TC and NI).

Besides transportation and food there are other things that the SIEs need to manage while they live in Shenzhen. When asked if they faced any problems with managing their finance, numerous respondents made it clear that the experience of managing finance and financial situation varied from person to person. Some did not face any difficulties at all (Interviews JI and MN), while others had problems with sending money oversees or opening a bank account (Interviews NU, EU, and CU). Those who experience trouble with banking address this by going to Hong Kong for all their money business:

"I do all my banking in Hong Kong. It is outside of China so it is much easier to move money around. It is an off shore zone. So the regulations are clear, not that they are easy but it is clear. Here in China it is a little bit grey. So that is one of the brilliant parts too, that you can quite easily set up a business or bank account in Hong Kong and then you can withdraw money here in China. So it is pretty good" (Interview NU).

It is observed that whenever people search actively for advice, expats and locals are happy to offer guidance and share their experiences on effectively managing financial aspects. The next excerpt clarifies this as the respondent does not experience any difficulties with finance because he managed to gain enough information before opening a bank account:

"Opening a bank account what I was told before was easy. Fill in the form, handed in my passport, they opened an account, they gave me an ATM card and it was fixed. It was my choice which bank I wanted to use. So before I choose the bank, in my first few days I searched for the most common ATM on the street. I asked some people what are the best banks. And you do get advice from people about where to go" (Interview JI).

This research also highlights the substandard postal services of China as most respondents pointed out that they send their posts to friends and family using the postal services of Hong Kong. (Interview RU, TC, NU, CU, SU and EU). The public post office of China as mentioned by one of the respondents is 'trash', although the experience with the private postal services is mentioned as good, cheap and convenient (Interview NU).

Housing is another critical aspect that SIEs need to take care of when living in Shenzhen. Similar to sorting out their finance, the role of advice from others was deemed to be beneficial to the newcomers in understanding where to live and how to find a place in the preferred neighborhood. It is common in China to live in gated communities and some SIEs also chose to live in safeguarded gated communities (Figure 11). When doing fieldwork and visiting the places of residence of some respondents, observed is that most SIEs live in European style apartments with furnishing provided by the landlord. For newcomers (SIEs), expat activities benefitted them as they could not only receive advice on finding a place but in some case also get the phone number of landlords directly. Expats also warn new SIEs of the tendency of Chinese landlords to ask for unreasonably high amount of rent (Interviews HN, JI, NU and VU).

Figure 11: Gated Community in Shekou.

Barrier: Healthcare

The issue of healthcare was mentioned as one of the key barriers that the SIEs have to overcome. If a person gets sick, he goes to his doctor. But when a person gets sick in an unfamiliar place, he needs to know where to go and what to tell. China has a unique way of dealing with healthcare issues and it is observed that SIEs struggle with the healthcare provided in Shenzhen. Some of them go to Hong Kong when they have injuries (Interviews TC, RU, FB, MT and PD), while others even chose to delay getting medical care till they go back to their country of origin for treatment of ailments and diseases that do not require immediate attention but are very expensive. (Interviews SU and NU). Based on the interviews, the quality of hospitals differs greatly between public and private hospitals in Shenzhen. Public hospitals are compared with war scenes from a Vietnam field hospital (Interview JI), or chaotic places. A majority explains how 'lucky' they are that they had not had any serious injury yet, which confirms the point that they would rather not end up in a Chinese hospital. One respondent (Interview CE) attributes the reason that hospitals differ in quality compared to the West to the fact that, as he understands it, doctors in China are not as well respected as doctors in his home country:

"If you go down to one of the Chinese hospitals there are eight people trying to go into the consultation of the doctor while he only can help one. There is no respect for doctors here. The result is that some of my foreign friends who went to the Chinese doctor got complete wrong diagnosis. One of my friends, there was nothing wrong with him and then they told him he had almost cancer. So he went to Hong Kong for a second opinion and then there was nothing serious wrong with him" (Interview CE).

On the contrary, private hospitals are experienced as convenient and trustable hospitals. Most of the respondents become aware of the differences between public and private hospitals through the information of other expats (VU, NU and CU). Whenever they hear a success story they use the advice to go to the same hospital whenever they need it themselves. Sometimes this advice is even a local clinic, but it is observed respondents only go to these local clinics when they have minor injuries:

"I went to the clinic, a friend of mine had told me about. She said do not go to the international clinic because they charge you more money so just call this number and hit whatever for in English. And that is how I got my appointment" (Interview VU).

In sum, many activities can be done by the expats and it is found that if a specific activity does not exist, it is their task to create it as the possibilities are big, but the effort has to come from within. Furthermore, whenever they have time, they prefer hanging out with friends and family mostly in their own neighborhoods and outdoors. Additionally, things to sort out, such as finance and healthcare, are struggles for them all, but when SIEs have some help to find out where the good places and the bad places are, they are more likely to have a positive experience of living in Shenzhen. And for all things that cannot be managed, Hong Kong is just around the corner.

5.3 Social Network

In this part, the organization of the social networks of SIEs will be discussed. Whenever an expat arrives in a new place, he feels vulnerable and uneasy as he is new to the place, people and culture (Killian & Johnson, 2006). As Easthope (2004) suggested, expats help each other in order to instill a feeling of safety and familiarity with the city, especially among the newcomers. This safety net is available to all expats irrespective of whether they are SIEs, spouses or CAEs because all expats are aware of the homemaking process they had undergone to get accustomed to the city and feeling at home:

"When you are part of the expat community, especially in China where the culture is different, you feel compelled with other expats. We are all in it together and we need to help each other out" (Interview JI).

Based on the interviews and observations, Shenzhen is no exception compared to other cities and an expat bubble does exist. Expats find comfort and safeness within this imagined geographic construction where people with the same culture or background are connected with each other (Al-Ali & Koser, 2002; Ahmed, 1999). This study defines the expat bubble as the overall group of expats who participate in organized expat events which are advertised on websites such as Shenzhenparty.com or Shenzhenstuff.com and who only meet Chinese people voluntarily in their daily lives. There are some differences found between different groups of expats in how they stay in this bubble or try to leave this bubble in order to create social ties with different types of people. In order to understand these differences the social network of SIEs will be compared with the social networks of CAEs and HWs by explaining the similarities and differences.

This study found that CAEs and their spouses were more likely to stay inside the expat bubble without trying to explore more. CAEs hardly interact with Chinese since their intention of coming to Shenzhen is not to socialize with locals, but to work at the office they were sent to:

"I meet guys at work. Our company is so big, 40.000 employees are at our campus and around 300 expats work for the company. When one expat sees another expat he walks up to the other and talk to them. The expats who has been at the company for a while tend to help the others who just arrived. They give advice if needed. Also, the company was quite helpful too, giving us information about what to do and where to go. Where we should live, what school we should talk to. That was helpful" (Interview JI).

The spouses, or HWs, arrive in Shenzhen because of their husband's work. They try to keep living in a place that is somewhat similar to that at the home of where they came from. They do not adapt, but just try to survive the best they can and for that reason they help each other out. The HWs attend activities of the Shenzhen Women International Club (SWIC) or through the international school of their children where they meet others to spend time with or ask for help if needed (Interviews TB and JI). The group of HWs believe they have a mixed social network consisting of both Chinese and other expats. However, it is observed that the Chinese who are included in their social network, are Chinese who bring their children to the same international school as their children and tend to have experience with Western cultures and speak English fluently.

The SWIC is an exclusive social club for female expats living in Shenzhen. They promote themselves as being particularly valuable to newcomers by providing a means to meet other expats (SWIC Website). They organize social and cultural activities open to the members only. One housewife explains the importance of SWIC for her when she had just arrived in Shenzhen:

"When we came to Shenzhen my husband lived in another part in town so he was not familiar with the area me and my children stayed, so he was of no help. But the women's group was a life saver. If I had a question at least I knew who I could call and ask. I would make a list of things and every coffee morning I would go and ask them. Also at that time we did a lot more activities as a group; they hired a bus and took us shopping" (Interview VU).

Every Tuesday there is a coffee morning at the lobby of the Hilton Hotel in Shekou to chit-chat with each other. The lack of Chinese language proficiency is the main reason why these women hang out together as they believe the SWIC is highly diverse with nationalities from all over the world (Interviews AA and CB). The women believe they are doing the best they can as one housewife states that not every person can live such a life as they do. She continues: "*and that does not mean life for the one who can is easy*". While observing the participants at this coffee morning, it was remarkable how much these women complained about their lives in Shenzhen. Topics about why relationships crack while living in Shenzhen, jealousy of the Chinese ladies who touch their husbands when they have drinks at the bar and the high prices of Singapore nannies compared to Chinese nannies suggest that these women listen keenly to each other. Although they give each other advice about how to manage their lives best, this advice is primarily about their struggle to survive in Shenzhen and least about

adapting to their new environment. Based on the theory of Granovetter (1973), these HWs lack a variety of social ties in their social network and are therefore not attached with more than people outside their expat bubble. They do not seek out further contacts since they are content with their lives within this bubble (Interviews TC, AA and CB). One of the HWs of this study seemed completely unaware of the fact that she is living inside a bubble as she explains how much she 'lives as a Chinese local', while at the same time she monthly visits her country of origin and her weekly schedule consists of having massages, facials and hiking trips (Interview CB).

While SIEs seem to live a life similar to that of other expats, a difference is found in terms of cross-cultural adjustment. Following the definition of Cohen (1977), the SIEs do not seem to live precisely in this bubble as the CAEs and HWs do. The main reason is that the SIEs do not shelter themselves away from the environment of the host society. Therefore their level of cross-cultural adjustment is higher as it turns out that SIEs seem to feel comfortable more quickly with the new culture and environment (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009) than other expats. The respondents try to interact with locals, frequently visit specific Chinese activities or eat Chinese food regularly (Interviews VU, RU, EU, JI, MU, CU and SU). By opening up to the new culture, SIEs seem to experience Shenzhen as a much more convenient place than other expats. An explanation for this is that the challenges of expat-life in China were known to the SIEs before expatriating:

"A lot of people come here and think 'I will do what I want to do for a year' and then they leave but maybe they don't stay for long because they cannot take the rush of emotion that sometimes happen. You have to bring your emotions back you have to bring it all in" (Interview SU).

SIEs assertively try to make themselves known within the city. By doing this, some of the respondents find out how easy it can be to live in Shenzhen:

"I have no fear of asking for help. If you need help Chinese people who cannot speak English will do whatever it needs to help you. I have asked people for direction for the right way. Instead of walking away they phone their English speaking friends. If you ask somebody in the country I come from for directions and they do not know, they will walk away. In many ways, I am slightly disappointed how easy it is to live here. I was hoping it might be a bit more challenging." (Interview JE).

"When I was here the first time in 2010, I really got frustrated. I never wanted to burden my Chinese friend by asking all my translation questions. But I now know many Chinese people so if I have 20 questions I just ask each person one question and in that way I got all my answers and I do not feel I am bothering anyone" (Interview VU).

These above excerpts are examples that some SIEs work out efficient ways of adapting to their new environment and thus attach better to their place than the other expat groups explained earlier. However, even though all SIEs of this study believe Shenzhen is the most comfortable city of China to live in as expat (Interviews JI and NU), life in China is not easy. The expat bubble is used in one way or another by all SIEs as well. They use the expat bubble as a launching place. When SIEs first arrive in Shenzhen they usually become part of the expat bubble through contacts via their work to get to know the city. Some SIEs pointed out their motivation to really get to know the Chinese culture and therefore they put more effort in getting to know Chinese people. Others were satisfied with the number of expats they met and did not make explicit attempts to search for more contacts. SIEs thus primarily use the expat bubble temporarily with the intention to get in contact with others:

"I do not usually. In the beginning I did. In my first year in Shenzhen I was much more active in those things but I have been here so many years, I enjoy meeting new people but I don't put a lot of effort to meet others now because I am happy with my social network I have now" (Interview NU).

"I have been to many (expat activities). When I first came here I had to meet people as my first costumers. In the first year I went to all the expat activities I could find. Not anymore. My busy times at work are between 6.00 and 21.00 o'clock, I prioritize my work now over the networking at these events" (Interview CE).

It does not necessarily mean that the people they spend leisure time with outside the expat bubble are not expats. They spend time with other expats and have created their own fragmentized expat bubble. The reason why they distance themselves apart from the main expat bubble is because they do not feel connected to these 'type of people.' As one respondent explains:

"I did some events but the characters I have met and the conversations you have with them is OMG. They can never be my friends. A lot of 50+ men come by themselves, either widowed or divorced and they are hunting, literally hunting is the word, young girls. O goodness the things

that come out of their mouth. That cannot be a friend so I do not want to talk to these people. That is not my type of people" (Interview EU).

Instead of participating in organized social events, the respondents prefer creating their own group of friends. Like their activities, many of their social relations also revolve around work. After they find a job in Shenzhen they spend more time with other employees and these can be either other expats or Chinese. It should be mentioned that almost all responded that their Chinese friends have knowledge about Western culture and/or speak English. Many of the SIEs made it clear they search for people who have similar personality and interests instead of the same nationality for example:

"It is more dependent on personality and interests. I have a colleague (Chinese) at my tutoring place and we have a lot of shared interests, more than the women at the SWIC. We are both in mediation and energy stuff and there are no people in the SWIC who are interested in this" (Interview VU).

These groups of friends can thus be seen as smaller bubbles, but the difference is that these smaller groups are not exclusive for expats only. This research further found that depending on interests and motivations some SIEs stay within the expat bubble, while others actively seek for a more mixed social network. What can be said about all is that "*once you are part of the expat community you can choose the people you want to spend time with*" (Interview JI). When asked if these friends would also be friends when living in the country of origin SIEs gave different responses. One said: "*you have to do it with the limited pool of foreigners there is in Shenzhen, so that is why not all my friends would be my friend if I was living back in my hometown*" (Interview RU). This excerpt suggest SIEs have no choice than making friends with people they would rather not be friends with. It gives the impression the expat bubble is not so versatile as asserted by the SIEs, which raises the question how much SIEs truly differ from other groups of expats.

It thus appears that SIEs most likely interact with other expats. Reason for this can be found in the theory of Peltokorpi and Jintae Froese (2009) who studied expats living in Japan, and state how challenging it is for SIEs to create social ties with Japanese locals because the Japanese culture distinguishes foreigners as the out-group. The presence of Western foreigners is relatively *new* for China. This is felt by the expats living in Shenzhen as they have to deal with the following two main barriers.

Barrier: Language

Two main barriers are mentioned by the respondents to explain why their social network consists mostly of other expats. Firstly, the language barrier which is mentioned by all respondents as they believe this makes living in Shenzhen challenging. As Shenzhen is a migrant city a variety of Chinese languages and dialects is spoken by the Chinese inhabitants. As a result, the common language spoken and understand by all is Mandarin. Language is a key aspect of culture and without sufficient knowledge of Mandarin one can experience this as a barrier while living in Shenzhen. It can limit daily activities or provide a feeling of uneasiness for the expats. As Fechter (2007) mentions, language is a crucial issue in the course of adaptation to the new country as it provides a certain symbolic capital which helps to make sense of a place where this language is spoken. Only four of the respondents spoke Mandarin language (17%). A large proportion of respondents speak 'survival Mandarin' (30%), while a majority do not speak Mandarin at all (35%). Language was mentioned by all respondents as a barrier, but when asking further, only one (Interview NI) and all housewives reported this barrier as negative. All others found ways of dealing with it. Some respondents tried to overcome their language barrier by taking Chinese language lessons (Interviews NS, VR, MU, NU, JU, CU) while others consciously decided before coming to Shenzhen to not learn Mandarin. For example:

"I made conscious decision when I came to not learn Chinese. Because when I learned Japanese before it took 4 hours per day. It is not the difficulty, but it is the amount of time that acquires me to study. I rather focus my attention on trying to understand how the Chinese people think. How is their history; why the people are like today? How does their culture affects what they do, how they behave and live. That imparts to help me survive and thrive in China" (Interviews JI).

The respondents who tried to learn Mandarin are indirectly trying to become independent of the expat bubble. Being able to communicate with Chinese helps SIEs make themselves feel more at ease while living in Shenzhen. Lehman (2014) argues that whenever SIEs are seen as strangers they will be treated as outsiders, but when SIEs have knowledge about the language, and thus also more about the culture, they will be treated differently and this helps them become more attached to their environment. The key reason to learn Chinese is for most of the respondents to be able to communicate better with locals as they believe it is important to maintain qualitative relationships with them:

"There were some relationships I had with Chinese locals that would not progress if we did not understand each other better. They only knew so much English and I only knew so much Chinese. It was the point if I want to get to know them better I need to learn more Chinese. That's when I took classes" (Interview CU).

Based on the differences in the motivation of the respondents, it is evident that not all the SIEs put effort into building or improving their language skills. However, they all are aware that speaking Mandarin would make their life easier:

"In the beginning it was more difficult to interact with life around you and I think that is why so many expats are unhappy. When you know the language a bit it changes your life as suddenly you understand what they are talking about" (Interview RU).

Although one of the barriers identified in this study is language, we found that almost all SIEs find solutions to adapt themselves to address it. It also did not deter the SIEs from expatriating to Shenzhen as they still made the choice to come to the city, which continues to experience an increasing number of foreign residents. One of the major contributors to this is the fact that Shenzhen is a fairly new city which was designed and developed addressing interests of foreigners in order to make it more accessible to them. The respondents experience this:

"The language is always going to be a problem. (...) But no, if you go into the metro system, everything is written in English. It's amazing, I have never seen anything like that" (Interview CE).

Secondly, although not many Chinese speak English, most respondents are aware of the rising number of English speaking Chinese in Shenzhen. This makes life in Shenzhen more convenient compared with other cities in China. While doing participant observation at the movie night organized by Love, Shenzhen at Whatever Coffee House in OCT Loft area, it was interesting to see that 50% of the guests were Chinese although it was an English movie (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Movie Night at Whatever Coffee House

Thirdly, Shenzhen is a migrant city. Chinese inhabitants have to speak Mandarin to understand each other as many languages and dialects are spoken throughout mainland China. The respondents are aware of the fact that Mandarin is the common language spoken in Shenzhen and this was even a motivational factor for some of the SIEs in their decision to expatriate to Shenzhen:

"There were two factors that I cared about when I chose to live in Shenzhen. First, I wanted a city where the weather was warm and second I wanted a city where they speak Mandarin. (…) I choose China because it is in my opinion completely unavoidable in business whether you are doing import into China, export from China or selling to Chinese nationals who live abroad permanently. It is just presence of China everywhere and I wanted to have a good understanding of their culture and also the language" (Interview NU).

Having this motivation makes Shenzhen a convenient place for expats to gain knowledge about the Chinese language and culture.

Barrier: Cultural Difference

It is not that SIEs intentionally do not spend time with Chinese, but the large cultural barrier makes having a mixed social network for most of the SIEs difficult to achieve. A lot of the interviewees said that they find it difficult to get in contact with Chinese people (Interviews NI, VR, EU, FB, PD, NS and MT). This is clearly reflected by one of the interviewees. She explained that the personal interests of Chinese are so dissimilar compared to Western interests, which in turn makes it challenging to create social relationships with Chinese locals:

"I have some Chinese friends, but I would say it is more difficult to make friends with them because you need to hang out at different places where they hang out. So you have to do activities such as KTV or hotpot to become friends with Chinese. I did KTV but still then ... you do not do KTV to make friends as you do KTV with your own group of people in your own private KTV room. Also I would say language is a difficulty because I do not speak Chinese" (Interview NS).

These differences in interests as a reason for not having many Chinese contacts is reinforced in other interviews and is in line with Conradson and Latham (2007) who argue that the experience of relocation to a new environment is connected to the affective possibilities that the new environment offers. The respondents point out that it is particularly hard to socialize and network with Chinese people not only because of the language barrier but also because of the vast differences in the Chinese culture is compared to other cultures that are more open. An interviewee explains his struggle with the understanding of the Chinese culture:

"For me as a person, it is just really hard to understand a Chinese person. We have a totally different background in pretty much everything. We have so many different tastes and not much in common. Unless it would be a Chinese person with a taste of western life. It sounds really harsh and racial but I would say for me you cannot be part of the community here unless you make your own ... like I am always around foreigners and never interact with Chinese because.. I do not know. It is hard to be part of their society. It is not like in other countries that you are going to live there and make new local friends and learn their language" (Interview FB).

Jintae Froese (2012) states that SIEs who are married to a local have a more mixed social network because their spouses open up social networks with locals, but the people in this research who had a relationship with a Chinese person did not differ much from the other respondents. Their social network included Chinese, but their relationship with a Chinese local did not cause their social network to be particularly more mixed than those who did not have such a relationship. The respondents with a romantic relationship in Shenzhen replied that they hang out with his or her friends, but due to the lack of shared interests, opening up to their social network does not happen often:

"I go sometimes for dim sum on Sundays with the parents of my boyfriend, but the spoken language is Chinese so I really have to push/practice myself. I have two times a week Chinese language class. Even if we hang out with his friends I try to (...) We often end up in a bar

somewhere, we can go to KTV but... I know drinking in a bar and get drunk is very foreign. KTV or a good dinner is more their thing" (Interview EU).

This lack of shared personal interests is the biggest struggle of all for SIEs, even though SIEs seek more for interaction with locals than other types of expats. Some of the respondents were really putting effort into '*collecting more Chinese people*' (Interview RU) in their social network, but because of the cultural and language barrier this is difficult to achieve. However, their search for 'Chinese similar minded people' can be found in the small but growing group of Chinese locals who have experience with Western cultures or speak the English language. SIEs who searched for this, found some good friends according to their stories. Even though this group of Chinese locals is growing, based on experiences during fieldwork, it remains difficult to fully understand each other cultures as this is deeply intertwined in a person's behavior and thinking.

Barrier: Lack of Openness

Another barrier that was observed is the lack of openness that SIEs mentioned when asked about the lack of Chinese social relationships in their social network. The reason cited is that SIEs believe Chinese have a lack of openness to 'otherness'. Chinese always spend time with other Chinese which makes it difficult to bond with them. During fieldwork it is found that Chinese themselves experience difficulties with meeting other Chinese. The social network of a Chinese individual is not big and meeting foreigners comes with many barriers equally for both the Chinese and the expat. One respondent who speaks Mandarin is of the opinion that at a certain point you reach a spot in the relationship with a Chinese where it does not go any further (Interview PD). The amount of effort that an expat puts in to suitably integrate with the Chinese culture can be of significant value as one cannot expect the Chinese to behave according to his own standards.

The lack of openness is recognized by a majority of respondents, but there is no consensus or common thinking about the way to address it. The reason behind the lack of openness can be linked to the lack of understanding towards each other's culture. The SIEs can be divided into two groups who differ in how much they try to make the most of the opportunity. The first group comprises people who do not take the effort to explore and the other group those who do put effort into broadening their social circle. One respondent explains:

"It depends on yourself how open minded you are and what you make out of your time. There are people (expats) in China who say they have the worst time of their life because they do not

do anything. Just being at home waiting for the day to go over and go to work again. And there are others and they enjoy it so much. They travel, go in the weekend to other places. Go with the bikes to other places. They do other things because there is so much to do" (Interview AI).

As Wang (2002) points out, SIEs need to actively interact with people around them in order to obtain social resources to help them to attach to their new environment. To establish social relationships with Chinese locals, SIEs need to be actively willing to learn new things and be open-minded to accept each other differences.

5.4 Predictors of Place Attachment

This chapter describes which elements play a role in the place-attachment of SIEs with Shenzhen. As Van Riemsdijk (2014) argues, is it necessary to give a place emotional or symbolic meaning if one wants to attach to it. Lewicka (2010) describes three categories in which the predictors of place-attachment can be categorized: social, socio-demographic, and environmental. The value of social relations is described in the previous chapter.

5.4.1 Socio-Demographic

Several socio-demographic factors such as family and a high socio-economic status are found to result in a higher level of place attachment. SIEs who brought their children with them had the additional benefit of the experience and knowledge sharing of the expat community such as the choice of school for their children:

"There are certain people you meet only because you have children (…) Because my children have friends from their school, you get to know their parents as well" (Interview JI).

Parents support each other in providing care as they all struggle with similar issues when raising children. For children it is important that the expatriate location transforms quickly to a place that the family can call home. A female respondent (Interview EF) with two children mentions the importance of creating a 'happy place' for her children in order to feel attached to Shenzhen as a family. She explains the importance of a quiet place where her children can "come home" that allows them to relax as a family. Ali-Ali and Khoser (2002) explain that it quickly becomes clearer to define what is *not home*, such as new traditions, unknown habits or alien places than what is home. This is especially true of children who can experience difficulties forming attachments to their new home. Also, they visit their country of origin twice a year during the summer and Christmas holiday: *"you need to give them roots and ties to a place from where they come"* (Interview EF). Finally, the importance of maintaining routines from back home for an expat family was mentioned by a respondent (Interview JI). He shares a regular cycling activity with his children and trips to the park as the family usually spends considerable time outdoors. Such activities make the family familiar with the environment in Shenzhen and contribute to their attachment to the place.

Family in terms of marriage or having a relationship with a local resident does not seem to play a key role in a higher degree of place-attachment (Interviews CE, MU, MN and EU). Although having a relationship with a local provides a general feeling of security based on help knowing the city and connecting with local networks, it nevertheless remains difficult for

expatriates to adjust to the Chinese lifestyle as a result of language and cultural barriers. This is thus partly in line with Jintae Froese (2012) who states that SIEs who are married to a local can adjust more easily to the new environment since their spouse opens up social networks. Through the spouse, these SIEs have a legitimate opening in their network which presents possibilities to connect with locals. It is, however, observed that expanding local networks of social ties requires SIEs to step out of their comfort zone and is perceived as a major effort to undertake since they believe living in Shenzhen is already adventurous enough.

Lastly, a majority of the respondents have a relatively high socio-economic status which makes it easy for them to maintain a comfortable life in terms of eating out frequently, using a taxi or renting an apartment in a safe and clean area. A key finding is that SIEs can make their lives as comfortable and convenient as possible. Therefore, their proximity to the local center of the city can be argued since convenient places are usually located in safeguarded gated communities. The following excerpt is characteristic:

"I spent a lot of time looking for an apartment that makes me feel at home. One that has a sea view, near a park and one that is quiet. Also I wanted an apartment that has decent, not cheap throw away furniture but real wood furniture. That makes me feel home" (Interview NA).

5.4.2 Environmental

As Conradson and Latham (2007) argue, the experience of relocation to a new environment is connected to the affective possibilities this new environment has to offer. According to Gieryin (2000), the attachment to a place depends on the architecture of the place. In Shenzhen, environmental elements turned out to be fundamental for the place attachment of SIEs. Factors such as relatively clean air and the large number of green spaces were essential in their decision to expatriate to Shenzhen (Interviews VU, RU, TC, HN, NS and EU).

The most important element is the unique location of the city, closely located to Hong Kong. The respondents regularly compared Shenzhen with Hong Kong. When asked why they do not live in Hong Kong, the SIEs made it clear that they have an emotional bond to Shenzhen based on the positive environmental features of the city compared to the negative features of Hong Kong:

"I love Hong Kong and being able to go there once in a while, but I am so happy to go back home. Hong Kong is very much high pressure and it is very small. Here the sidewalks are really nice and big and in Hong Kong they are so small. Also, all the people in Hong Kong are so

packed and everybody is in a hurry. It has just a very different feeling. Shenzhen is more mellow and I like that" (Interview VU).

"In Shenzhen you can go to the beach and you can also climb the mountain if you wish to do that. It's all relatively nearby. Also the people are a little bit more spread out. If you are in the city center you feel that there is a lot of space to spread out with. (…) Being close to Hong Kong gives me a little bit of the New York City feeling without necessarily living at that high level of costs. So I can cross back and forth. But I do not end up doing that much because there is a lot to do in Shenzhen and I have all my friends here" (Interview EU).

The idea of living in nearby Hong Kong is mentioned by all SIEs as pleasant. There are some respondents who would prefer to live in Hong Kong, but their salaries are insufficient to cover the cost of renting an apartment as real estate prices are much higher in Hong Kong than in Shenzhen. Their preference for Hong Kong is solved through frequent visits: first, to 'leave China for a while' and second, to buy Western food which is expensive in mainland China.

As noted earlier, the accessibility and number of green spaces is a reason cited by the respondents for liking Shenzhen (Interviews NI, VU, RU, EF, TC, CB, AA and NU). The number of designated green spaces is described by the interviewees as a factor contributing to the calm ambiance of Shenzhen (Figure 13). Related to this is the fact that Shenzhen is designed for so many inhabitants. Because it is an architecturally designed city, there are wide roads and open spaces with an ability to absorb the increasing population of the city.

Figure 13: Green Park at OCT Loft Area.

Finally, the relatively good air quality compared to other Chinese cities is often mentioned by the respondents (Interviews MU, NU and EU) as a crucial factor in the decision to expatriate to Shenzhen. As pollution fills the air in most of Chinese cities, the respondents are of the opinion that Shenzhen has relatively good air quality, making it a healthier city to live in, at least in comparison to other locations in China. Although one respondent is aware Shenzhen is also polluted, she copes with this by growing plants in her house:

"I fill my apartment with plants. Because you live in this concrete jungle, it is nice to be surrounded by cleaner air, so I also grow a lot of plants on my balcony" (NU).

In conclusion, several predictors play a role in the contribution to a positive attachment to the place of residence of SIEs. These findings are in alignment with the theory of Gieryn (2000) who states a positive relationship exist between place attachment and the closeness to prominent landmarks in a city. The lack of authenticity does not bother the SIEs as they are comfortable with the well-designed city they live in.

5.5 What I call Home

Since SIEs are highly mobile people they challenge the notion of home by living somewhere else. This mobility challenges them to reflect on their meaning of home (Philip & Ho, 2010). Although Hedetoft and Hjort (2002) explain that the concept of home is unique for each person, this study investigates if SIEs living in Shenzhen have shared characteristics in the various ways they conceptualize and "feel" at home. When asked what the respondents consider as their home, different answers surfaced:

"Home is always where my mum is" (Interview AI).

"I do not have one, I always move around" (Interview CE).

"It is the country where I grew up" (Interview PD).

"Home for me is a place where you do not have to worry about the intoxicating things around you" (Interview NI).

"Home is when I am nearby an airport" (Interview EU).

"Home is where my pillow is" (Interview VU).

According to the theory of Duyvendak (2011), expats can make themselves feel at home using a number of strategies. Although the answers of the respondents are quite diverse, this study did find that most of the SIEs behave according to the *mobile home strategy*. The first element of this strategy is that SIEs see mobility as positive. The second element is that the group of expats can be seen as *universalists* who believe it is not necessary to form attachments to particular places since these can be recreated elsewhere. Although they recreate their home in Shenzhen, many respondents mention their place of origin as their other home. One respondent explains:

"Two places at this moment are my home. First, my home in the USA where I was raised. Second, my home here in Shenzhen. People who do not consider themselves as a Shenzhenner are not connected to the city" (Interview RU).

Expressing a connection to two homes is related to the importance of feeling supported by the people who live with the respondents in these homes. Home is related to one's personal identity, and a safe and comfortable place is needed so that people can further discover themselves (Interviews SU, CE, CU and RU). The challenge of living in Shenzhen thus plays an important role in the exploring of oneself as mentioned by one of the respondents:

"Shenzhen provides challenges for me. I am growing here a lot. I am learning about myself. There is a lot happening. It is a good place to grow, it is not a place to be comfortable" (Interview SU).

Although SIEs are of the opinion that Shenzhen is one of the most comfortable cities in China to live in as expat (Interviews JI and NU), the idea that Shenzhen is a place to grow even though it presents challenges exemplifies the fact that living in Shenzhen, or China, is not easy for most of the SIEs. The void created by the barriers SIEs need to overcome to feel at home in a place that is markedly different from the West cannot be easily filled. Two respondents explain that they would like to see a more open and welcoming environment to foreigners:

"Even down here in Shekou there is still a struggle with the invitation of having foreigners here. They are not used to having foreigners here" (Interview SU).

"I would say that is very significant. Shekou specifically is one of the oldest foreign communities in China so if there is still opposition in one of the oldest foreign communities in China what does that tell you about the rest of the country where there are other foreigner communities that have been there not so very long" (Interview CU).

China decided to open up to the outside world only a few decades ago. The rapid expansion of the country, including in Shenzhen, leads to an imbalance felt by the expats as well as by the Chinese locals:

"Foreigners come in, buy land and change all the things around them. I can understand the frustration about foreigners coming in. I mean there is an understanding that foreigners are here and there are changes that are happening it is just how quickly it is happening and how China is allowing it to happen is I think what causing such a rift in the distinction of foreign and the local relationship" (Interview SU).

The SIEs of this study can be seen as pioneers from Western nations and it takes more time to include comfort in their homemaking process. It is their task as pioneers, to find out how individuals with such different standards and perceptions can manage their life to the best in this megacity of China.

To further find out how SIEs make themselves feel at home in Shenzhen, the question was asked what they brought with them in their suitcase when they expatriated to Shenzhen.

Based on these answers, a difference is found between CAEs and SIEs. The CAEs had a cargo full of furniture delivered from their country of origin, while SIEs did not bring a lot of items with them to Shenzhen. Very few talked about 'home' in the sense of a relationship to material things or possessions. SIEs were aware that you do not need much, only the basics. The following excerpts are typical:

"I brought only things I need. I left a lot of things at home. I had only 1 bag. I do not think you need a lot of clothes here. This is China so I can buy a lot of clothes here which are much cheaper" (Interview VR).

"Every time you move you bring less stuff. I have learned that you really need very little." (Interview MN).

The duration of stay affects what SIEs bring with them. One respondent, who is not thinking of leaving soon, explains that this affects how he makes himself at home in Shenzhen:

"You always have one luggage with stuff inside. Wherever you go your luggage follows you always and what happens is that more stuff goes in there. Reminders of certain places, or souvenirs, that normally would end up in your house. Now in Shenzhen is the first time that I opened that luggage and looked what is inside, because it was worth to take everything out. I knew I was not going to leave soon" (Interview AI).

SIEs bought items locally in Shenzhen that they could not bring from their country of origin. This included a range of items from daily usage to furniture. The arrival of the Swedish furniture retailer company 'IKEA' has positively contributed to this due to the availability of globally standard items in their stores thereby eliminating the need to ship furniture from the SIE's home base. This was mentioned by four of the interviewees (Interviews VU, AI, EU and JI). For example:

"I went to IKEA to buy my furniture. The thing about IKEA is that you know that you can get everything you need. If you just arrived and you go to all the independent stores you would never have the time to find all the things you need. So IKEA is by far the easiest option" (Interview JI).

These respondents found a sense of familiarity and homeliness due to the standard look and feel of the IKEA products worldwide. However, some of their possessions are not easily available or are too expensive and these are brought with the SIEs to make them feel more at home when they arrived in Shenzhen. These objects are displayed in the following figure:
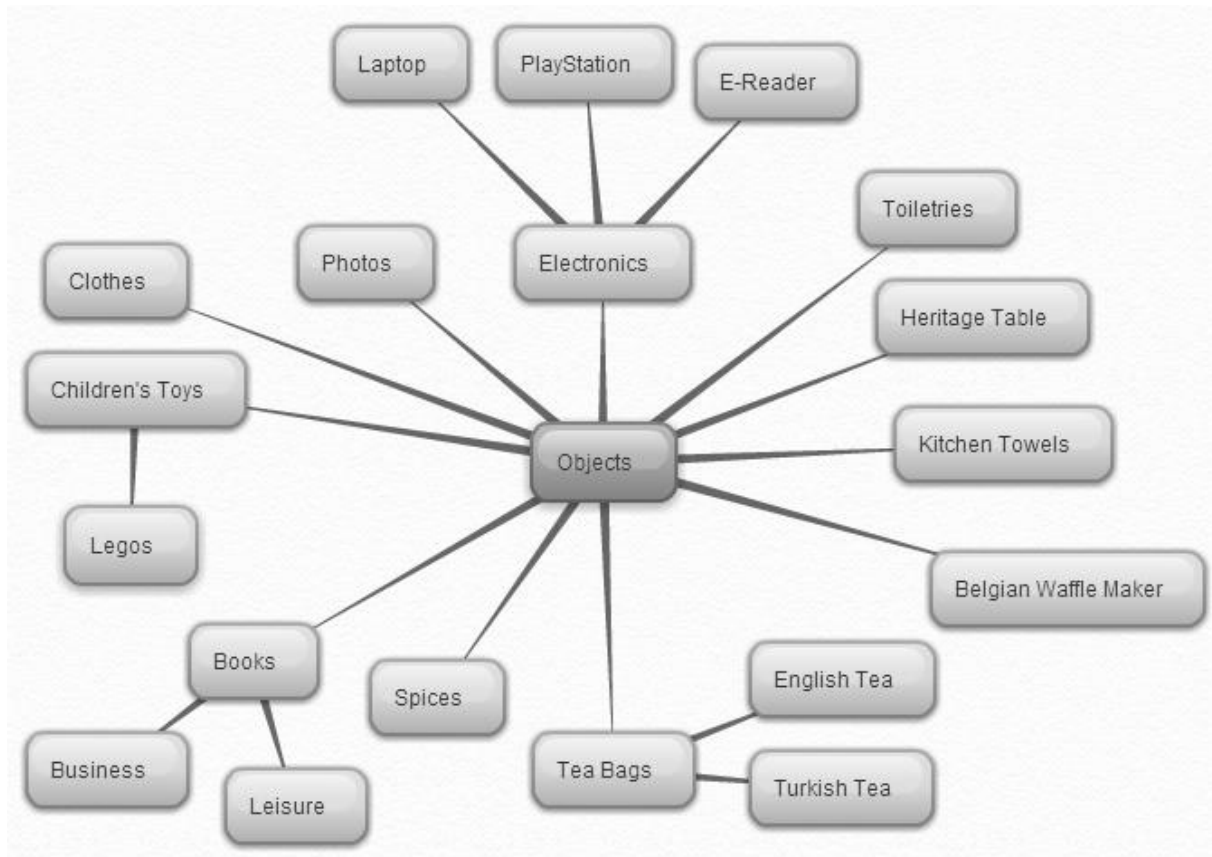
Figure 14: List of Objects Brought by the SIEs to Shenzhen.

All objects are in one way or another important contributors to the process of managing homesickness effectively. The extent to which an SIE feels homesick is related to the degree of support available and accessible in the new environment. Hack-Polay (2012) explains that support is needed to overcome the periodic feeling of homesickness. The respondents were asked if and what they miss from 'back home.' A majority of the respondents miss home because of their friends and family (Interviews NU, NS, VR, CU, CB, SU). They use social media as the solution to keep in contact (Interviews CE, JI, HN, MN and VR). Almost all respondents periodically return to their country of origin. Some return twice a year (Interviews CU, CB, EF, NU, TC and EU), while most are content with one visit a year or less (Interviews FB, MT, PD, JU, SU, VU, NS and RU). As Held et al. (1999) explain the increasing phenomenon of worldwide mobility, many SIEs are able to have their family and friends visit them in Shenzhen:

"Mostly I miss people, but I cannot bring them with me. Luckily sometimes my sister or brother visits me. So every three months I have someone who visits me" (Interview NS).

Other things that the SIEs miss from 'back home' are specific places where they grew up, specific sports, their own language and music. The absence of some of these things, such as the language and local music, are addressed by meeting other expats in Shenzhen with the same background, so they can discuss in their own language and share their admiration for local music of their country of origin (Interviews VR, MN and HN).

Not all respondents (Interviews CB, NI, VR, EU, SU, CU and EF) believe Shenzhen feels like home. When asked for further explanation it appears China is too intense both emotionally and physically for them to adjust to the cultural and social differences, even though Shenzhen is one of the easiest cities of China to live in as an expat. Some respondents (Interviews HN, FB, PD, EU and NI) are relieved when they can leave mainland China once in a while to feel at 'home' somewhere else:

"I am always happy when I can go away from Shenzhen after a few months: going back to civilization again. I do not like to be in a routine so once in a while I need to go. Luckily I travel a lot. But I like Shenzhen, the people are nice, they are just a bit peculiar. But I guess they also think that about us" (Interview HN).

The intensity of living in China has a lot to do with the cultural differences between Western culture versus Chinese culture. One respondent adds to this point by suggesting that an individual cannot flourish in China which is needed in order to create a home (Interview CU). The fact that the foreigner will always be viewed as a foreigner (even though he speaks excellent Chinese and is married to a Chinese) makes it impossible for an individual to let his guard down in Shenzhen while living there. This answer refers to a symbolic layer in which Shenzhen as 'home as heaven' cannot be easily achieved. As Duyvendak (2011) explains, it is important that a person can openly and freely express who he or she is, and when respondents answer they are relieved to leave mainland China once in a while. It does not suggest they view Shenzhen as a 'heavenly' or 'secure' home. Not all respondents struggle with this lack of acceptance. Those with a greater sense of Shenzhen as home are the SIEs who have lived relatively longer in the city than the other SIEs, and because of this longevity are now of the opinion that they cannot ever see themselves moving back to their country of origin. The reason they give for this opinion is knowing what 'better quality of life' is:

"While living in China for a few years I have come to a point that I cannot see myself ever turning back to England. I think I got bored of the culture before I left. If I go back and meet

my friends and we are going to the same places and bars, nothing really changed and I do not miss that'' (Interview CE).

As described, SIEs can create and experience their 'home' in various ways in their mobile lifestyle. Their feeling of home is not bound to a specific territory and relates more to the current place where they live. They can recreate their home anywhere in the world as they do not perceive mobility as a negative factor. This distinguishes SIEs from other groups of mobile people who do not see mobility as a positive change. Furthermore, the feeling of home for SIEs can be attributed to a place where they feel secure and familiar, but also where there are challenges and opportunities for individual growth and exploration.

5.6 Advices for Shenzhen

In order to identify what the SIEs think that can improve the accessibility of Shenzhen, the question was asked to the respondents what they would like to see changed in the city. A variety of answers was given. All advices are analyzed and categorized into themes. In short, the SIEs would like to see a more improved business environment. Also do they have some ideas to achieve better transportation and improve the traffic management. Furthermore, some recommendations are given about the development of Shenzhen in terms of planning and architecture. At last, did the respondents mention ideas how they think their quality of life can be improved when living in Shenzhen. More details of the recommendations can be found in Appendix 2.

6. Conclusion 结论

In this chapter a summary of the findings is presented followed by further analysis in the discussion part. In addition, this chapter also highlights the research limitations and strengths and gives some suggestions for further research in the field of expatriates and their homemaking process.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The current scientific literature lacks discussions on the homemaking process of SIEs in a city such as Shenzhen. Therefore, this study had an explorative approach and attempted to get a broad overview of how SIEs make themselves feel at home by exploring their daily activities, behavior patterns and social connections. This research aimed to determine the accessibility of Shenzhen for SIEs, thereby uncovering the opportunities and boundaries SIEs experience when living in this city. To answer the research question: *"How accessible is Shenzhen for Self-Initiated Expatriates to establish their home and how does the context of reception challenge this notion of home?"* the main findings of the in-depth interviews and participant observations are categorized per sub-question.

1. *What are the personal characteristics of SIEs living in Shenzhen?*

All expats experience China as a difficult country to live in. Shenzhen however, is experienced as one of the most convenient places of China to settle. Several personal characteristics help to survive in Shenzhen as an expat: (1) be open for adventure, (2) be adaptable, (3) be open-minded, (4) be willing to learn new things and (5) be patient. Although it is observed being adventurous is essential, it turned out most of the SIEs believe they live an adventurous life but without stepping too far outside their comfort zone. This can be attributed to the difference in cultural backgrounds and standards. Based on the personality traits, some SIEs cope better with these differences than the others. Furthermore, it is found that the interpretation and experience to globally rolled out standards is contextual in nature with different interpretation by people with different cultural backgrounds.

2. *How do activities and routines contribute to the homemaking process of SIEs?*

Several activities that the SIEs perform as part of their routine in order to become familiar with Shenzhen were identified. The study found out that the most activities undertaken are revolved around work. When the SIEs have free time, they prefer to spend it with friends and family and mostly outdoors. Because of the large geographical distance, the mobility of

most SIEs is limited into their own neighborhood. In terms of daily routines, each SIE has developed his or her own survival techniques to make living in Shenzhen as convenient as possible. It can be concluded that the help of others contribute to the ease of living in Shenzhen since all expats seem to struggle with the same issues. The main barriers are the search for high quality food and access to good healthcare. However, the help does not come automatically, so it is required to be proactive as an SIE to seek for help. The unique location of Shenzhen and its proximity to Hong Kong serves as an effective solution for things that cannot be sorted out in Shenzhen, or mainland China.

3. *What are the ways in which social networks of SIEs are organized?*

Shenzhen is no exception compared to other cities and an expat bubble (network) does exist wherein the majority of expats shelter themselves away from the environment of the host society. SIEs behave slightly different and put effort in finding solutions to adapt themselves. They open up more to the Chinese culture and try to interact with locals. However, because of the key barriers: language and cultural differences, the SIEs are most likely to interact with other expats as well. With contract to the majority of expats, the SIEs create their own bubbles which are not exclusive for expats only. Since the cultural interests between SIEs and Chinese are so diverse and the Chinese lack a certain openness, it raises the question for further research on how much the SIEs behave differently compared to the main expat bubble.

4. *Which elements play a role in the place-attachment of SIEs with Shenzhen?*

Shenzhen is a unique city as it has only been in existence for a few decades and almost all inhabitants are migrants. Living in a 'migrant city' helps SIEs to feel 'one of them'. Furthermore, several predictors echo that they contribute to a positive attachment to the place of residence of SIEs. Socio-demographic factors, such as having children opens up the access to other social networks which helps families to find out their way. The environmental elements are also a critical determinant as they play a role in the place-attachment of SIEs with Shenzhen. Relatively clean air, high amount of green spaces, closeness to Hong Kong were named as contributors for SIEs to choose Shenzhen as expat location and feel at ease in the city. Furthermore, the fact that the city lacks architectural authenticity does not bother most SIEs as they are comfortable with the well-designed city they live in.

5. *Are there shared characteristics in the various ways Shenzhen SIEs feel at home?*

SIEs easily (re)create their homes somewhere else as they see mobility as something positive. As home is a complex concept, it was observed that home is about immaterial things, such as a familiar feeling or family and friends for most of the SIEs. However, the challenges of living in Shenzhen, or China, are significant and hence challenge the SIE to create a home in the city in the true sense. This can be attributed to the attitude towards foreigners as Shenzhen does not have a welcoming environment to the foreigners yet. The results suggest that a big gap exists in the understanding of each other's culture. The SIEs living in Shenzhen can be seen as pioneers. It is their task, to find out how individuals with such different standards and perceptions can manage their life to the best in this megacity of China. Therefore, Shenzhen is seen as a place for individual growth and exploration, and seldom as a place that offers comfort and stability inherently. The culture of the city is still evolving as new hobbies continue to be created and new avenues continue to be developed. This makes Shenzhen unique compared with other Chinese cities that are already fully developed and have a coherent cultural identity.

6. *What advice would SIEs give to make Shenzhen more accessible for them to live in?*

The list of recommendations as noted through the interviews and observations do not lead to a standard set which can be applied in every circumstance. However, the findings as presented in Appendix 2 can be relevant for future planning or be used for public or private policies to make Shenzhen a more attractive destination for expats in general.

To answer the research question, this study found that the context of reception has numerous challenges for SIEs to cope with since most SIEs experience living in Shenzhen as difficult. The following barriers are found to be most challenging: (1) our Western standards, (2) geographic distance, (3) food, (4) healthcare, (5) language, (6) cultural differences and (7) lack of openness.

However, a number of opportunities are also found that makes the city more accessible for SIEs to live in. Firstly, Shenzhen is a designed city. For example, the signs are displayed both in Chinese and English, also the presence of wide roads makes the feeling of living in such a crowded megacity more convenient. Secondly, it is a migrant city which makes the common spoken language Mandarin (for those who speak Mandarin). Thirdly, the social network of expats living in Shenzhen is strong and open to all expat newcomers. Each person is in the same boat and the expats living longer in Shenzhen are most willing to help the new arrivals out.

Fourthly, based on motivation and personality traits described earlier, many things are possible to achieve ranging from setting up a sport school to starting up a company. Shenzhen can be described as a city with opportunities, but one has to work proactively to benefit from them. Lastly, the geographical advantage of Shenzhen is beneficial for SIEs because of its location at the border of mainland China and proximity to Hong Kong. This enables the SIEs to have the possibility to 'escape' mainland China for a while whenever there is a need to break the either intensity or monotony of life in Shenzhen. Furthermore, it helps in circumventing the barriers towards the homemaking process for SIEs in Shenzhen.

In summary, to illustrate the accessibility of Shenzhen, a variety of barriers and opportunities are documented to highlight how Shenzhen is appreciated for many reasons while disliked for others. With regards to the homemaking process, Shenzhen is emotionally and physically intimidating and therefore constricts the adjustment to the cultural and social differences, despite its popularity as one of the easiest cities of China to live in as an expat. The homemaking process cannot be easily established and comfort which is a key driving factor is hard to achieve.

6.2 Discussion

As SIEs are the result of the globalized world, their lifestyles can address new ways of thinking about managing of life and homemaking. The conclusion section established that with regard to the homemaking process, SIEs struggle with feeling at home in Shenzhen due to the big cultural and social differences. SIEs have a mobile lifestyle and expatriating to places such as Shenzhen gives a good impression on the enormity of the challenges of settling in a new place.

As Massey (1992) and Portes (1995) state, human behavior can be best understood in the context of social relationships in which persons are imbedded. Although SIEs are seen in literature as a specific group of expats (Doherty and Dickman, 2008; Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008), the results of this study do raise the question if, in terms of social contacts, SIEs indeed behave differently than other groups of expats. Their cross-cultural adjustment seems higher, as they seem to put more effort in connecting with locals, but whenever there is a lack of interests in each other activities, even SIEs search for people with similar interests and these are often no Chinese locals. By creating their own bubbles, they hold back different social resources since weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) are helpful for gaining new information or connection with different networks.

The results also revealed that foreigners are treated differently by the locals and this makes integration to the Chinese lifestyle difficult. This supports the findings of the study conducted by Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese (2009) on expats living in Japan in which the expats experienced being treated differently by most of the locals as out-group members. Although the number of Chinese with Western experiences is growing, the communications where both parties understand each other effectively remains a challenge. The cultural standards are deeply embedded in the personality and have a stark similarity with the Western standards. However if one can tackle these differences and learns to understand the Chinese way of thinking and living, Shenzhen can be a convenient place. However, as Inkson (2005) gave five categories why SIEs would expatriate to a place, it can be questioned if political and cultural factors play a big role in their motivation to expatriate to Shenzhen, since these factors are often called to be challenging or negative. Nevertheless, the motivation to fully adjust the lifestyle to fit the Shenzhen culture is observed to be limited for most SIEs. The majority of SIE is content with their way of living, and does not feel the obligation to establish contact with the Chinese locals. This behavior as was observed can be associated with the spirit of being adventurous as living in Shenzhen, or China, is perceived as already quite adventurous by most.

6.3 Reflection

The aim of this research was to get a broad overview of how SIEs manage their lives in Shenzhen in order to find out how accessible the city is to make them feel at home. However, there were some constraints and limitations of this case study. They will briefly be described in this section followed by the strengths of this study.

In the literature the term 'expat' is vaguely used. The target group in the existing literature often remained unclear due to the inconsistent usage of the terms such as expats, SIE and migrant. Furthermore, there were limitations with time as the opportunity was given to spend six weeks in Shenzhen to collect the data. With a longer timeframe, a bigger research sample with more information could have strengthened the results of this study. As this study was an exploratory research, it can be questioned how reliable the interpretation of the findings are since only qualitative information is used. Whether or not the combination of quantitative and qualitative research gives stronger outcomes would be an interesting question for future research. As far as the reliability of the findings concerned, this was limited since only one case study has been done. For that reason, it is recommended that further research should analyze multiple case studies to ensure a stronger external validity.

Despite its lack of statistical strength there are key strengths of this study. The scientific benefits of this study are that it is the first of its kind which investigated the expat life in the context of Shenzhen as other studies primarily performed research about expats in other Chinese cities. Also, instead of focussing on expats in general, this study is the first to investigate how the specific group of SIEs manage their lives in order to feel at home in their new environment. From that perspective, this study has contributed positively by providing a strong basis of the understanding on the accessibility of Shenzhen for SIEs to live there as home. Furthermore, a large sample size is used with 23 in-depth semi structured interviews which strengthens the findings by factoring in views and inputs from a diverse set of people. The societal benefit of this study is that this study has provided answers to questions which can help in the further development of Shenzhen to make it globally more attractive and accessible for SIEs. The answers can be used by public and private organizations to understand the SIEs' needs, demands and interests in order to make plans to cater for them to make Shenzhen a more attractive destination to live in.

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Appendix 1 – Topic List Interviews

1. <u>'Shenzhen Expat' profile</u>
   Gender & Age
   Nationality
   Education
   Profession & Income average
   Language(s)
   Duration of stay
   How often emigrated already?
   Who emigrated with the expat (wife/husband & children)

2. <u>Home</u>
   Material / non material
   Universalist/ particularist
   Generic / general places
   Social relations
   Objects

3. <u>Social Network</u>
   Size
   Density
   Diversity
   Frequency
   Closeness

4. <u>Activities</u>
   Daily
   Professional
   Leisure

5. <u>Barriers for Shenzhen expats</u>
   Language
   Accommodation
   Integration
   Healthcare
   Sorting out finances
   Neighbourhood
   Relation with natives
   Food & restaurants
   Weather

6. <u>Unique features of Shenzhen</u>
   Professional environment
   Shenzhen expat organisations
   (Organized) expat activities
   Public spaces
   Landmarks
   Size of the city

Appendix 2 – Advices for Shenzhen (Long Version)

In this appendix, a list of recommendations is given based on the analysis of the feedback and input received from the interviewees on how to make Shenzhen more accessible to SIEs.

- ✓ Freedom to access internet: It would be helpful to have less restriction on the internet as this negatively impacts the foreigners living in Shenzhen who cannot enter websites from their home country.

- ✓ Better sports culture: it would be beneficial to see Shenzhen gets a national / professional sports team, particularly a soccer team. A premier league or a first division soccer team would help the city to have a sport identity and to develop a greater sense of local pride. Inhabitants could then proudly say 'I am from Shenzhen' and everybody would know Shenzhen based on this sports team.

- ✓ Lower taxes on goods: It would help to have less strict taxes on imported food and beverages.

- ✓ **Improved business environment:**
  - o Promotion of entrepreneurship: it would be great if individualized businesses would be more encouraged. Help to maintain their businesses with easier legal steps.
  - o Control on sale of counterfeit and spurious products: China has earned a negative reputation of being the home of sub-standard quality and cheap products. The result is that you cannot trust anybody when buying something.
  - o Promotion of better education to facilitate upbringing of better work ethics which would enable creation of world class working conditions in companies.

- ✓ **Better transportation and traffic management through:**
  - o Synchronized stop lights, so they promote better sense of traffic discipline among users.
  - o Reducing level of the car horns leading to noise pollution.
  - o Introducing Xpress train instead of only the long metro ride. Shenzhen is a huge area and it would be a good idea to have an Xpress train which rides every 30 minutes and stops only at the popular spots (Luohu-Futian-Window of the World-Airport for example).
  - o It would be beneficial to connect the lovely nature around Shenzhen with the metro system.

✓ **Development of Shenzhen:**
  - Protection of urban villages: It is key that the urban villages, such as Baishizhou, are not brought down at the cost of urbanization and modernization. The city should strive to keep as much of the urban villages as possible. There is abundance of work force in these villages it is a unique part of the city.
  - People have a negative perception about the high structure and planned development of Shenzhen. It is important to have spots where there is more natural chaos and organic life.
  - Protection of heritage places: It is important to keep places that have their own character; otherwise the city starts to lose its natural vibe. This is especially true of proposals to tear down areas to build another housing complex that looks exactly the same as five other ones in the same area.
  - It would be economically viable and beneficial to make the Shenzhen Airport international. This would contribute to making Shenzhen more important at the global level.
  - It would be prudent to consider not building shopping malls indiscriminately as there are enough of them in the city already.
  - There should be more focus on the redevelopment of certain buildings instead of tearing them down and building new ones.
  - There is a big room for better city landscaping in Shenzhen characterized by a stronger sense of its own style and space. Currently, there are a lot of new building projects that are supposedly architecturally really interesting but they are not cohesive and are completely separate from the other buildings. Since Shenzhen is on the sea and has a lot of mountains, they can work better with the landscape. It would be great if there were some cohesiveness, themes in the infrastructure, in the building material, etc. The city should ponder on things that would lead to creation of identity through it architecture which it currently lacks.

✓ **Improving quality of life:**
  - Improved infrastructure for the promotion of events throughout the city.
  - It would be great if the government would put more emphasis on educating Chinese residents on how to behave in an 'international' city. It would be interesting if people learn how to be more polite, especially towards foreigners as many Chinese do not really know how to interact with foreigners yet.
  - Improving the air quality by moving the factories outside of the city.

- o Easier access to the licensing of microbreweries would enhance the quality of life of people by promoting social meeting places. Presently, it costs excessive amount of money to secure a distillery license which is discouraging.
- o Introduction of community centers within the different neighborhoods would contribute to better quality of life. By arranging meet-ups, people can get more connected to their place of residence.
- o It would be wise to limit the building of Chinese mega clubs. The city does not need any more crappy regular Chinese dance clubs, as there are a lot and they are devoid of a specific vibe or character.