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The Great Vessel Rarely Completes:

Translating Corporate Sustainability

Submitted by Wenjin Dai, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree
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It has been a very unforgettable journey, full of confusions and excitements, pain and joy, uncertainties and challenges… Something always happens when I just thought I had enough. This process has transformed many aspects of me, including increased myopia and ability to appreciate various things. Perhaps it will be followed by a series of post-PhD disorders, but I think I will truly miss these years.

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I dedicate this thesis to my dear parents Yongzheng Xu & Tianfei Dai

And my sister Shujuan Dai

The Great Vessel Rarely Completes: Translating Corporate Sustainability

Abstract

This thesis contributes to our understanding of Corporate Sustainability (CS) in Multinational Corporations (MNCs) by offering a non-western perspective. A review of the extant literature reveals CS-related studies are mainly based on theories and implications in and for western contexts. It leads us to question the definitions of CS that have been taken for granted in current management and organisation studies. This thesis argues CS should be considered as a non-fixed, contextual and culturally-sensitive notion. When the ideas of CS travel from western scholarship to Chinese organisation practices, the meanings are forever constructed, altered, and mobilised. This is beyond linguistic *translation*, and functions as a continuous stream of temporary hermeneutic processes of *translating*. This research explores how CS has been translated in a Japanese MNC in China (the organisation is called 'OMG' in the research).

The ethnographic enquiry provides a visual and narrative representation of corporate culture as promoted in OMG; 'Communal Vessel' evolves as a translational construct symbolising the culturally-derived meanings of CS. The intrinsically oxymoronic meanings of 'Communal Vessel' can be drawn from classical Chinese philosophies, which could have implications for understanding contemporary organising practices in China, and globally.

In summary, this thesis problematises the construction of CS, and contributes an indigenous, non-western way of understanding CS via an ethnographic representation focusing on processes of *translating*. The implications are summarised through an analysis of the classical phrase '*The Great Vessel Rarely Completes*'.

List of Contents

List of Table

List of Figures

Abbreviations

ABC	The Pseudonym of the Pilot Study Organisation
ANT	Actor-Network Theory
BCE	Before Common Era
c.	Circa (About/around)
CS	Corporate Sustainability
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MNC	Multinational Corporation
OMG	'Oh my goodness' (the pseudonym of the field organisation)
SA	Sustainability Assessment
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SHA	Stakeholder Approach
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WWF	World Wide Fund For Nature

Chapter 1: Introduction

A Story about Translating

In my hometown Kunming, and areas in the southwest of China, most local restaurants have an unusual way of taking orders. First of all, instead of 'customers', they refer to 'guests'. Rather than handing them printed menus, they guide the guests to a big shelf full of varieties of raw vegetables, and on some occasions, some swimming fish or strolling chickens. They let the guests see and choose the food they prefer, and also how they would like the food to be cooked. Sometimes even in the restaurant of a four star hotel, the chef might still prefer this way of taking orders. As the varieties of seasonal vegetables change quite frequently and the guests have different tastes, this way is much more popular than ordering from a menu, and we call it 'seeing and ordering'. I quite like this way as well, as I am not sure if I have the knowledge to name all the wild vegetables.

Rather than reading menus and guessing what this and that might be, local folks prefer this way. The good thing about this is you can see and even smell the earthy, raw materials, and sometimes you can see how they are being cooked. For tourists who want a taste of fresh and indigenous food (probably for a tolerant stomach), they prefer this way as well, if they cannot read nor understand the menu, or they have certain interpretations of how the dishes should be. Therefore, 'seeing and ordering' is appreciated as a different and indigenous way.

Nevertheless my point is not about the visual representations. Lately many restaurants put pictures of dishes that were prepared and decorated nicely next to the menu, promising to offer 'the same great' products and services. However, quite often your waiter/waitress might come back and tell you that they have run out of the thing you want, or the only chef who knows how to cook that dish is off-duty. When the dish is brought to the table, you would probably be surprised, compared with what the picture looked like, or how you thought it should be when you read the menu. I do not intend to argue which way is the best way. In other places where food material can be guaranteed throughout the year, and the varieties of the dishes are quite certain and clear, ordering from a menu is probably the most direct and simple way.

However, when things are changing constantly, the process gets messy, people feel confused. Sometimes the little things that are normally being ignored could make a difference. In this example, it can be the smell or the colour of food materials, as something that might be hard to place in general categorisations.

This thesis does not aim to offer standardised 'dishes' according to a 'menu for sustainability'. Metaphorically, it questions the sociological production of the so-called 'menu', as well as meanings arising from it that might have been taken for granted. In a fast changing global environment, associated with many complexities, it is rather difficult to promise that 'chefs', or researchers, can know what and where to find the 'food materials', and 'cook' in the same way, in order to offer the 'so-called dish' on the corporate sustainability 'table'. Likewise, managers and executives in companies may refer to the 'menu' to describe what they intend to do, but they might refer to a tremendous diversity of ingredients and ways of preparing their 'meals'. When ideas travel across time and space, from one setting to another, the ideas are also being altered, modified, mobilised, and hence 'translated' (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). This research intends to embrace the complexity, appreciate the originality and freshness encountered from translating, and offer some indigenous understandings of Corporate Sustainability (CS).

In this chapter, I will introduce the background of the research, and build the foundation for the arguments in the following chapters. Firstly, it introduces recent arguments and issues on sustainability, highlighting the western origins of the terminology and therefore the implications associated with it. Secondly, linked with the globalisation debate, it discusses the responsibility of Multinational Corporations (MNCs). MNCs as the engine of economic globalisation, and arguably, the source for many responsibility related issues, have been placed under the spot light attracting global repercussions. How environmental and social issues are considered by the MNCs has significant impacts both globally and locally. This is crucial in emerging economies, such as China, considering its different economic, cultural and political contexts. Thirdly, it will introduce how this research is positioned, and the main implications. Finally, the main arguments and contributions of each chapter in the thesis will be presented.

Sustainability & Multinational Corporations

While the global economy is developing with an unprecedented speed, there are more and more concerns and debates about the social impacts, and limitations of the natural environment. The challenge at present is how to develop a sustainable global economy 'that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p. 41). The main debates around sustainability are concerned with how to continually achieve economic prosperity, while still maintaining environmental quality and social justice, this is known as 'Triple Bottom Line' (Elkington, 1996).

Global issues such as climate change and global warming are considered to be the consequences if current economic development mode continues. As Grint (2010) suggested, global warming is a good example of a wicked problem with enormous challenges and uncertainties, which is deeply integrated with the whole ecological environment and global societies. According to Rittel & Webber (1973), a wicked problem is in a complexity of uncertainty - it cannot be solved in isolation because it integrates with its environment, and it often has no clear relationship between cause and effect.

Thus, it has been gradually realised that 'the best solution' to fix everything may not exist, and the limitation of identifying agency in the complexity of sustainability is revealed. Sustainability, as a wicked problem, requires the change from management to leadership (Grint, 2010), from individual to collective, from elegant approaches to clumsy solutions (Verweij, Douglas, Ellis, Engel, & Hendriks, 2006). Systemic, interconnected problems cannot be understood in isolation. Therefore an holistic, and deep ecological view might be helpful: seeing the world as an integrated whole, rather than a dissociated collection of parts, as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent (Capra, 1997). Thus a fundamental change in our perceptions, values and thinking is required in order to build a sustainable society, which is defined as a society that satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of future generations (Brown, 1981; Capra, 1997).

Along with the rise of discourses around globalisation and climate change, there is increasing attention in sustainability and business, and in MNCs for the past decades (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Lundan, 2004; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Rugman & Verbeke, 1998). MNCs are arguably seen as the economic engines of the future (Hart, 1997), and the agency for progressing a sustainable world (Blowfield, 2013; Clifton & Amran, 2011; Dunphy, Griffiths, & Benn, 2003). Under the complex surge of globalisation, MNCs are being increasingly held accountable for greater transparency, social and environmental responsibilities (Tan, 2009a). This is particularly the case when they are operating in emerging markets, where responsibility scandals are often brought to light, and remain popular topics among academics and practitioners globally (Egels-Zanden, 2007; Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Tan, 2009a).

Industrialisation and internationalisation initially focused on commodities and heavy manufacturing, so many emerging economies still suffer from oppressive levels of pollution (Hart, 1997; He & Chen, 2009). Sometimes even if the market economy in developed and some emerging economies has been improving, and also in their physical environment by reducing pollution and natural resource depletion - much of the most polluting activities, such as commodity processing and heavy manufacturing, have been relocated to other emerging economies (Hart, 1997). Thus, to some extent, the 'greening' of the developed world could be at the expense of the emerging economies, environmentally and socially.

Additionally, there is growing scholarly interest in the relationship between MNCs and society (Rodriguez, Siegel, Hillman, & Eden, 2006). Although protests and consumer boycotts toward MNCs are well-known, and responsibility related debates have attracted wide attention, further in-depth research is needed in the field of MNCs, sustainability, and responsibility (Hartman, Rubin, & Dhanda, 2007; Husted & Allen, 2006; Shrivastava, 1995), in developing country contexts (Ite, 2004; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), another popularly debated topic, can potentially assist in addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities in developing countries, but it may sometimes jeopardise and damage the same communities politically, socially, and economically (Ite, 2004). Evidence from

industries such as oil and gas has demonstrated that, in spite of the significant growth in MNC's codes of conduct and social reporting, the motives for CSR engagement and their implications can be questioned, and criticised (Frynas, 2005). Also, many MNCs based in the US, UK and Europe have engaged in corporate citizenship to promote their ideas of CS, as another popular but problematic concept, corporate citizenship is defined narrowly as philanthropy or external relationships with stakeholders to address social problems, but ignoring the environmental aspects (Rondinelli & Berry, 2000). With the growing criticism in this field, there is room for further studies looking into the fundamental processes where CSR and CS have been enacted in organisations (Fleming, Roberts, & Garsten, 2013).

Also, and crucially for this thesis, the understandings could differ in diverse cultural contexts. Some cross-cultural research indicates that even in western areas, American companies tend to justify CSR using economic or bottom-line terms and arguments, whereas European companies rely more on language and theories of citizenship, corporate accountability, or moral commitment (Hartman et al., 2007). Although the analysis from companies' reports mainly remains at the discourse level, some cultural distinctions in the use of CSR related terminology, and its implications have been addressed (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007). However, most sustainability and CSR related studies are conducted from western points of view (Hartman et al., 2007; Meek, Roberts, & Gray, 1995). While now many MNCs have expanded in the East, many aspects of sustainability related research in the non-western contexts are unidentified (Bondy, Matten, & Moon, 2004; Chapple & Moon, 2005). Relevant CS research conducted in China and current approaches will be introduced in the next section.

China as the Context

The past quarter-century has witnessed the impressive economic growth of the People's Republic of China. Since the economic reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, it has experienced unprecedented economic development. Although the average 10 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annual growth has lifted more than 600 million people out of poverty (World Bank, 2013), recently concerns have been raised as to whether this growth pattern can be sustained healthily (Troilo & Sun, 2010; Zheng, Bigsten, & Hu, 2009). Rapid economic reform and social change are accompanied by severe challenges for China, including environment destruction, industrial urbanisation, inequality, corruption, bureaucratic failure, and demographic pressures, such as aging population and insufficiency of labour (Boisot & Child, 1988; Li, 2009; Troilo & Sun, 2010; World Bank, 2013).

China is playing a crucial and influential role in the world economy, and undoubtedly China's sustainable development is considered to be vital for the entire planet (UNEP, 2011). Also China has recently experienced a series of industrial scandals, food scares, labour crises, and environmental degradations, which have significant impacts locally and globally (Ip, 2009; Lu, 2009). The relationship between corporations and society has been questioned; what roles the MNCs should be playing in China (Tan, 2009b).

However, sustainability related research is more commonly conducted in western countries, and the under-representation of Asia and China in current management research and CS-related studies has been identified (Kolk, Hong, & van Dolen, 2010; Moon & Shen, 2010). With its distinctive historical, institutional, and cultural factors, the complexity and sensitivity of CS practices and strategies adopted by MNCs' subsidiaries in China need to be studied further (Lam, 2009).

According to China's 12th Five-Year Plan 2011-2015 outlining key economic and development targets of China for the next five-year period (National People's Congress, 2012), resource conservation and environmental protection are strongly emphasised, by aiming to achieve significant reductions. It indicates that by the end of China's 11th Five-Year Plan in 2010, 19.1 percent energy

consumption reduction was achieved compared to the 20 percent target; so the recent 12th Five-Year-Plan includes substantial investment in building an environment friendly society, and actively coping with global climate change; developing a circular economy is also emphasised (National People's Congress, 2012).

Although current perspectives and constructions of CSR and CS originated in the West and have been developed worldwide, similar ideas on business ethics from China could be traced back more than 2500 years, and legitimately interpreted within traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucianism and Taoism (Chan, 2008; Wang & Juslin, 2009). For example, the concept of a 'circular economy' has been proposed from a western closed-loop industrial ecology perspective (Esty & Porter, 1998; Yuan, Bi, & Moriguichi, 2006), yet its underlying ideological foundation echoes Chinese classic ideologies on nature, humanity, and harmony (Wang, 2009). Now 'circular economy' has been identified by the central government as a development strategy for reconciling the contradiction between rapid economic growth and quality of the environment (Yuan et al., 2006).

Although these streams of traditional wisdom originated in China, it is noted that many other regions and studies have been influenced by Confucian and Taoist thinking, from ethical value to daily organisation practices (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Low & Ang, 2012; McElhatton & Jackson, 2012; Tan & Chow, 2009). For example, Dollinger (1988) suggests that understanding issues in many Japanese organisations can be improved through appreciating Confucian philosophies. Therefore, the context of a Japanese MNC in China can represent a very interesting case, as the underlying meanings of sustainability and responsibility may have been influenced by the dynamics of eastern traditions. This will be further discussed in the following chapters.

Additionally, most extant research in sustainability and CSR conducted in China has taken a quantitative approach to identify relatively determinant factors in various organisations, and the applicability of definitions and arguments of CSR in China have also been questioned (Moon & Shen, 2010). Considering CSR as a rising and sensitive topic in China, studies from an ethnographic perspective, looking closely how CSR works at MNCs in China are rather limited. However,

the insights from the literature review suggest that a standard and fixed definition of CS or CSR may not be possible even in western contexts (Montiel, 2008): so explorative studies that examine the process in CSR practices could offer deeper understandings. Ethnography, as a way of analysing and interpreting social life, can be used to investigate how things work in organisations (Watson, 2011). Based on my field work in a Japanese MNC in China, which I call 'OMG', this research provides an ethnographic account of how CS evolves through organising and translating processes, to offer another way of understanding CS and CSR in China.

In summary, in order to take a look at what might be happening inside of the 'black box' of CS (Latour, 1987), perspectives of translating are employed to explore the stage between when an idea is constructed, and when it becomes taken for granted (Mueller & Whittle, 2011). Thus, as a contextual and culturally-sensitive idea, how CS travels from the West to the East (or vice versa), from theories to organisational practices, from ancient time to the present, will be exemplified in the case of OMG. Through translating the everyday OMG life, Communal Vessel has been evolving as an oxymoronic construct incorporating inclusiveness and emptiness at the same time, which returns to the understandings of CS.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 is the Introduction for the thesis. It introduces the background and positions the research within debates around MNCs and responsibility, and also the distinctiveness of the Chinese context.

As the current global economic development scenario is predicted to be unsustainable (IPCC, 2013; WWF, 2010), fundamental change about the way we do business globally and locally is needed. However, this research is not focusing on how to deliver fundamental change, or how to solve current environmental and social issues. Along with the global debates of Sustainable Development and responsibility of MNCs, this research intends to provide another way of understanding how Corporate Sustainability evolves in the context of a Japanese MNC in China.

Chapter 2 is the Literature Review for the thesis. It locates the research topic within a series of concepts related to Corporate Sustainability (CS). Through reviewing existing literature, I identify the limitation of a one-solution-fits-all concept of CS and critique attempts to construct one. There is a fast growing research interest in CS-related topics, but these remain highly debated concepts drawing criticism and cynicism (Fleming & Jones, 2013). Different people and organisations that deploy the language or tools of CSR and CS might want, and often mean different things (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Votaw, 1972). Thus, in many ways the idea of CS remains loose and non-specific, leaving room for interpretation and as often, for manipulation.

A constructionist perspective has been adopted in this research to understand CS and CSR (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1995), so a more nuanced conceptual basis can be provided rather than simply objectifying the content of activities that can be associated with CS. This constructionist approach demonstrates the need to shift from researching 'what is or what is not CSR', or 'why it is important', to exploring how we may understand CS and CSR in organisations, or 'how is CS constructed in the process and what are the implications'.

Also, Actor-Network Theory (ANT) will be introduced as a theoretical perspective that can be used to describe the complex of sustainability related discourse and fast changing situations. In addition, ANT can accommodate and tolerate various definitions and implications of CS, and help to identify the importance of understanding the constructions of CS in organisations. In order to do so, related notions such as translation and ordering will be developed.

Therefore, the main purpose of this research is to explore the underlying meanings of Corporate Sustainability in the context of a Japanese MNC in China. To do this, the research approach is built on particular research philosophies and methods.

Chapter 3 will introduce the Methodology of the thesis. As the research inquiry is not proposing and testing research hypotheses with clear cause and effect relationships, a non-linear and interpretive approach has been adopted in the thesis. Therefore, instead of suggesting step-by-step procedures, this chapter

describes how the research strategies are informed and justified by the changing situations.

Firstly, the research philosophies that have been adopted in this research will be discussed: from epistemology, ontology to methodology. In order to explore the constructed nature of CS, interpretivism, hermeneutics, and constructionism are discussed as the philosophical foundations. Also, qualitative inquiry with a reflexive approach is considered to be appropriate for the research purpose.

Secondly, as one of the main methodological foundations for this research, translation and its philosophical implications will be discussed. This research can be seen as a translating process offering a possible representation of the situation. Also, the implications of translation still depend on, and account for the 'potential of the situation'.

Thirdly, ethnography and visual depiction, namely participant produced drawing will be explained as the main methods adopted in the thesis. Ethnography should not be simply considered as a method for data collection, but another way to explore the research field with an open attitude. Following a review of the pilot study that influenced this research, the process of the field work will be described. It includes the access negotiation, influences of the 'ethnographic self' in the field, and the ethical considerations throughout the whole research process. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the holistic approach for data analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 4 presents the ethnographic account with representation and interpretation of the interviews, drawings, and the narratives I have gathered during the field work. In the beginning the ethnographic setting will be represented, including the company, and the main characters. This account is composed of their stories, smiles, tears, and dreams. Then, this chapter will present the three main themes that underpin the interpretation: translating Corporate Sustainability; 'visible structures' and 'invisible axis'; and the sense of self with cultural implications. Finally, the ever-evolving Communal Vessel is introduced, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 contains the Discussion following the analyses in the previous chapter. It will firstly discuss the interpretations and understandings attributed to

CS, which have been continually constructed and translated throughout the ethnographic inquiry in OMG. Instead of 'translation', 'translating' is proposed as a temporary, continual, hermeneutic understanding process. Following this, the meanings of Communal Vessel will be explored through translating processes. As a CS translational construct in OMG, Communal Vessel is found to incorporate inclusiveness and emptiness simultaneously, through its intrinsic oxymoronic nature. Hence, this discussion exemplifies how the process of translating Communal Vessel offers various cultural understandings of CS.

Chapter 6 is the Conclusion of the thesis. Following the discussions of the arguments, five main contributions of this thesis will be summarised as: problematising the construction of CS, suggesting CS as a non-fixed and contextual notion; offering a non-western perspective for exploring how CS evolves in a Japanese MNC in China (and potentially for wider application); employing visual representations of 'promoting corporate culture' in OMG; bringing a translational perspectives to understanding CS; and using 'Communal Vessel' as an indigenous heuristic for interpreting understandings of CS in China and globally. In addition, the limitations of the study will be explained, and the opportunities for future research will be suggested. This chapter concludes with a well-known Chinese idiom, the 'Great Vessel Rarely Completes', emphasising the continual processes of translating and ordering, and implying the perpetual incompleteness of our understandings of CS.

In summary, Chapters 1 and 2 (Introduction and Literature Review) begin by introducing Corporate Sustainability and explaining why contextual research is important. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological stances and the research process for this study. Chapter 4 (Representation and Interpretation) presents various understandings of CS and the organisation. Chapter 5 explains how the processes of translating are intrinsic to cultural representations of CS, and proposes Communal Vessel as a translational construct from OMG. The main contributions of the research will be addressed in Chapter 6, which concludes with the idea of the 'Great Vessel Rarely Completes'.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to address the background and the arguments of the thesis, this chapter introduces the key themes and concepts, and theoretical implications. The main themes and concepts central to the research are: sustainability, Corporate Sustainability (CS), Stakeholder Approach (SHA), and current approaches to studying Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in China. Through a critical review of existing literature, the importance of understanding CS and CSR as constructed notions will be addressed. Hence, further research exploring how the meanings of CS are constructed and translated in specific contexts or networks is needed.

In the second section, Actor-network Theory (ANT) is introduced as a theoretical perspective valuable in explaining the ordering and organising attempts enabled by sustainability related actors. Rather than assuming predefined meanings for discursive and macro notions, such as 'Corporate Sustainability' for MNCs in China, this chapter suggests examining the translating and ordering processes that are continually evolving among actors and networks.

Key Themes and Concepts

Sustainability

Since the 1970s, specific global debates have been raised in terms of accelerating industrialisation, rapid population growth, depletion of non-renewable resources and a deteriorating environment (Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972). The notion of Sustainable Development may have originated from the organic farming movement of the 1940s, but the notion did not start to receive serious attention until the United Nation's 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (Murray, 2011). It is noted that the world's economic, social, financial and cultural systems are highly interdependent, while the planet is stressed and rapidly approaching its outer resource limits (Club of Rome, 1985). Along with a line of global reports, the Brundtland Report 'Our Common Future' introduced a visionary element into the global debate (Turner, 1987). The report was released in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Gro Harlem

Brundtland (WCED, 1987). This commission is tasked by the United Nations to formulate a forward-looking 'global agenda for change', intending to place the environment centre-stage in terms of human development. Here Sustainable Development is described as:

> 'the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p. 41).

According to this report, this definition contains two key implications within it: in terms of 'needs', it suggests priority should be given to the essential needs of the world's poor; secondly, it considers the environment's ability to meet present and future needs as the limitation to economic and social development (WCED, 1987). Although it is implied that the term 'sustainability' has been considered a synonym of 'sustainable development', the differences between these two concepts still exist (Dresner, 2002; Seghezzo, 2009).

In addition, the Brundtland report launched the concept of Sustainable Development as a 'global objective', to guide policies orientated to balance 'economic, social and ecological conditions', which is often represented through the 'triple bottom line': economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social justice (Elkington, 1996). As the three pillars of sustainability, they attempt to offer a comprehensive approach with considerations of environmental and social aspects. The relationships between the three remain the focus of discussion. Instead of the traditional separated distinction of the three facets, it is suggested that the three pillars of sustainability are closely related, and their impacts are deeply interconnected (Elkington, 1996, 2006). The significance of the 'triple bottom line' framework lies in the relationships and interconnections among those three complementary facets. However, it might be problematic if it is considered as the guidance of measuring organisation's environmental and social performance. And the possibilities of calculating the social bottom line, as the standards of 'good' and 'bad' based on a common scale can be particularly questionable (Norman & MacDonald, 2004).

Controversy exists about impacts of economic globalisation on the environment and sustainable development (Tisdell, 2001). Many believe that economic globalisation is a force for sustainable development (Hansen, 1990; Sebastian

& Alicbusan, 1989), while others warn of possible negative consequences for the environment and sustainable development (Greenpeace, 1997; WWF, 2010). Also economists and policy-makers tend to use criteria, indicators and measurements to categorise sustainability to represent given sustainability issues or levels (Martinet, 2011). For example, it is claimed that environmental protection cannot be achieved unless an environmental perspective is integrated into economic policy (Jacobs, 1991).

Also, the limitations of WCED definition as a conceptual framework are examined and it is suggested that the concrete meanings of these terms and their adaptability for specific cases remain disputed (Seghezzo, 2009). The WCED report suggests that the satisfaction of human needs as inherently conflicting with environmental constraints; also in the traditional sustainability triangle, society and environment are considered as separate pillars. However, the clear distinction between nature and society has been questioned, as nature can be seen as a cultural construction (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Newton, 2007; Seghezzo, 2009). Instead, another sustainability triangle formed by 'Place', 'Permanence', and 'Persons' is proposed emphasising the importance of the time, scale, and personal aspects (Seghezzo, 2009). Although it demonstrates a tendency of systematic thinking addressing the complexity of sustainability, this five dimensions' framework fails to clarify issues composed within the framework, such as values, rights, happiness, and well-being.

Although the WECD's definition of sustainability has been criticised as just an extension of the principles for the economics of scarcity into the realm of environment ecology (Tijmes & Luijf, 1995), it is argued that WECD advocates a regime to speak a 'universal language' that helping to define shared perceptions of long-term environmental issues and building a world community, which might jeopardise traditional cultural differences so as to achieve economic solutions. According to Tijmes and Luijf (1995), the term 'world community' indicates a world of markets, desires, indefinite needs and cultural uniformity, in which everything is scarce, where the Earth reduces to a 'common resource' instead of as 'common heritage'.

Although the terms sustainability and sustainable development have been used in numerous disciplines and in a variety of contexts, the definitions of both of the

terms are being continually questioned and debated (Brown, Hanson, Liverman, & Merideth, 1987; Costanza & Patten, 1995; Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robèrt, 2007; Owens, 2003; Seghezzo, 2009). After this definition from the World Commission on Environment and Development, the environmental and social issues are put on a global agenda. This definition, or phrase, has been adopted and built upon by governments, policy-makers and businesses. However, in many ways, it remains loose and non-specific, leaving room for interpretation, and as often, for manipulation.

More arguments on sustainability related definitions will be explained in the next following sections. Next, as sustainability's extended concept in business, Corporate Sustainability, and its close-related themes, will be discussed.

Corporate Sustainability

Following the discussions on Sustainable Development (WCED, 1987) and Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1996), sustainability has been seen as the latest example of profound change demanding transformation throughout societies, governments, investment, and corporations (Blowfield, 2013). Therefore hundreds of concepts and definitions have been proposed suggesting a more environmental friendly, humane, and ethical way of doing business, such as Sustainable Development (WCED, 1987), Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1996), Corporate Citizenship (Altman, 1999), Business Ethics (Minkes, Small, & Chatterjee, 1999), Stakeholder Relations Management (Steurer, Langer, Konrad, & Martinuzzi, 2005), Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991), and Corporate Sustainability (van Marrewijk, 2003).

Among the other concepts, Corporate Sustainability (CS) is defined as 'meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders', and arguably by integrating its economic, ecological and social capital (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131). It attempts to transpose a sustainability-inherited concept into the business or the corporate domain for a sustainability inherited concept (Kleine & Von Hauff, 2009; Steurer et al., 2005). Although it provides a common ground for related discussions, the mechanical combination of the concepts has not been

accepted by academics and practitioners without criticism, such as how the business case for CS is built and what barriers the practitioners might face (Salzmann, Ionescu-Somers, & Steger, 2005).

Lately, managers in various organisations are increasingly facing consumer boycotts, public pressure, and regulatory monitoring around sustainability issues. The major drivers for corporations to include sustainability objectives into their strategies have been seen as avoiding liabilities, reducing potential risks, improving reputation, increasing local community support, and enhancing difficult-to-imitate human and knowledge capabilities that contribute to continual competitive advantages (Dunphy et al., 2003). CS can thus be seen as offering opportunities as much as avoiding potential problems. It is suggested that investing in sustainability has all kinds of potential benefits, such as providing positive corporate performance, competitive advantage, increasing customer loyalty, legitimacy, enhancing company image, improving employee recruitment and retention (Haugh & Talwar, 2010).

Other perspectives have been developed with the evolving debates on CS. A natural-resource-based view of the firm proposed by Hart (1995), is considered as a theory of competitive advantage based on a firm's relationship to the natural environment. It takes the perspective that valuable, costly-to-copy firm resources and capabilities provide the key sources of sustainable competitive advantage; and it criticises the concept of 'environment' in current management theory that emphasises political, economic, social, and technological aspects, but might have ignored the constraints imposed by the natural environment (Hart, 1995; Shrivastava & Hart, 1992). Also, a humanistic view is raised as opposed to current 'economistic' concepts that consider maximisation of utility as the ultimate goal (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010). Instead, it is claimed that human beings are more guided by balancing the interests of themselves and people around them, in accordance with general moral principles (Dierksmeier & Pirson, 2010). Although these views offer different perspectives by exploring alternative management paradigms, they are limited by lack of empirical evidence.

From a practical perspective, some scholars suggest examining CS based on environmental assessing and reporting practices, for example through

identifying the key environmental indicators (Atkinson, 2000). The theoretical development on Sustainability Assessment (SA) is largely evolved from practitioners of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and more recently Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (Pope, Annandale, & Morrison-Saunders, 2004). However, there are some concerns raised in terms of misrepresentation and misuse of these assessments, as often problems are caused by the integration of social and economic aspects (Aras & Crowther, 2009; Morrison-Saunders & Fischer, 2006). It is also noted that SA processes could have implications that are environmentally unsustainable (Morrison-Saunders & Fischer, 2006).

Additionally, as the two concepts that have been popularly discussed, explored, and criticised in academic and business fields (van Marrewijk, 2003), the relationships between the notions of CSR and CS are often introduced by focusing on their differences. A hierarchical relationship model is often proposed, seeing CS as an ultimate goal above of CSR, which is underpinned by balancing interests of profit, people, and the planet (Linnanen & Panapanaan, 2002; Wempe & Kaptein, 2002). By examining extant literature that uses both CSR and CS concepts referring to social and environmental management issues, there is no clear distinction between the two terms, and the conceptualisations of both overlap, but researchers tend to use the two terms to ask different questions (Montiel, 2008; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). Recently the notions of CSR and CS have converged, and are even often seen as synonyms (Keijzers, 2002). Nevertheless, CSR can be regarded as a concept associated with the discourses on CS, as shown in several CSR policy documents (Banerjee, 2008). Therefore I will discuss the implications of both CS and CSR theories and practices.

Sometimes the two concepts are presented as significantly different: CSR is associated more with aspects of human communion, such as amongst people, nature and organisations, whereas CS is related with the agency principle, for example environmental management (van Marrewijk, 2003). Also, CS is differentiated from other concepts by offering five interpretative levels: compliance-driven CS, profit-driven CS, caring CS, synergistic CS with a win-together approach, and holistic CS, which embeds CS in every aspect of organisation and presents it as the only alternative in the context of an

29

interdependent network that requires individual and organisational responsibilities (van Marrewijk, 2003; van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003). However, the comparison of definitions is of limited value, as most of them are based on the examination of theoretical terms used in the scholarly literature, without fundamentally questioning theoretical and methodological propositions (Montiel, 2008; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014).

As can be seen from this literature review, a standardised concept of CS is neither plausible nor possible, and specific interventions can only be addressed within specific situations due to various institutional frameworks and value systems (van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003). CS is nonetheless proposed as the overarching and most established term in related discussions (Kleine & Von Hauff, 2009). In summary, CS should be considered as a broader notion that includes CSR and can also contain other potential meanings, which could be explored by context-sensitive studies.

As discussed above, CSR is a closely related topic to CS. Its theoretical foundations and relevant debates will be further explained in the following sections. These include Stakeholder Approach (SHA), a basic concept underpinning other theoretical themes such as CS and CSR. The next section will introduce the main arguments of SHA and its implications.

Stakeholder Approach

Faced with a fast changing environment and various conceptual challenges, the traditional way of looking at organisations and their relationships with external groups, such as suppliers, customers, shareholders and employees, has evolved into a systematic way of addressing the networks of organisational relationships. With the emerging importance of government, foreign competitors, environmentalists, consumer advocates, special interest groups, media and others, a stakeholder approach (SHA) is suggested by Edward Freeman (1984), offering an holistic framework of business strategy for practitioners and scholars. He argued that, if business organisations are to be successful in current and future environments, any group or individual who might affect, or is affected by organisations must not be left out, as that group could be crucial (Freeman,

1984). Stakeholder groups, such as customers, suppliers, employees, local communities, and shareholders, are considered as holding a stake in and are affected by the firm's success or failure. As highlighted in SHA, an organisation and its managers not only have obligations to ensure that the shareholders receive a fair return on their investment, but also to other stakeholders, which 'go above and beyond those required by laws'(Heath & Norman, 2004, p. 247).

In order to do so, firstly, Freeman mobilised the stakeholder approach as an analytic or 'rational' tool to map out all relevant parties; secondly on the 'process' level, SHA can be used to scan which players might be more influential in the process; thirdly, the 'transactional' level of SHA considers the resources and interactions among stakeholders (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Freeman, 1984). Since the publication of Freeman's landmark book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (1984), SHA has gradually become one of the central themes among recent business and society texts (Carroll, 1989; Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997).

However, it is pointed out that the notions of *stakeholder, stakeholder management, stakeholder theory* are interpreted and explained in different ways with various implications (Brummer, 1991; Clifton & Amran, 2011; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue there are four types of stakeholder theory, distinguished in terms of its *descriptive, instrumental, normative* and *managerial* characteristics. There have been several attempts to add to this typology and categorisation, trying to clarify the enormous range of understandings of related concepts. However, it appears that people might mean different things in debates about stakeholder and corporate responsibility, even when they use the same terms (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008).

When addressing questions such as 'Who or What Really Counts' (Freeman, 1994), there is no consistent agreement in terms of who or what should be stakeholders of organisations, and which one or ones will be considered to have priority. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) propose a theory of stakeholder identification which arguably can separate stakeholders from non-stakeholders. They suggested a theory of stakeholder salience, considering which stakeholder should be given priority to competing stakeholder claims by examining their power, legitimacy, and urgency in the stakeholder relationships.

While stakeholder salience is examined through manager perceptions, stakeholder power to influence organisations is found to be the most important attribute among the three (Parent & Deephouse, 2007).

Mitchell et al.'s (1997) theoretical framework has been assessed and examined theoretically and empirically in numerous research projects. However, some studies seem to have taken the power, legitimacy, and urgency attributes as inherent or given, without questioning the fundamental propositions of the framework, or fully examining it through empirical work (Parent & Deephouse, 2007). It is also pointed out that the stakeholder identification and salience models require simultaneous recognition in the eyes of the decision-makers (Clifton & Amran, 2011; Magness, 2008; Parent & Deephouse, 2007). Practically, it depends on the diverse factors affecting the ways in which any stakeholder will be perceived and assessed by decision-makers. Although the frameworks attempt to articulate the process of establishing stakeholders' status, the transient nature of stakeholder related considerations should not be neglected (Magness, 2008). In a fast changing environment, the dynamic nature of relationships involves so many complex considerations that even a systematic framework such as this cannot always identify and capture the salient features.

In addition, the area of SHA has developed with further theoretical and empirical implications. Freeman (1994) suggests that stakeholder theory can provide an academic genre that combines central concepts of business with ethics, instead of taking each separately. Some authors insist we consider stakeholders as people with names and faces, in order to emphasise the relationships and value creation among stakeholders, rather than their mechanical roles (Freeman, Wicks, & Parmar, 2004; McVea & Freeman, 2005). More interestingly, responding to the earlier critique that stakeholder means various things to different people, Phillips, Freeman and Wicks (2003) ask 'What stakeholder theory is not' in order to claim that the breadth and ambiguity of interpretation for stakeholder related concepts is one of its greatest strengths, though also its most prominent theoretical liability. They attempted to narrow its technical meaning through reflective critiquing towards a better use in management and organisation studies. In the meantime, SHA has been widely adopted in corporations and other organisations (Agle & Agle, 2007), so we should not ask 'if', but 'how' stakeholder theory can be modified and adjusted, in order to make

real impacts on how we do business at present (Agle et al., 2008; Clifton & Amran, 2011).

Corporate Social Responsibility

In the previous section we discussed theoretical issues related to sustainability, CS, and SHA. In this section I introduce CSR, as one of the key theoretical terms in the thesis: from its origins and related arguments, leading to discussions of definitions and implementations.

Evidence of corporate concerns for social responsibility can be traced back for centuries, for instance in the 19th century philanthropic social initiatives and practices of some firms in the Industrial Revolution in western countries. But as a distinct concept CSR has been developed theoretically and empirically since the 1950s (Abrams, 1951; Bowen, 1953; Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Since the 1990s, CSR has risen to prominence in business, public debates and academic research (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008). Rather than treating corporate growth and social welfare as a zero-sum game, CSR is regarded as a fundamental new way of studying the relationship between business and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Nevertheless, CSR is frequently debated, discredited, marginalised, or overlooked theoretically and empirically (Carroll, 1999; Crane, Matten, McWilliams, Moon, & Siegel, 2008).

The arguments for and against CSR are mainly around the nature of business and roles of governments (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008). Friedman (1970) argue that unlike people, 'business' as a whole cannot be said to have responsibilities; however a corporate executive, as an employee, should have direct responsibility to his employers - the shareholders, which is generally about making as much money as possible while conforming to the legal rules. As agents of other people who own the corporation, it is challenging for the executives to justify what activities should be counted as CSR, and often, it could be contradictory to the interests of the shareholders and employees (Crane, Matten, McWilliams, et al., 2008; Friedman, 1970).

However, this perspective is criticised for misinterpreting the nature of CSR and locating corporations in moral-free zones (Mintzberg, 1983; Mulligan, 1986). According to this view corporations should not be seen as merely economic actors, but also as political or social actors because of the wide impacts of their economic decisions. These impacts account for more than can be included in the limited scope of governments and legal systems (Mintzberg, 1983). Mulligan (1986) questioned Friedman's analysis, claiming that the commitment to social responsibility can be an integral element in business management. In order to increase competitive advantage, a strategic perspective on CSR can be justified in terms of moral obligation, sustainability, license to operate, and reputation of the corporation (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Definitions and Implementations of CSR

After introducing the key concepts, such as sustainability, CS, SHA, and CSR, the main arguments are focused on their definitions and implementations. CSR is widely debated from different perspectives. In this section, I examine the discussions about its definitions and implementations.

The meanings of CSR have been evolving. In an attempt to reconcile the various obligations faced by corporate executives, Carroll (1991) suggests that CSR should be distinguished by four components: (from the bottom up) economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. This is regarded by some as a broad but comprehensive framework on CSR, with an orientation towards SHA (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008). However, it is criticised for being descriptive and vague, with limited generalisability outside of the US because of the varied evidence from Europe and Africa (Maignan, 2001; Matten & Moon, 2008; Visser, 2006). Yet although CSR demonstrably varies in different cultural contexts, these authors' propositions are still mainly based on Carroll's framework without challenging the fundamental paradigms.

Following the continuing debates and development on the definitions of CSR, a proliferation of theories and terminologies is proposed: for example stakeholder management (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997), corporate social performance (Wood, 1991), corporate accountability (Smith, 1990), corporate

social responsiveness (Frederick, 1994), corporate citizenship (Altman, 1999; Matten & Crane, 2005), and corporate sustainability as discussed above (Dunphy et al., 2003; van Marrewijk, 2003). It has been pointed out that some theories and classifications might have combined different approaches, but use the same terminology with different meanings (Garriga & Mele, 2004). Therefore Garriga and Mele (2004) attempt to clarify the situation by classifying the main CSR theories as four perspectives: seeing corporations as only an instrument for wealth creation, and their social activities as merely a means to achieve economic results; concerning the power of corporations in society and responsible use of this power in the political arena; considering corporations as instruments for the satisfaction of social demands; or emphasising the ethical responsibilities of corporations to society. This classification provides a good overview of the main debates, and demonstrates CSR should be understood as an 'interdisciplinary topic' (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008) which involves management, economics, sociology, politics, law, philosophy and organisation studies.

A number of approaches have been developed to implement CSR and related notions. For example, attempts to measure CSR include analysis of the relationship between corporate social performance and corporate financial performance (Moir, 2001; Orlitzky, 2008). Interestingly the results vary: some studies found a positive relationship (Waddock & Graves, 1997), some found a negative relationship (Wright & Ferris, 1997), or even a neutral relationship (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). In order to achieve the 'ideal' level of CSR spend, CSR is seen as an investment with identifiable 'resources' and 'outputs' (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Although some of these studies are considered methodologically and empirically flawed, it is claimed that managers should treat CSR decisions precisely as other important decisions (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000; Orlitzky, 2008).

CSR has also been examined from other perspectives, such as strategy (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Rugman & Verbeke, 1998), investment (Cheah, Jamali, Johnson, & Sung, 2011; Kurtz, 2008), marketing (Groza, Pronschinske, & Walker, 2011; Smith, 1990), operational management (Kleindorfer, Singhal, & Van Wassenhove, 2005), supply management (Ehrgott, Reimann, Kaufmann, & Carter, 2011), public relations (Benn, Todd, & Pendleton, 2010), corporate

governance (Hillman, Cannella, & Paetzold, 2000; Prado & Garcia, 2010), leadership (Swanson, 2008; Waldman, Siegel, & Javidan, 2006), and ecological perspectives (Hart, 1997; Shrivastava, 1995). Many of these studies look for the drivers and determinants of CSR, which is seen as a distinctive actor influencing organisations (Gonzalez-Benito & Gonzalez-Benito, 2010).

Accordingly, the drivers for CSR are categorised in four levels: national business systems, the organisational field, the organisation, and the individuals within the organisation (Angus-Leppan, Metcalf, & Benn, 2010). On the organisation level, top managers are often seen as being in the positions to influence CSR strategies and projects. The decision-makers are charged with the responsibility of formulating corporate strategy, and sometimes are deeply involved in gaining corporate reputation through CSR involvements (Waldman, Siegel, et al., 2006), which in return might improve the corporate strategic advantages (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Their personal values and initiatives are often seen as the drivers of CSR (Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004). This approach is re-examined through the role of leadership, and insights from ethical and gender perspectives (Marshall, 2007; Mostovicz, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2009).

The extent of the importance and emphasis toward CSR might vary among top management, even in the same company. A cross-national and longitudinal study of 561 companies among 15 countries claims that a CEO's visionary leadership and personal integrity can be predictors of CSR values adopted by top management (Waldman, de Luque, et al., 2006). Waldman et al. (2006) particularly pointed out that because of their implications for multinational corporations (MNCs), CSR values might differ between managers in subsidiary countries and those in home countries, which are relatively more economically developed. Although this comparative approach might have methodological flaws by categorising national cultures and CSR values on the basis of aggregated self-perceptions (Smith, 2006), it demonstrates that many variables can differentiate how CSR is understood and valued.

Nevertheless, most of the theories and notions around CSR are discussed from Anglo-American perspectives; insights from other cultural contexts are limited. Many authors point out that CSR understandings and practices differ among

countries and change within their contexts (Brammer & Pavelin, 2005; Khan, Westwood, & Boje, 2010; Maignan, 2001; Matten & Moon, 2008; Visser, 2006). Seemingly CSR has been adopted by other regions in the world, such as Europe (Matten & Moon, 2008), Africa (Visser, 2006), Australasia (Golob & Bartlett, 2007), and some parts in Asia (Chapple & Moon, 2005; Moon & Shen, 2010). For instance, Matten and Moon (2008) suggest that European corporations tend to be more 'implicit' in terms of their CSR claims, compared with American counterparts with 'explicit' attachment to CSR; different institutional environments are identified as the reasons, such as political, financial, labour and cultural systems. Rather than corporate policies that make CSR 'explicit', 'implicit CSR' refers to 'corporate roles within the wider formal and informal institutions', and consists of 'values, norms, and rules' addressing stakeholder issues (Matten & Moon, 2008, p. 409).

Although this perspective emphasises the cultural dynamics of CSR, and foresees 'explicit' CSR spreading globally, it does not clarify how organisations are influenced by the 'explicit / implicit' CSR dimension; nor how to address the 'implicitness' of CSR, as values, norms or rules in organisations are not always apparent or observable (De Long & Fahey, 2000). Therefore such comparative studies remain insufficient because their arguments are mainly based on examining the language that companies use to describe their involvement in society, from company websites, codes of conduct or CSR reports, where these are 'explicit' enough to be found. Nevertheless, scholars start to consider CSR as a more complicated notion derived from different, sometimes 'implicit' meanings.

Understanding the Constructions of CSR and CS

> 'Corporate social responsibility means something, but not always the
> same thing to everybody.' (Votaw, 1972, p. 25).

Different people and organisations that deploy the language or tools of CSR might want, and often mean different things (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Votaw, 1972). CSR is considered as a 'dynamic phenomenon' (Carroll, 1999), an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1956; Matten & Moon, 2008),

'internally complex and naturally open for application and interpretation' (Moon, Crane, & Matten, 2005). 'For some, it represents a misguided attempt to divert money that should rightly go to shareholders; for others, it is little more than a smokescreen behind which large multinationals can maintain a discredited, unsustainable business model while appearing to be responsible to the outside world; for still others, it represents a genuine opportunity to help leverage millions out of poverty in the world's poorest countries. Ultimately, corporations may do good, or harm, or perhaps even very little, when they practise CSR' (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008, p. 1).

Additionally, definitions of CSR are often biased toward specific interests, and thus could prevent the development and implementation of CSR (van Marrewijk, 2003). Through the analysis of 37 definitions of CSR, Dahlsrud (2008) argue that developing a totally unbiased definition of CSR is theoretically and empirically challenging. Also, it is suggested that we should not focus on how CSR has been defined, but think more about how CSR can be socially constructed in specific contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Dahlsrud, 2008). The explicit, managerial-centred CSR can be understood from an historical perspective that recognises the political and cultural background. An example is its mobilisation in the early 20th century attempts to prevent unionisation or significant workplace regulation in large American corporations (Marens, 2013). Therefore CSR should not be simply associated with positive or negative impacts (Banerjee, 2008; Roberts, 2003), but seen as a continually evolving subject in the constructed processes of organising. The open for interpretation and interdisciplinary nature of CSR should be considered as part of its rich meanings, even an advantage to the field (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). Instead of assuming a common definition that applies to every context, we should explore various implications and constructed meanings of CSR within specific contexts.

Although CSR may be critically regarded as 'aspirational talk', sometimes performative, and hypocritical CSR communications can reveal realities and aspirations perceived by organisations, or even potentially construct positive impacts (Christensen et al., 2013). This perspective approaches language as a performative process, that shapes and generates organisations and their perceptions of realities (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Weick, 1969). Costas and

Karreman (2013) demonstrate through empirical studies how this aspirational CSR talk and practice can be serve to construct an idealised image of a socially, ecologically and ethically responsible corporate self; even as a form of management control that ties employees' aspirational identities and ethical conscience to the organisation. Through this socio-ideological control (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2004) and management of meaning, people are persuaded to adapt to certain values, norms and ideas, or how particular phenomena can be understood in organisations (Costas & Kärreman, 2013; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1988; Kunda, 1992).

Thus, rather than simply analysing the content of CSR activities, CSR and CS could be considered from a constructionist view, arguably as a more robust conceptual basis (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1995). Although examining the construction process seems to be quite challenging empirically, it shows the tendency for scholars to shift from researching 'what' is CSR and 'why' it is important to explore 'how' we may understand CSR in organisations.

In the following section, the development of current CS research in China, as the context for the thesis, will be discussed.

Relevant Research in China and Japanese MNCs

The ongoing environmental and social pressures discussed above have led to calls for fundamental change and deeper understanding about the way we do business globally and in emerging economies such as China (Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Tan & Tan, 2005; Yang & Rivers, 2009). China is by far the largest emerging economy, currently manufacturing or assembling over 50% of the world's products (Lu, 2009). In 2011 it overtook Japan as the world's second-biggest economy (BBC News, 2011). China is playing a crucial and influential role in the world economy, and undoubtedly China's sustainable development is considered to be vital for the entire planet (UNEP, 2011).

As discussed, sustainability-related research is more commonly conducted in western countries; voices from the East are needed as sustainability and CSR practices emerge as a management field internationally. Also there has been a general interest in the distinctiveness or comparability of management in Asia and China (Moon & Shen, 2010; Tan, 2009a). Some argue that with the rise of the awareness of CSR, it might become an 'Asian-driven' strategy issue in the future (Bruton & Lau, 2008). However, an examination of both English and Chinese language academic literatures reveals the under-representation of Asia and China in current management research and CS-related studies (Kolk et al., 2010; Moon & Shen, 2010). Even if translingual translation is not seen as an issue, the comparability and implications remain problematic because of different research approaches (Moon & Shen, 2010). Likewise, caution is needed when applying theories from the west to China without putting the specific contexts into consideration.

CS and CSR are recognised as growing fields in China, and many distinctive features have already been identified when compared to Western business environments. For example, the distinctive roles for institutional and political perspectives in China (Child & Tsai, 2005), the impacts of low transparency, guanxi and the prospect of a massive emerging market (Krueger, 2009), the fast development and wealth creation (Enderle, 2010), the expansion of MNCs after China's economic reform and the 'open up' (Tan, 2009a); also the encounters with China's cultural and ideological heritages (Ip, 2009; Lockett, 1988; Wang & Juslin, 2009). A significant growth of research on CSR in China emerged during the 1990s, when multinational corporations (MNCs) started to conduct social responsibility audits and play a more important role in China (Moon & Shen, 2010). The development of CSR and CS can be considered as a key actor in current economical, social and environmental situations in China.

China has recently experienced a series of industrial scandals, food scares, labour crises, and environmental degradations, which have significant impacts locally and globally (Ip, 2009; Lu, 2009). The relationship between corporations and society has been questioned; and specifically what roles MNCs should be playing in China (Lam, 2009; Tan, 2009b). Additionally, differences exist between how CSR practices are conducted in MNCs' subsidiaries and in MNCs' parent companies, because of different stakeholders, institutional and cultural

40

environments (Yang & Rivers, 2009). These factors among others lead to the conclusion that the complexity and sensitivity of CSR practices and strategies adopted by MNCs' subsidiaries in China should be re-considered.

Specifically, the significant impacts of Chinese culture on organisations are often identified, such as respect for age and hierarchy, group orientation, face, and the importance of relationships (Lockett, 1988). However, current perspectives on CS and CSR have seldom taken the influence of these Chinese cultural roots and situations into consideration. Although current perspectives and constructions of CSR and CS originated in the West and have been developed worldwide, similar ideas on business ethics from China could be traced back more than 2500 years and legitimately located within traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucianism and Taoism (Chan, 2008; Wang & Juslin, 2009). For example, Tzu-kung (520-475 BCE) regarded as the originator of the Confucian Trader, who was a very successful business man, applied the Confucian virtue of 'righteousness' (Yi) and 'sincerity' (Xin) to his business and philanthropy, to pursue profits with integrity and commitment to the community's prosperity (Huang, 2008; Lee, 1996; Wang & Juslin, 2009).

Wang and Juslin (2009) contribute a Harmony Approach to CSR by relating it to the Confucian interpersonal harmony and Taoist harmony between human and nature, invoking a broader understanding towards nature, people, and society. Harmony, *He* （和）, rooted in numerous Chinese classic ideologies and contemporary thinking, describes a non-static situation when different multiple parties coexist and are interdependent with each other, without separation or absolute superiority, sustaining through the interaction of different elements (Li, 2006). As a culturally specified CS perspective, it not only provides a culturally sensitive approach that is better understood and arguably more easily adopted by organisations in China, but also echoes the government's 12th Five-Year Plan 2011-2015 for building harmonious society (National People's Congress, 2012). Additionally, it offers an holistic and relational perspective considering sustainability with worldly (Turnbull, Case, Edwards, Schedlitzki, & Simpson, 2012) philosophical implications on how the world at large operates and how human beings ought to act (Li, 2006), or act upon (Jullien, 2004).

Many other regions and studies have been influenced by Confucian and Taoist thinking, from ethical values to daily organising practices (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Low & Ang, 2012; McElhatton & Jackson, 2012; Tan & Chow, 2009). Confucian traits and values can be recognised anywhere in the world, not only in Asia (Pan, Chaffee, Chu, & Ju, 1994; Robertson & Hoffman, 2000). For example, Romar (2004) argued that much of Peter Drucker's work was developed from his readings of the early Confucian classics, such as the Analects and the Mencius. 'Confucian ethics… is a universal ethic in which the same rules and imperatives of behaviour hold for every individual. This is no 'social responsibility' overriding individual conscience, no cost-benefit calculations, no greater good or higher measure than the individual and his behaviour…' (Drucker, 1981, p. 166). Contemporary understandings of these classic philosophies and the implications for organisations should be studied further.

Furthermore Japan shares a similar cultural heritage (Lockett, 1988), and its ethical principles and managerial practices can be partly attributed to the Confucian traditions and Japanese divergent Confucianism (Boardman & Kato, 2003; Chan, 2008; Dollinger, 1988; Ornatowski, 1999). Japan is considered as a society combining Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism and western modernisation, expressed in one of Japan's most famous slogans, 'Eastern ethics, Western science' (Dollinger, 1988). Holt (1999) pointed out that Japanese management philosophy has two directions, one concerned with the relationship between people, and the other focused on production efficiency. It is pointed out that some Japanese CSR concepts, such as 'kyosei', meaning 'cooperative living or symbiosis', and the Japanese code of ethics, called the 'shuchu kiyaku', all can be traced back to classic Confucian ideology through historical connections between the Confucian philosophical principles and their adaptation and application to 16th century Japan (Boardman & Kato, 2003). Since Confucianism has developed and evolved over the years, attention needs to be directed to original Confucian philosophy and the modes of its development in specific contexts.

Although the distinctiveness of organisations in China should be addressed, it is difficult to reach a consensus on the impact of national, cultural and organisational differences, in terms of ethics-related attitudes and behaviour

(Tan & Chow, 2009). Therefore the cultural aspects discussed in the thesis should be considered as a representation encountered in the case of this study, rather than an attempt to claim cultural propositions associated with certain nationalities.

In summary, this section on 'Key Themes and Concepts' begins with a discussion of Sustainability in general, exploring meanings that have been continually debated and evolved for decades. Then it turns to the definitions and implementations of other key concepts in this field, such as Corporate Sustainability (CS), Stakeholder Approach (SHA), and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). These concepts are closely related with each other while accommodating different emphases. The discussion focuses on definitions and implementations of CSR and CS, while addressing the importance of contextual influences. This leads to the argument for the inadequacy of current mainstream approaches to CS-related research, which is mainly based on evidence from western points of view, mostly with quantitative approach looking for determinant drivers of CS (Moon & Shen, 2010). Contextual research with close observation in non-English speaking regions is needed. Also, as the world's second-biggest economy, China's sustainable development has big impacts locally and globally. Thus the insights of CS and CSR from China should be explored further, considering the cultural and philosophical influences. Confucian traits have been appreciated all over the world, especially in Japan, considered as a society combining both eastern and western thinking. Therefore understanding the meanings of CS within a Japanese MNC in China, is likely to have a distinctive research impact.

Translating and Ordering: Some theoretical Perspectives

This section will introduce Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as a theoretical perspective that can be used to describe the complex of sustainability related discourses in relation to current changing situations. More interestingly, ANT can accommodate the varied definitions and implications of CS and help to address the importance of understanding the construction of CS and CSR in processes of organisation. ANT invokes a series of concepts which will be discussed in this section, such as actor, network, actant, macro and micro actor, and translation.

Actor-Network Theory

Actor-Network Theory (ANT) prompts profound theoretical implications in various fields. It originated in studies of science, technology and society emphasising the importance of non-human actors (Latour, 1987). It comes from an application of semiotics (Law, 1999), and is often called the 'sociology of translation' (Callon, 1980, 1986). ANT is regarded as an increasingly popular sociological method adopted within several social science fields (Alcadipani & Hassard, 2010; McLean & Hassard, 2004). It has been applied to many subjects due to its easy transportability, for something unfixed and hard to define; but it has also been criticised for these reasons (Law, 1999; McLean & Hassard, 2004). Actor-Network Theory suggests that organising involves three kinds of actors: human, things, and quasi-objects (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005; Hernes, 2008). Many things can be considered as quasi-objects that perform a sustaining but indeterminate role in the network (Brown, 2002), such as organisational routines that stabilise the organisation network (Feldman & Pentland, 2005), or even bigger, the organisation field as nexus (Hernes, 2005). Thus ANT offers another way to look at things - from the perspective that there is no great division, no good or bad, no white or black. While the story of ANT is represented by the combination of 'performativity' and 'relational materiality', it is identified as an 'intentionally oxymoronic' notion resolving the distinction between structure and agency, moving between the centred actor and the decentred network (Law, 1999).

Additionally, ANT is described as a relational and process-oriented sociology that treats social relations, such as power and hierarchy as network effects (Law, 1992). As the heart of ANT, the *heterogeneous network* is depicted as a patterned network composed of bits and pieces of human and non-human materials (Law, 1992). Those network effects, such as hierarchy and power (Law, 1992), are generated through the ordering attempts and countless negotiations within the heterogeneous networks. Also, society, organisation, and agent can be seen as patterned networks of heterogeneous relations, or effects produced by these networks – 'hence the term, actor-network: an actor is also, always a network' (Law, 1992, p. 384).

There are various approaches to and perspectives of ANT. According to Gherardi and Nicolini (2005), a 'discursive perspective' is identified by sharing a number of concepts and metaphors, such as translation, intermediary, actor-network, and accepting the two principles of material relationalism and performativity (Law, 1999). Some scholars describe ANT through heroic stories in which individual people or small groups of actors actively carry out the task of assembling and sit in the centre of authority, which is recognised as 'the entrepreneurial' approach (Callon, 1986; Graham, 1998; Latour, 1987). Additionally, it is argued that ANT invites a range of controversies, for instance the inclusion/exclusion of actors and networks, the symmetrical treatment of seemingly dichotomous factors as humans and non-humans, agency and structure; also the nature of politics and power in the 'heterogeneous engineering' (Alcadipani & Hassard, 2010; McLean & Hassard, 2004). Whittle and Spicer (2008) criticise the philosophical conflicts that might exist between ANT and Critical Management Studies and raise attention to reflexive translation of ANT.

Nevertheless, the wealth of different arguments should be seen as the continual problematisation and development in the theoretical field (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). ANT is further clarified and developed in the book 'Actor Network Theory and After' (Law & Hassard, 1999). For example, Bruno Latour (1999) critically declares that for him there are four things wrong with ANT: the word actor, network, theory, and the hyphen! According to him, ANT is never a theory, but a 'very crude method to learn from the actions without imposing on them a priori definition of their world building capacities' (Latour, 1999, p. 20).

Therefore, a ready-made definition of ANT will not be included in this research, but we will turn to further discussions inspired by related theoretical implications. Although the debates on ANT continue, it still offers a reflexive approach to study organisation and organising, and a perspective to re-consider ordering and the resolving of the extremes, if the extremes exist.

ANT and Translation

The notion of translation is borrowed in the development of ANT from contemporary French philosopher Michel Serres (1982), for its richness of meanings. Besides its linguistic interpretation, translation is defined as 'displacement, drift, invention, mediation, creation of a new link that did not exist before and modifies' (Latour, 1993a, p. 6), which 'comprised what exists and what is created; the relationship between humans and ideas, ideas and objects, and humans and objects' (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 24). Therefore translation has been considered as a key point for understanding organisations and the construction of actors, as this concept involves both movement and transformation, and embraces both linguistic and material objects, which are often referred to in actor-network theory (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996; Latour, 1986, 1993b).

Also, John Law (1994) points out that ANT theorists tend to tell stories and trace histories rather than talking about modes of ordering. 'Translation' is discussed as the process through which putative actors attempt to characterise the uncategorised pieces in networks and constitute themselves as agents; the process also referred to as 'heterogeneous engineering' according to the materially heterogeneous nature of agents (Law, 1987, 1994). Thus, 'translation' can be considered as the analysis of ordering effects, as the processes of patterning and ordering; and as a verb, translation implies 'transformation and the possibility that one thing (for example, an actor) may stand for another (for instance, a network)' (Law, 1992, p. 386). The process of translation is crucial to examining how actors and organisations mobilise heterogeneous networks. 'To translate is to displace; but to translate is also to express in one's own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they

associate with each other: it is to establish oneself as a spokesman. At the end of the process, if it is successful, only voices speaking in unison will be heard' (Callon, 1986, p. 223). Through the example of the translation between the scallops, the fishermen, and the scientific community, Callon (1986) argues that translation will just fail without displacements, transformation, negotiations, and some adjustments that accompany them.

Additionally, translation is described as both the movement of an entity from one context to another in space and time, as well as the translating process from one language to another, with the transformation of meanings (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2005). Translation can also trace the change when an 'actant' (Greimas & Courtes, 1982), which might be any person, any text or image, becomes an 'actor' by acquiring a character and playing its role; or depicts the process of constructing a macro actor from negotiations and associations with others (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). Through the translation perspective, we can explore associated networks with heterogeneous pieces, the 'networked actors', identifying the constructing process of actors and macro actors. Thus, the process of translation can bring out its implicit constrains, such as social control and conformism (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996).

ANT can also provide a perspective towards power. The relationships between individual and society, force and consent, power and powerlessness are often referred to in a dualistic way (Foucault, 1982). However, many scholars have realised that complex relations of power and resistance should not be seen in opposing polarities, as what might be seen as resistance can also be considered as compliance or indifference (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994; Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). Also power and resistance are acknowledged to be exercised by different subjects (Knights & Vurdubakis, 1994). Power is described as a 'pliable and empty term' by Latour (1986, p. 266), who questions the notion of power from an ANT perspective. Latour (1986) suggests power should not be depicted as something that one can possess; he emphasises the exercise of power as a possible effect and consequence, rather than as a cause of action. Instead, power can be considered to be the result, or a network effect (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). The result might be the situation that some actors control others, but translation will help to understand the way actors are defined, associated, and organised (Callon, 1986).

Nevertheless, translation is seen as a mechanism or device that can reconcile the fact that a text is object-like, but can be read in different ways at the same time, and also in terms of empowering the 'travelling of ideas' across time and spaces, when people energise an idea they translate (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Latour, 1986). For example, through the investigation from the linguistic approach, some researchers argue that the word 'responsibility' should be replaced by 'accountability' with more theoretical accuracy (Brooks, 1995; van Marrewijk, 2003). In addition, it is pointed out that the inconsistency and ambiguity of CSR or CS are also due to translation problems (Göbbels, 2002). Translation occurs at the stage between when an idea is constructed, and when it becomes taken for granted (Mueller & Whittle, 2011). As shown in the literature review, CS actors are associated with many other actors and networks, weaving a net of complexity. But translation can be used to investigate the constructing and organising processes, so the process of translation needs to be explored further. In conclusion, translation and ANT perspectives are deployed in this research in order to investigate and explore the constructed meaning effects of CS in heterogeneous networks.

Macro Actor and Ordering

Macro actors can be 'institutions, organisations, social classes, parties, states' (Callon & Latour, 1981, p. 279), and can be described as more general discourse with different purposes, or as a metaphor, a poetic way to make an actor sizable (Mouritsen & Flagstad, 2005). A potential actor might be considered as a macro actor when it has been successful in mobilising certain micro actors (Callon, 1986). Macro actors associate and organise these relations by 'black-boxing' them and therefore can be seated on top of many black boxes, such as thoughts, habits, forces and objects (Callon & Latour, 1981; Mouritsen & Flagstad, 2005).

CS can be interpreted as a 'macro actor', while economic prosperity, social justice, environmental benefit and many other actors are mobilised and organised along within the network of sustainability. And these actors will be

48

organising other micro actors in networks, for example, the regulations protecting workers' health and well-being, the decisions about charity donations, the re-design of the supply chain, and so on. These, and many other things, people, technologies, texts are micro actors, are as intermediaries and translators of the macro actor – corporate sustainability.

As discussed in previous CSR sections, much of the extant literature attempts to consider CS as a 'powerful' actor mobilising many other actors and networks, without questioning the constructed and 'networked' nature of it. Indeed, the construction of macro actors is often poorly understood, as 'macro actors would wipe away any traces of their construction, presenting themselves through their spokespersons as being indivisible and solid' (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005, p. 7). CS has been examined with sets of preconditions and followed by determinate approaches, treated as a 'black box' of which we 'need to know nothing but its input and output' (Latour, 1987, p. 2). However, what happens inside of the black box remains rather complicated and random.

Some critical CSR research has pointed out that the increase in power associated with CSR can attract opportunistic actors with little interest in responsibility but produce almost complete inactivity on CSR except improving their own positions and power within that organisation (Bondy, 2008). Also, the 'greening network' of organisations is criticised because it might be neither realistic nor necessary to create a new eco-ordering (Newton, 2002). As the coexistence of orders and resistances in the heterogeneous network, 'pure order' has often been pursued as a false dream of managers, while the attempts at 'ordering' are never complete (Law, 1992, 1994). It is also argued that *ordering* is preferable as a verb instead of a noun, to describe an uncertain process of overcoming resistance (Law, 1992). Subsequently, instead of having a false dream of a pure and stable eco-order, we can only speak of attempts at ordering a seemingly green network, by observing the interactions among networks, by perhaps empowering micro actors.

Following the discussions on Triple Bottom Line (Elkington, 1996) in previous sections, the categorisation of economic prosperity, social justice, and environmental benefit is fundamentally questioned. It is suggested that 'social', as an adjective, should not be referred to as a special domain that can 'glue'

some particular elements, but as a continual process of tracing and assembling the associations and connections (Latour, 2005). ANT offers another perspective to see the social world as a set of related and heterogeneous 'bits and pieces'; and treats the social as the 'recursive but incomplete performance of endless intertwined orderings' (Law, 1994, p. 101).

The division between nature and society is also criticised from an ANT perspective, just as ecology specifies that natural and social entities should be seen as bonding together in complex interrelations (Murdoch, 1997, 2001). According to ANT, we should not assume either human or non-human objects can determine the nature of social change or stability in general; even artefacts could have politics (Law, 1992; Winner, 1980). It points out how limited the human-centred perspective could be, as it continually positions humans as the only significant actors without adequately taking into account the various nonhuman actors that make up our world and that we depend on (Murdoch, 1997). Nevertheless, this does not mean we should discard the effect of human agency, as human actors arguably gain power of reflection through language which can provide motive forces for action (Murdoch, 2001). This perhaps can explain one of the reasons why CS has been continually debated. The search for 'The Solution' should be questioned, especially when we are trying to find the invisible or imaginative actors by emphasising the performativity that 'sometimes makes durability and fixity' (Law, 1999).

The influences of organisational culture in pursing CS and CSR initiatives have been noted. Through examining the extant 'green business' literature, Newton and Harte (1997) suggest that many researchers believe the main challenges could be that organisations lack CSR commitment, or they have the 'wrong' organisational culture; and some of them tend to promote environmentalism in the context of a nonstop pursuit of profit maximisation. Nevertheless, the so-called cultural change in organisations could involve many forms of control (Hawkins, 2008), and sometimes 'making' meanings for people (de Certeau, 1984; Peters & Waterman, 1982). For example, deliberate culture change is described as an attempt to 'elicit and direct the required efforts of (organisational) members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions' (Kunda, 1992, p. 11). Thus, ethnographic-informed methods could be used to offer thick descriptions of how these control

and cultural influences are enacted in everyday organisational life (Geertz, 1973; Goffman, 1959).

Nevertheless, the importance of the relational and inter-connected nature of networks should not be neglected (Newton, 2002). As two stories about ANT, relational materiality and performativity should go together, a balance between the 'centred actor' and the 'decentred network' could be seen as the ideal situation (Law, 1999). Instead of assuming the position of the 'green' macro actor, ANT is proposed here to help with addressing the difficulties of eco-ordering as a theoretical stance. It cannot only investigate the construction and associations of sustainability-related actors and empower some micro actors, but also help us to understand the tentative and contested nature of the actors and networks.

Constructing Research Inquiries

In order to facilitate the development of interesting and influential research, it is particularly important to produce innovative questions that challenge existing beliefs and assumptions, open up new research problems and integrate different approaches to resolve long-standing controversies (Campbell, Daft, & Hulin, 1982). Taking into account several factors influencing the development of research questions, for example funding, publication, fashion and fieldwork experience, how to construct interesting and non-formulaic research were examined and the challenges and difficulties were suggested (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011).

Although the most common and dominated way of producing research questions in the area of organisation studies is to spot various gaps in existing literature, these questions are less likely to lead to significant theories because most of them do not question the assumptions that underlie existing literature in any substantive ways, though challenging assumptions appears to be what makes a theory interesting and remarkable (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011).

Two possible ways of constructing interesting and influential research questions were proposed: problematisation and the use of empirical material (Alvesson &

Sandberg, 2013). Problematisation is conceptualised as the endeavour to know how to think differently (Foucault, 1985), and aims to significantly disrupt the reproduction and continuation of institutionalised lines of reasoning (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011), rather than 'reinforcing them by thoroughly and systematically filling a gap in existing literature' (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013, p. 129).

And, the second way for challenging dominant theoretical assumptions is through acknowledging the constructed nature of empirical material and seeing it as a source of inspiration and as a partner for critical dialogue, instead of a guide or ultimate arbitrator (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). For theory development an approach is suggested through encounters between theoretical assumptions and empirical impressions, looking for the unanticipated and the unexpected that puzzle the researcher, and encouraging interpretations that allow a productive and non-commonsensical understanding of ambiguous social reality (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).

Following the discussions in this chapter, the term 'sustainability' has been understood differently in different contexts, with positive and sometimes negative or ambiguous implications (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008). In Chinese, there is a term for 'Sustainable Development', but 'Sustainability' and 'Corporate Sustainability' are not commonly used. How could we ensure communal understandings in current debates, if the term itself might be unidentified or even problematic? As an example of problematic, ambiguous, and constructed notions, CS needs to be examined through problematisation.

Therefore, further research that explores deeper and perhaps culturally embedded meanings of CS is required. Instead of filling theoretical gaps in the extant literature, a new approach to address the constructed, tentative and discursive processes of CS is proposed.

Summary

On the basis of critically reviewing the extant literature in the field of CS and MNCs, this chapter introduces the main theories and concepts underpinning this research. ANT is proposed in the second section as a theoretical

perspective, a platform from which to engage with various definitions and implications of CS, while addressing the importance of problematising the construction of CS.

Firstly, this chapter introduces attempts to define sustainability and CS. A wealth of concepts and definitions has been proposed suggesting a more environmental friendly, humane, and ethical way of doing business. Sustainability is often regarded as an example of profound change demanding transformation across societies, governments, investment, and also corporations (Blowfield, 2013). By combining the WECD's explanation of sustainability and SHA, Corporate Sustainability (CS) is defined as 'meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders' (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002, p. 131). Although this provides a common ground for further discussions, the mechanical attempt to generalise the sustainability initiative into business contexts has not been accepted without question.

Thus, it has been noted that perhaps a standardised definition of CS does not work (Montiel, 2008). When such terms are mentioned in organisations, people probably want, and often mean different things (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Votaw, 1972). The discussions on CS-related topics require critical reflections. A constructionist view is adopted in the research exploring the construction process of CS-related notions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1995).

Following the implications of ANT as a theoretical stance, CS has been examined by a series of metaphors or notions. For example, CS is examined by studies via determinant approaches, as a mysterious 'black box' of which we can only address its input and output (Latour, 1987); or as a problematic 'macro-actor' associated with and mobilising other actors and networks (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). These arguments demonstrate the questionable construction of CS that needs to be further explored in a specific context.

Under the complex surge of globalisation, MNCs have been playing more and more important roles in the economic and social development of the world. MNCs are often brought to the focus of global debates regarding their responsibility issues (Egels-Zanden, 2007; Kolk & Pinkse, 2008; Tan, 2009a).

There is a growing scholarly interest in the relationship between MNCs and societies, and within emerging economies' contexts (Rodriguez et al., 2006). Thus, further in-depth research is needed in the field of MNCs, sustainability, and responsibility.

Additionally, when CS theories and practices have been developing as a management field internationally, sustainability related research is more commonly conducted in Anglo-American contexts; thus, voices from the East are needed (Kolk et al., 2010). Through examining both English and Chinese literature in management and organisation studies, the under-representation of Asia and China in the field of CS has been identified (Kolk et al., 2010; Moon & Shen, 2010). As the largest emerging economy, currently manufacturing or assembling most the world's products, exploring Chinese perspectives in the field of CS could have significant impacts locally and globally (Ip, 2009; Lu, 2009).

However, even if the translingual barrier is not seen as an issue, perspectives of how CS is understood in China remain underexplored. It is especially challenging when the measurements or benchmarks have been widely adopted, though these might not work in China, considering the distinctiveness of institutional, political, and cultural factors (Moon & Shen, 2010).

In summary, CS has been questionably constructed as a macro actor that balances the economic, social and environmental interests in organisational networks, and mobilises other actors. However, it is like a journey that organisations are travelling on rather than the destination of 'sustainable results'. It is a process in which people are searching between the 'centred actor' and the 'decentred network' (Law, 1999). The review of existing literature reveals the construction of CS needs to be examined through problematisation. Instead of considering CS as a taken for granted concept, this thesis proposes to explore the non-fixed meanings of CS in a specific context. In the next chapter, I will present the methodological choices and specific methods applied in this research, which have been developed throughout the process. Also, it will describe how the field organisation was chosen, and discuss the analysis and interpretation processes involved in this research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As discussed in the previous chapter, the main purpose of this research is to explore the understandings of Corporate Sustainability that have been evolving via processes of translating in a specific context. It involves complex networks with messy and elusive possible effects. Thus, it is not appropriate to apply deductive research hypotheses with 'one step follows the other in a clear, logical sequence' here (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 11). For this research, non-linear, implicit, and sometimes 'messy' methodological considerations (Law, 2004) are more suitable for exploring the non-fixed meanings of CS. This addresses the discursive, complex nature of the field, and is appropriate due to the limitation of extant research. This approach is rooted in questioning what should be counted as 'data', and suits my doubts about finding 'the definite truth'. In order to clarify how I conducted this research and why, the *Research Philosophy* will be discussed prior to *Research Methods*: from epistemology, ontology to methodology. Following a review of the *Pilot Study* that influenced this research, the *Research Process* of this study will be described, including the *Ethical Considerations* throughout the research. Then, the *Analysis and Interpretation* will be explained.

Research Philosophy

The 'Potential of the Situation'

Before discussing the role of this section, the relationship between theory and practice needs be considered. It has been suggested that the research process should not be regarded as either 'deductive' nor 'inductive' (Bryman & Bell, 2011), as neither theory nor practice can provide a solid basis, but perhaps as incorporating and coupling one with another (Jullien, 2004). 'The world is not an object of speculation, and it is not a matter of knowledge on the one hand and action on the other' (Jullien, 2004, p. 15). This also applies to other seemingly contradictory terms and 'paradigms' (Kuhn, 1970) that will be discussed in the following sections; the differences and comparisons will be presented and developed, rather than declaring clean-cut distinctions.

For instance, the 'West' and the 'East' are presented as two opposite ways of thinking, and constructed to compensate for each other. They are not based on a specific geographic divide, but refer to different philosophical perspectives informed by classical traditions (Dar, 2014). For example, similar to the Chinese cultural treatise of Lao-Tzu, the ancient Greek pre-Socratic thinker Heraclitus recognised the spontaneous and ever-changing world order, and also advocated the search for the invisible and inarticulate (Chia & Holt, 2009). However, not all Eastern philosophies can be classified in this way. For example, arguably Confucius tended to emphasise the importance of idealised social ordering and fixed social structures.

Similarly, some Eastern thinking can be explained and interpreted with Western philosophies, for example the '*yin*' and '*yang*' elements from Chinese ancient thinking. One of the most important characteristics about *yin* and *yang* is its continually evolving nature. Following the discussion of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in the previous chapter, *yang* can be the character to describe when an actor enables the network and emerges among others to become an actor. However, Eastern thinking can also improve our contemporary understandings. As *yang* in one network can be *yin* in another, it will involve translation processes between actors and networks, which can be seen as the key process in ANT. Therefore, the 'West' and the 'East' should not be seen as distinct oppositions, but as various sources for inspirations.

Additionally, the notions of the '*potential*' and '*situation*' can help us to understand the methodological choices in the research. They are from an ancient Chinese military strategy treatise, '*The Art of War*', and interpreted as 'the potential of a situation' by Francois Jullien (2004). The notion of 'situation' (Xing 形) describes the process when things are developing and taking shape; while 'potential' (Shi 势) is 'implied by the situation and can be made to play in one's favour' (Jullien, 2004, p. 17). Interestingly the Chinese ideogram of Shi (势) comprises two other ideograms implying the meanings of 'holding', and 'power'. Chinese ideograms are considered to have multidimensional, ambiguous qualities, for representing complex ideas and offering dynamic interpretations for contemporary thinking (McElhatton & Jackson, 2012). Through the implications of the ideograms of the 'potential of the situation', it

can be interpreted as an evolving process when an actor mobilises and associates with other actors or networks, in many forms; then, an actant becomes an actor (Greimas & Courtes, 1982), a macro actor is constructed (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005), and translation happens (Callon, 1986).

This idea of the 'potential of the situation' can be applied to methodological considerations. Rather than constructing an ideal form that we project on to things, or imposing our plan upon the research, it could be helpful to consider the potentials inherited and evolved from the changing situations in the messy research process (Jullien, 2004; Law, 2004). 'Rather than depending on our tools, we should rely on the way that a process unfolds; rather than thinking of drawing up plans, we should learn to make the most of what is implied by the situation and whatever promise is held out by its evolutions' (Jullien, 2004, pp. 16-17). It can also be used to describe the research philosophies, as they are not based on solid and clear distinctions of every paradigm, but are about translating and shifting the methodological assumptions according to the research purpose. Thus the 'competing paradigms' such as deductive and inductive approaches, positivism and interpretivism, objectivism and constructionism, quantitative and qualitative research strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2011), are not considered as isolated opposite camps in this research, but differentiated through continuing negotiation and translation.

Therefore, this chapter is not about declaring methodological choices as if ordering from a menu, it attempts to explore the research potentials and strategies that have been informed and evolved throughout the research process. Rather than claiming the certain reasons that these methods are chosen, this chapter describes the evolving situations and unfolding potentials in accordance with methodological implications. The arguments are not definite, but can be justified by the contextual situations.

Understanding is Interpreting

In order to clarify the way of choosing the methodological strategies, this section begins by introducing the epistemological and ontological considerations undertaken in this research. These philosophical stances are not only the key to questions, i.e. how the research should and can be conducted, but also provide good foundations to help with understanding this research.

Firstly, in order to answer questions such as: what is, or what can be considered as scientific knowledge, what we mean by the notion of 'truth', and how it can be studied (Duberley, Johnson, & Cassell, 2012), epistemological concerns need to be considered. This is so when questioning if the social world can and should be studied according to the same positivist principles and procedures as the natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Instead of insisting science must be conducted in a value-free, objective way, we may consider the observation of the world is inevitably influenced by our perceptions, and the notions of truth and objectivity are merely the outcomes of discursive practices (Duberley et al., 2012). Also, it is argued that human action is differentiated from the movement of physical objects because the former is 'inherently meaningful', therefore it requires to be interpreted in particular ways (Schwandt, 2000).

Contrasted with positivism, interpretivism is suggested as an epistemological choice that respects the differences between people and the objects of natural sciences, and accommodates the subjective meaning of social action, which is also known as the 'method of understanding' (Weber, 2009, p. 57). For example, in the classic Hawthorne Studies, the failure of the investigation to answer the original research questions stimulated the researchers to question their approach and to adopt a more interpretative epistemological position (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Many subjects and notions, such as leadership, could be comprehended through interpretive understandings due to their complex and constructed nature (Conger, 1998; Grint, 2000).

Although different approaches have evolved from interpretivism, hermeneutics is suggested as the philosophic stream focusing on the iteration of interpretation, where pre-understanding informs understanding, and vice versa, leading to a greater understanding (Duberley et al., 2012). The main characteristic of

hermeneutics is that the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole, and the whole can only be understood on the basis of detailed parts (Gadamer, 1975; McAuley, 2004). This is drawn from objectivist hermeneutics, also known as the original hermeneutic circle between the parts and the whole, as, 'you start at one point and then delve further and further into the matter by alternating between part and whole, which brings a progressively deeper understanding of both' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 92). Furthermore, the notions of 'part' and 'whole' are extended as hermeneutics develops. From its Renaissance roots, hermeneutics has gradually developed, suggesting that a text should be located in its context to understand it; the context should naturally connect to the author or authors; then the authors need to be considered in their social context, or broadly the whole historical background (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; McAuley, 2004).

However, the traditional objectivist view of hermeneutics has been challenged as it is based on the polarity between a subject and an object (Gadamer, 1970; Heidegger, 1959; Sköldberg, 1998). It is criticised for being influenced by the 'dichotomy between an empathising subject and an object-person' (Sköldberg, 1998, p. 78). Instead of focusing on the subjective thinking and objective reality, 'alethic hermeneutics' is suggested as it dissolves the polarity between subject and object into a more primordial circle between understanding and preunderstanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Furthermore, hermeneutics is concerned with 'the revelation of something hidden' (Heidegger, 1959, p. 102), or forms the underlying pattern of metaphor or narrative, in which language is considered as the medium of understanding, and the centre for hermeneutic preunderstanding (Gadamer, 1975).

According to Gadamer (1963), hermeneutics is an 'entirely different notion of knowledge and truth' (p. 113), which can be revealed and realised through understanding (Bernstein, 1982). 'It is not the name for a discipline, nor for a method of achieving the sorts of results which epistemology failed to achieve. Hermeneutics is an expression of the hope that the cultural space left by the demise of epistemology will not be filled – that our culture should become one in which the demand for constraint and confrontation is no longer felt' (Rorty, 1979, p. 315). This is described as a hermeneutics even without the claim to knowledge and truth (Bernstein, 1982).

Nevertheless, understanding should not be considered as a procedure that rules can govern or be followed – 'Understanding is interpretation' (Schwandt, 2000, p. 194). 'Understanding is not an isolated activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate' (Gadamer, 1970, p. 87). 'Indeed, human life is a matter of the continuity of one's self-understanding, but this continuity consists in constantly putting oneself into question and a constant being-other. Just for this reason, one can never achieve self-consciousness in the sense of a full self-identification' (Gadamer, 1989, p. 119). Therefore the 'complete' or 'correct' interpretation is merely a fantasy and it will not be sought after in this thesis; instead, the forever interpreting and understanding processes will be explored through the research.

Following Heidegger's (1971) recognition of the priority of language, the arguments between Gadamer and Derrida, also more importantly their dialogues, developed towards two different directions, later labelled as 'hermeneutics' and 'deconstruction'. Also, it is suggested that both streams need to be understood together through their debates and encounters (Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989). According to Michelfelder and Palmer's (1989) examination of the dialogues, Gadamer emphasises the unity of and in meaning, toward a strengthening of tradition and authority of texts; while in the other stream led by Derrida questions the concept of meaning itself and looks at 'how a text's explicit formulations undermined its implicit aspects', which brings out 'what the text excludes by showing what it includes' (Silverman, 1989, p. 4). Although both Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction challenge the metaphysics of modernity, and criticise the view that language is at our disposal, as a common ground they offer different views of language (Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989).

Although opposite directions are claimed, neither Gadamer nor Derrida could speak for hermeneutics or deconstruction. It is not only because there are other branches in both fields, for example there are objectivist hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics with different philosophical implications; but it is more about the non-fixed meanings of these categorisations as well. Therefore it might be more beneficial not to consider them as two exclusive boxes, but

maybe as two competing but complementary arguments evolving within each other, according to the situations. For the purposes of this research, although the discussion of translation later is inspired by Derrida, the approach taken in terms of understanding and interpreting meanings is mainly restorative and hermeneutic, rather than deconstructive.

Constructed Realities

In order to clarify the subjective and constructed meanings and understandings, specific ontological assumptions toward realities are adopted in this research. Ontological philosophies are concerned with the essence of phenomena and the nature of existence; often asking if the phenomenon actually exists independently of our knowing, or if what we see and what we take to be real is the outcome of these knowing and perceiving (Duberley et al., 2012). Instead of asserting that social phenomena and their meanings exist independent of actors, constructionism, as an ontological position is taken in this research, which implies that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but they are also in constant states of revision (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The foundations of 'reality' and 'knowledge' in everyday life are questioned by Berger and Luckmann (1966), who influentially clarified that reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge should be gained via the analysis of the constructing processes. As they suggested, 'the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality' (p. 3), while 'everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men, and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 19). Thus there are multiple realities constructed by different people, even in the same context. Nevertheless, the reality of everyday life is perceived as an ordered reality, but objectified as well, which is independent of our own volition such that we cannot wish them away (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Organisations are inherently constructed by human and non human actors and perceived as various realities by people. Therefore, it is meaningful to attempt to approach the realities constructed by others who see their worlds differently from the way we construct ours (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1993), for example

exploring the meanings of corporate culture via ethnographic study (Watson, 1994).

Compared to constructivism which emphasises construction as an individual cognitive and mental process influenced by social relationships (Cunliffe, 2008; Spender, 2008), social constructionists focus on 'how meaning and a practical sense of a situation are created between people in their taken-for-granted ways of talking, and in responsive dialogue' (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 201). Researchers see themselves as part of the constructing process while embracing reflexive approaches (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Gergen, 1999). Additionally, constructionism is urged to examine the 'processes external to individuals, such as language' (Spender, 2008, p. 56), because language, as a system of vocal signs, considered as the most important sign system of human society, is continually constructed from the formation and application in various situations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Additionally, the relationship between social reality and language was interestingly examined by John Searle, in *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). Searle argues that many things in our everyday life such as money, governments, and marriage are socially constructed institutions, and claims that 'language is essentially constitutive of institutional reality' (1995, p. 59). Therefore the thoughts or notions that are language dependent should not be taken for granted as they are highly contextual and culturally sensitive. As stated, 'language, through its intersubjective transferring of meaning, is an important means for collective sedimentation' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 27).

From an ANT perspective, Bruno Latour with his investigations of scientific knowledge, is considered as a second wave of social constructionism (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), claiming that non-human micro actors such as technical artefacts can also play important roles in the constructing process (Latour, 2005). The existence of absolute, objective truths is questioned through the study by Latour and Woolgar, which examines how knowledge is socially constructed in a laboratory (Latour & Woolgar, 1979). Instead of the objective, singular 'reality', the idea of the possible, networked 'reality effects' has been recognised (Latour, 1993b). Specifically, Latour problematises the conventional

interpretations and conceptions of 'social' and 'construct' by empowering the non-human actants and emphasising the constructing process (Latour, 1986; Latour & Woolgar, 1979).

Therefore notions such as CSR and CS, which have been taken for granted in most extant literature as shown in the previous chapter, should be examined via the constructing and interpreting processes, in a specific context.

Qualitative Inquiry

The differentiation between quantitative and qualitative research is considered as a common approach of classifying different methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative inquiry is considered as a more comprehensible approach, for understanding complex and dynamic issues in social science - when the identification of certain cause and effect relations cannot offer meaningful explanations. Qualitative inquiry gradually rose in the 1970s, further developed along the streams of criticising statistical hypothesis testing, experimentation, and advocating interpretivist fieldwork methods (Schwandt, 2000). However, the categorisation of quantitative and qualitative research methods based on the use of measurement has been criticised as an ambiguous, and even as a false distinction (Layder, 1993). Additionally, the dividing-line of quantitative and qualitative is not definite and fixed. For example there are cases of qualitative positivism, such as historiography (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). It is realised the differentiation has been oriented from the contrasting epistemological and ontological foundations, which suggests quantitative studies usually take a deductive, objective, and positivist approach, while qualitative research tends to have inductive, interpretive, and constructing perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Besides the consideration of the research inquiry, other factors can also influence the choice of methods in the process of research, such as personal values, political, historical, ethical, and practical considerations (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007). It is suggested that social research design should not be always considered as a lineal and rational process of selecting the most effective tool to address a particular question, but rather a highly complex and continually

evolving process (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007; Law, 2004). 'Social inquiry is a distinctive praxis, a kind of activity that in the doing transforms the very theory and aims that guide it', therefore 'acting and thinking, practice and theory, are linked in a continuous process of critical reflection and transformation' (Schwandt, 2000, pp. 190-191).

Furthermore, the various philosophical camps and arguments can be seen as representations of the development in the field, or they may be seen as 'philosophical labels' with tricky characters that can kill or cure, so the openness and indeterminacy of choosing among rival theories or paradigms should be emphasised (Bernstein, 1982). Although categorising may or may not be the start of theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), 'there is no neutral algorithm for theory-choice, no systematic decision procedure which, properly applied, must lead each individual in the group to the same decision' (Kuhn, 1970, p. 200). The choice of methods can originate from personal values of the researcher, more or less justified by the clarification of philosophical stances; but they may just tend to be the representation of the research network that is continually negotiated and shaped during the process.

According to Heidegger's notion of 'Being-in-the-world', 'human beings are part of the world, not separate from it; and the world is fundamentally a network of meanings and significances in which we live our lives' (Sköldberg, 1998, p. 78). As discussed in reference to Julien's account of the 'potential of the situation', categorising and labelling are constructions, which change along with appreciation of both the potentials and situations. So there is no intention to discard philosophical classifications; these philosophical areas are introduced here as the inspirational traditions for methodological choices, rather than justifying the fixity of the distinctions.

Reflexive Approach

Since the 1970s a reflexive trend has emerged in the field of organisation studies and challenges the adequacy of positivist theorising of organisations (Weiskopf & Willmott, 1996; Willmott, 1995). Reflexivity or reflection is concerned with the complex relationship between processes of knowledge

production and the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer; it can be defined as the 'interpretation of interpretation', and the launching of a critical self-exploration of one's own interpretations of empirical material (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), reflective research has two basic characteristics: careful interpretation, which depends on the awareness of theoretical assumptions, the importance of language and pre-understanding; and reflection, which turns attention towards the researcher, the relevant research community, society, traditions, also the problematic nature of language and narrative in the research context.

However, it is indeed difficult for researchers to realise and clarify the taken-for granted assumptions and blind spots in their own social culture, research community and language (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Critics suggest that some contemporary organisational research and theorising is constrained by the ontological commitments of being-realism, which tends to treat common-sense notions such as organisation, environment, structures, strategies, as theoretically legitimate objects of analysis, or compares them as if the ontological status of their objects are unproblematic (Chia, 1996b; Weiskopf & Willmott, 1996; Zimmerman & Pollner, 1971). Chia (1996a, 1996b) argue that organisation theories are academic products, or the effects of primary organising processes, which have not been adequately acknowledged nor have their consequences been explored.

Additionally, it is clarified that people cannot know language 'according to the traditional concept of knowledge defined in terms of cognition as representation' as language is not 'wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak' (Heidegger, 1971, p. 134). As 'language is not a "medium" or "conduit" for communicating our thoughts and experiences - Instead, the grammatical structures of language organise our consciousness and thought processes, making it then possible for us to think about our experiences retrospectively in a discrete, differentiated, linear and sequential manner' (Chia, 1996b, p. 39). 'Social entities, events and things do not first pre-exist and then suffer descriptive distortion through language. Instead, language actively configures such entities and events in the very act of representing. In our use of language we do not just 'write about' our objects/subjects of analysis,

66

but bring these objects into existence through representational acts of writing.' (Chia, 1996b, p. 37)

Empirical research approached with reflexivity 'starts from a sceptical approach to what appear at a superficial glance as unproblematic replicas of the way reality functions, while at the same time maintaining the belief that the study of suitable excerpts from this reality can provide an important basis for a generation of knowledge that opens up rather than closes, and furnishes opportunities for understanding rather than establishes truths' (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 9). Therefore, a reflexive perspective has been adopted from the beginning of this research, carried out with practical implications through the fieldwork, and represented from writing and translating the cultural implications.

Encountering the Impossible but Necessary Translation

'Translation is a process before it is a result' (Callon, 1986, p. 224).

As this research is conducted in a non-English speaking context with data in Chinese (Mandarin) and Japanese, various translations have been involved in the research process. It has gradually become apparent that translation is not just a data processing technique involved in cross-cultural research, but should be considered from critical and reflexive perspectives (Jepson, 2009; Xian, 2008). Translation offers the 'potential' of leading to many different understandings and interpretations due to the 'situations'. Arguably this research journey can be considered as a translating process. Therefore the discussions on translation are needed, from linguistic to philosophic arguments, from categorisations to different epistemological points of view. Different claims regarding translation can be made, drawn from various angles.

According to Alan Murray (2008) in his translation of ancient Greek Hermes, hermeneutics has three meanings: to say, means to proclaim, or announce; to explain, adds the interpretation of meaning to the proclamation; and to translate, which 'gives meaning when the original language may not be one's own, but may also be appropriate if the style of language used is unfamiliar to the

audience' (p. 106). Gadamer considers language as the medium of understanding by taking translation as the example, 'the translator must translate the meaning to be understood into the context in which the other speaker lives… Thus every translation is at the same time an interpretation' (1975, p. 346). From this point of view, translation is seen as a process of interpretation, gaining a certain understanding on the basis of pre-understanding.

The act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning is called the 'hermeneutic motion', which process is described by George Steiner (1975/1998, p. 316): as translators, 'we lean towards the confronting text… we encircle and invade cognitively, we come home laden, thus again off-balance, having caused disequilibrium throughout the system by taking away from the other and by adding, though possibly with ambiguous consequence, to our own'. Through the circulation of translation, the struggles and tensions encountered between the two texts and settings, have become part of the interpreting process, gaining deeper and more extensive ramifications.

From a deconstructionist point of view, 'one should never pass over in silence the question of the tongue in which the question of the tongue is raised and into which a discourse on translation is translated' (Derrida, 1985, p. 219). The story of the 'Tower of Babel' implies the inevitable multiplicity of tongues as intended by God led to the failure of building the structure of the tower, that might have been able to reach heaven (Davis, 2001). Jacques Derrida (1985) translates the translations of the word 'Babel' itself and exhibits the incompletion, impossibility but necessity of translation. Additionally, the limits of theories of translation have been emphasised: 'all too often they treat the passing from one language to another and do not sufficiently consider the possibility for languages to be implicated more than two in a text' (Derrida, 1985, p. 223).

There are three levels of translation identified by Russian linguist Roman Jakobson (1959): intralingual translation or 'rewording' - translating into other signs of the same language; interlingual translation or 'translation proper'– translating into another language; and intersemiotic translation or 'transmutation' – translating into another nonverbal system of symbols. Jakobson points out in his work 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' (1959) that a lack of semantic

equivalences in the target language can prevent the transformation of conceptual information encoded in the source language with a rich context. Translation as a performance, as a violent action, can be deconstructive and constructive at the same time (Luo, 2007). Therefore, it is commonly recognised in translation studies that meaning can never be safely, or cleanly transferred from one linguistic system to another (Davis, 2001; Derrida, 1985; Derrida & Venuti, 2001; Eco, 2003).

Although only the 'translation proper' should technically be called translation, as it 'could be made both in the presence of the original text and in its absence' (Eco, 2003, p. 158), the wider implications of translation have been accepted and developed further. Also, when linguistic, cultural and methodological problems are encountered in qualitative data translation, researchers and translators should recognise the negotiator role, preserve and highlight cultural differences, rather than resembling the target culture by translation (Xian, 2008). Luo (2007) describes 'hard translation' as an approach to maintain and negotiate the original cultural implication in the processes of translating and reconstructing.

Umberto Eco considers translation as a negotiation process, 'by virtue of which, in order to get something, each party renounces something else, and at the end everybody feels satisfied since one cannot have everything' (2003, p. 6). A translator is seen as the negotiator between those parties, between the original text, and the destination text (Eco, 2003). For example poetry is sometimes considered 'untranslatable' because the construct of verbal equations reigns over poetic art; perhaps therefore 'Traduttore traditore' from Italian makes sense, as 'the translator is a betrayer'; but more importantly asking 'betrayer of what values' (Jakobson, 1959, p. 238). Poetry may be a good example, but the implication of untranslatability has gone beyond translating poetry.

Other narrative constructs that will be represented in this research, such as narratives, jokes, stories, names, or even drawings, involve all the three levels of translation. The translation process is not just about the linguistic aspect, but more of a balancing journey among meanings, culture, and political considerations. As Lawrence Venuti said after his examination of translation in cultural studies, 'we only ever speak one language, but it is never our own and

never simply one language… a language is imposed by the exigencies of a social situation that is structured hierarchically, whether that situation be cultural or political' (2003, pp. 238-239).

Following the discussion in previous sections associated with ANT, translation offers other philosophical implications beyond linguistic interpretation. Translation is also considered as a key ordering process constructing actors and networks, capturing the movement and transformation of both linguistic and material objects, with displacements, negotiations, and some adjustments (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996; Latour, 1986; Law, 1994). 'Translation is the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form… The repertoire of translation is not only designed to give a symmetrical and tolerant description of a complex process which constantly mixes together a variety of social and natural entities. It also permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they have mobilised' (Callon, 1986, p. 224).

Additionally, the impossible but necessary translation is explained further. 'Where a translation is necessary, the gap between the spirit of the original words and that of their reproduction must be accepted. It is a gap that can never be completely closed.' (Gadamer, 1975, p. 346) In terms of what can be often called 'relevant' or 'good' translation, it is described as 'a translation that does what one expects of it, in short, a version that performs its mission, honours its debt, and does its job or its duty while inscribing in the receiving language the most relevant equivalent for an original', which is however only 'the most possible' one (Derrida & Venuti, 2001, p. 177).

Therefore questioning of the popularity of CS should begin with the examination of its translating and negotiating processes. At the same time this research can be seen as a translation process in order to offer a plausible representation of the situation. From the linguistic view, translation can be considered as a culturally and politically sensitive methodological process; from the ANT perspective, translation offers the opportunity to embrace various lingual, material, and visual actors, and appreciates the process involving transformation and motion of constructing and negotiating; from the

philosophical aspects of translation, it travels through different worlds and permits the possibility to speak for the unspoken… In conclusion, it still depends on, and accounts for the 'potential of the situation'.

Research Methods

In order to explore the cultural meanings of CS evolved in a specific context, this research presents an ethnographic account, which utilises multiple methods, including participant and non-participant observation, interviewing, and visual method, namely participant produced drawing. As the main research methods involved in this thesis, my understandings of ethnographic and visual methods will be discussed below. Also, the pilot studies conducted before the field research will be introduced. Then, the choices of conducting and representing this study will be summarised.

Ethnography: Writing the Culture

Ethnography should not be simply considered as a method for data collection, but as another way to do research, and one which prompts an open attitude through the exploratory journey. It is referred to as 'a way of writing and analysing' (Watson, 2011), 'a style of research' (Brewer, 2000), 'a way of life' (Fetterman, 2009), or even 'Jazz' as a fundamentally creative, exploratory and interpretive process (Humphreys, Brown, & Hatch, 2003). As clarified by Tony Watson (2011, p. 202), 'ethnography is not a research method, but a way of writing about and analysing social life', in order to investigate 'the realities of how things work' in organisations.

Ethnography is variously defined: as 'the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally' (Brewer, 2000, p. 10). Or it can be defined from a culturally holistic perspective: 'a genre of social science writing which draws upon the writer's close observation of and

involvement with people in a particular social setting and relates the words spoken and the practices observed or experienced to the overall cultural framework within which they occurred' (Watson, 2012, p. 2). In general, ethnography is about telling a 'credible, rigorous, and authentic story' through the eyes of local people as they pursue their everyday lives (Fetterman, 2009).

Also, ethnography is differentiated from participant observation as 'writing' and is defined as 'a written account of the cultural life of a social group, organisation or community which may focus on a particular aspect of life in that setting' (Watson, 2008, p. 100). However, ethnography does 'not always mean exactly the same to all social scientists at all times or under all circumstances' (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001, p. 5). It is argued that ethnographic research is never attached to standard techniques, except some general characteristics such as the avoidance of technical jargon and high-wire abstraction, the preference of a slight literary air compared to other forms of social science writing, and the emphasise on empirical work (van Maanen, 2006).

The further exploration of ethnography can start from its etymology: the writing (-graphy) of culture (ethno-) (Huang, 2002), which captures the emergence of ethnography as writing reflexive tales of fieldwork (Marcus, 2007). Although 'culture' is seen as one of the broadest ethnographic notions involving certain social group's behaviours, customs, ideas, beliefs, and knowledge, ethnography is also considered to contribute to the enlightment and richness of cultural interpretation (Harris, 1968; O'Reilly, 2009; Strauss & Quinn, 1997). 'Organisational culture' (Pettigrew, 1979), has also been a very popular but broad term among academics and practitioners since the 1970s. It is argued that cultural representations can be observed through socially relevant rules and meanings that participants draw on to make sense of their world, rather than tested by rational and standardised research (Kunda & van Maanen, 1999). Thus ethnographers need to get close enough and sometimes participate in organisation members' lives, to see how their realities are constructed, how they look at others. Often the interactions among people in organisations are quite subtle, sometimes even through 'winks and blinks' (Fetterman, 2009).

The aim of ethnography is usually to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a specific field or setting, which involves close associations with the setting (Brewer, 2000). It originated from the tradition of social anthropology in the 20th century, and associates with certain philosophical paradigms, such as naturalism, humanistic, hermeneutic or interpretative approaches (Brewer, 2004). Since the well-known Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939) in the 1920s that established a tradition of ethnographic research focusing on informal social interaction in organisations, it has been applied in various organisational studies (Brewer, 2004). Ethnography has been developing over the years and evolving along different streams, for example at-home ethnography (Alvesson, 2009), auto-ethnography (Boje & Tyler, 2009), critical ethnography (Forester, 2003), visual ethnography (Pink, 2007), or even sensory ethnography (Pink, 2009). Visual method that is employed in this research will be introduced in next section.

Although there are a number of ways to conduct ethnographic research, writing ethnography is recognised as a big challenge. Writing is an interpreting and translating process, which reconciles the field research and the researcher, theories and research, the performativity from the heterogeneous networks. Therefore the way of writing decides the type of ethnography. According to the degree of manipulation of research materials, Humphreys and Watson (2009) categorise ethnographic forms into a four-fold ideal typography: the plain, the enhanced, the semi-fictionalised and the fictionalised. The way the ethnographic account is written for the thesis will be similarly with their description about the 'enhanced ethnography', which is 'an account of events occurring within the investigation of a single case which uses the presentational techniques of the novelist', for example 'use of dialogues, author as a character in the narrative, inclusion of emotional responses by author and subjects, attention to the perspectives and stories of subjects' (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 43).

Although ethnographers are often challenged by the issues of researcher bias, lack of control, and generalisability, it is claimed that ethnography can create unique contributions and trade-offs through these processes: providing a deep and nuanced understanding of organisations, offering multiple perspectives that could depict how participants view their world, and exploring daily social interaction, routines, rituals as processes (Fine, Morrill, & Surianarain, 2009).

Member check at the end of data collection and building triangulation from multiple sources are recognised as two common strategies for 'managing' researcher bias (Fine et al., 2009; Morrill, 1995). Triangulation is declared as a common technique when ethnography naturally involves the use of multiple methods of data collection (Brewer, 2004), which is considered inherent in qualitative research in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Flick, 2002). However, overreliance on these methods implies the assumption of the existence of 'the objective truth' that is out there and can be captured. Furthermore, it is suggested that 'triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation' (Flick, 2002, p. 227). Therefore, the combination of multiple methods, perspectives, and empirical materials should be considered as a strategy that adds rigor, depth, breadth and richness to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2002). This has been described as a 'crystallisation process', which should be the focus of qualitative inquiry rather than triangulation (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). In the crystallisation process, writers tell similar tales from different perspectives, as 'there is no one correct telling, each telling, like light hitting a crystal, reflects a different perspective on the incident' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6).

Additionally, in terms of generalisability, which is frequently argued as the aim of science, its meaning should be questioned further. Generalisability is originally defined by many social scientists as 'the ability of a finding to represent some social process or state in a larger population from which a random sample was drawn' (Fine et al., 2009, p. 613). Nevertheless, ethnography can approach generalisability from other perspectives. It is suggested rather than 'enumerative' generalisation, ethnography typically tends to have 'theoretical' generalisation, which involves 'suggesting new interpretations and concepts or re-examining earlier concepts or interpretations in new and innovative ways' (Orum, Feagin, & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 13). Also, ethnography contributes to the 'naturalistic' generalisability if it can resonate with reader's empirical experiences by offering plausible, persuasive, and sometimes surprising account (Fine et al., 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1978).

As Tony Watson (2000) says in the voice of Terry, a figure from one of his ethnographic fiction science stories, 'none of it actually happened, but it happens all the time' (p. 508). Therefore, the quality of an ethnographic account

should not be judged based on the standard criterion of truth or validity, but how plausible is the story, after witnessing so many ambiguities of relationship, careful negotiations and sophisticated exchanges in the field (Watson, 2000). Thus the ethnographic account in this research accords with these interpretive and reflexive philosophies in order to offer deeper understandings of the complex processes of constructing and translating CS.

Ways of Seeing: Visual Depiction

This methodology chapter can be considered as the discussion of the 'ways of seeing': from the ways of looking at the relationship between theory and practice, to the ways of observing the complexities in the field, until the ways of gazing for various interpretations. This section will introduce visual depiction, as a way of representing the various understandings and translations, and its theoretical and methodological implications.

The discussion, perhaps, should start with questioning 'What is visual' after all. The common distinction between visual and verbal representations, also known as 'Word and Image' is critically examined by Mitchell (1994), who claims they are deceptive labels. He (1994) argues that the interaction of pictures and texts is constitutive of heterogeneous representations, while there are no 'purely' visual or verbal arts but all mixed through various media. His book on 'Picture Theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation' (1994) is considered an example of the shift from the 'linguistic turn' (Rorty, 1979) to the 'pictorial turn' (Bell & Davison, 2013). Another example of the 'Word/Image' representations is the Chinese pictograms, in which character (word) is originally composed of symbolic images. Human expression can be seen via words, numbers and pictures as alternative 'but often complementary systems of meaning' (Stiles, 2004, p. 129). Therefore, the visual is perhaps an alternative expression and construction in the web of meanings.

In addition, it is suggested that visual depiction is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary societies, as our everyday lives are surrounded by different sorts of visual representations, such as photography, painting, film, video, sculpture, website, and digital graphics (Bell & Davison,

2013; Rose, 2007). However, none of them is the direct reflection of the world. 'They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways; they represent it' (Rose, 2012, p. 2). What is seen, what cannot be seen, and how it is seen are constructed in many ways.

Visual representation can communicate meanings beyond the barrier of language. 'Seeing comes before words', observes John Berger, as children look and recognise before they learn to speak and write (Berger, 1972, p. 7). It has been realised that visual methods can provide the opportunity to explore and help to clarify some hidden meanings and deeper understandings (Sievers, 2008). The ways in which people see things are affected by many factors, by 'what we know or what we believe' (Berger, 1972, p. 8).

Additionally, visual depiction can involve various kinds of displacements, or translations (Latour, 1988). A projective technique called 'anamorphosis', which means giving a 'distorted imaged of a scene when seen from the usual viewpoint, but so executed that if seen from a particular angle, or reflected in a curved mirror, the distortion disappears, and the image in the picture appears normal' (Latour, 1988, p. 16). For example in *The Ambassadors* painted by Hans Holbein (1533), often regarded as the triumph of representation (Berger, 1972), a strange elongated shape at the bottom could reveal a skull image if looked at from a certain angle. Thus with the right angle of view and the right polished surface, another familiar order will emerge from the utmost disorder, although the problem becomes which is the normal plane of projection? (Latour, 1988).

It is also argued that visual depictions are constitutive of knowledge production (Berger, 1972; Fyfe & Law, 1988). 'A depiction is never just an illustration. It is the material representation, the apparently stabilised product of a process of work. And it is the site for the construction and depiction of social difference. To understand a visualisation is thus to inquire into its provenance and into the social work that it does' (Fyfe & Law, 1988). 'Although every image embodies a way of seeing, our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing' (Berger, 1972, p. 10). In Gordon Fyfe and John Law's Introduction 'On the invisibility of the visual' (1988), they critically unfold a sense of the 'sociology of visual depiction' as an artificial creation, which groups

heterogeneous processes and social contexts together. They claim that the visual, in its specificity, should be integrated into other sociologies. Thus, both the processes that lead to the creation of visual depictions, and the way in which they are used, have to be studied in specificity (Fyfe & Law, 1988).

Despite the provenance of several decades in sociology and anthropology, academics and practitioners have witnessed the rise of visual depictions of organisational life (Bell, 2012; inVisio, 2014; Shortt & Warren, 2012; Vince & Warren, 2012; Warren, 2002, 2008); visual depiction has become increasingly incorporated into ethnographic work in providing rich and interpretive cultural representations, while an ethnographic approach is appreciated in visual studies. The combination offers the opportunity to appreciate the rich data with expressive and imaginative qualities. 'The more imaginative the work, the more profoundly it allows us to share the experience of the visible' (Berger, 1972, p. 10). Ethnography and visual studies can contribute to one another, as visual theories can inform the understanding of the potential cultural representation, and an ethnographic approach can support the production and interpretation of visual materials (Pink, 2007).

For instance, participatory visual methods are discussed by Vince and Warren (2012) as an approached explicitly involves research respondents in the co-creation of drawing or photography, often in ethnographic fieldwork. As a classic example of using drawings in management and organisation studies, Shoshana Zuboff asked clerical workers to draw how they felt about their jobs before and after the installation of a new IT system (1988). Drawing has been used by researchers interested in exploring individuals' imagined idea of the organisation they work in and the organising dynamics (Hutton, Bazalgette, & Reed, 1997), to reveal notions such as emotion and identity in organisations (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Ward & Shortt, 2012). Thus drawing can present the participants' experience and allow them to express how they feel towards the realities they live in. Additionally, drawing triangulates well with other qualitative methods and may engage with researcher bias (Kearney & Hyle, 2004; Vince & Warren, 2012). Even when the drawings are not considered from the perspective of psychoanalysis (Rose, 2007), the value of this method is claimed to be able to reveal collective experience and knowledge about a specific work context (Vince & Warren, 2012). For example the power relations that shape the

interpretations and experience of members in an organisation (Sievers, 2008).

Ethics and the analysis of visual data have generally been seen as the key challenges in participatory visual research (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Vince & Warren, 2012). However, more extensive concerns of visual methods in academic research have been identified, such as subjectivity in interpretation, variations in drawing ability (Stiles, 2004), technical publishing difficulties in conventional journals and books (Banks, 2007), and such ethical issues as the 'richness of data also risks revealing who the drawer is' (Stiles, 2004, p. 138). One of the major doubts about visual methods relates to notions such as objectivity and scientific rigour that have been often used to evaluate research quality (Bell & Davison, 2013; Holliday, 2001). Nevertheless, the approach depends on the perspectives toward objectivity and the role of research. The interpretation, analysis and categorisation of the images are, arbitrary, and like all methods, constructed in relation to particular methodological and theoretical stances (Pink, 2007). Thus, ethnographers often prefer to seek and embrace the potential of multiple understandings, rather than notions of 'pure science' (Holliday, 2001).

In addition, the challenges of visual methods can provide more perspectives for interpretation. It is suggested that visual images have their own biographies: when they move from one context to another, although their content remains the same, they are viewed differently or transformed in the new context (Morphy & Banks, 1997; Pink, 2007). Therefore the analysis is not a simple matter of interpreting the visual materials, but also involves examining how different are the interpretations constructed by the authors and viewers at different stages (Pink, 2007). For instance, the interpretations of visual images can be examined from three sites: the site of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site where it is seen by audiences in various contexts (Rose, 2007). Additionally, the analysis of images produced for research purposes should be differentiated with those that are created for other purposes, or found already in existence (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001).

All in all, analysing visual materials cannot entirely follow certain 'recipes', for example Content Analysis and Social Semiotic Analysis. It has been noted that people can experience similar realities in different ways, constructing their

realities and constituting meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1969), possibly in the forms of verbal and visual representations (Stiles, 2004). The important role of experts in analysing the visual constructions is emphasised by some semiotic and visual sociologists (Chaplin, 1994; Emmison & Smith, 2000), whereas how the images created and interpreted by ordinary people in a specific context is focused on by other researchers in order to understand participants' realties and perceptions (Stiles, 2004). For some situations such as cultural and ethnographic research, a more intuitive and open perspective should be considered instead of following step-by-step procedures (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). Also it is important to recognise that ethnographers are themselves subjective readers of ethnographic images (Pink, 2007). Thus, a reflexive approach to analysing and interpreting visual research materials should be taken in this study.

From a social semiotic approach, visual communications involve the description of semiotic resources, 'what can be said and done with images and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted' (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 134). However, interpretation varies. It can proceed with intertextual connections by creating new interpretations, or following certain kinds of 'point of view' towards visual resources shared in contexts, for example the various angles things are depicted (or viewed) from might have different implications (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Thus, the resource just creates a 'meaning potential', not exact meanings, and the specific contexts are always crucial in the interpreting process. But this approach provides an opportunity to allow for further interpretations and rich understandings of organisational processes, when visual depiction is employed in conjunction with other ethnographic data collection methods (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Therefore, the dynamic relationship between producer, image, text and audience should be explored further from a reflexive approach (Bell & Davison, 2013). The importance of this is emphasised when looking at visual images in ethnography, which entails the awareness and sensitivity to the ways in which the researcher has had an impact on what an image reveals (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Pink, 2007). 'It is to note its principles of exclusion and inclusion, to detect the roles that it makes available, to understand the way in which they are distributed, and to decode the hierarchies and differences that it naturalises.

Also, the reflexive approach is used to analyse the ways in which authorship is constructed or concealed and the sense of audience is realised' (Fyfe & Law, 1988, p. 1).

In summary, visual studies should be considered together with other interpretive sociological approaches (Fyfe & Law, 1988). Visual materials themselves, such as drawings and pictures, might not be able to offer 'definite' arguments due to their abstract and interpretative nature. However, how these visual materials are interpreted by the producer, the viewers at various situations etc, all together construct the web of meanings. Also in ethnographic fieldwork, the employment of visual materials can offer researchers more opportunities to explore deeper thoughts of the participants' realities. For example, the power relationships involved in the research and writing processes (Holliday, 2001).

I have concluded, therefore, that an ethnographic approach involving visual methods can help to explore the constructed meanings of CS in a specific setting.

Summary of Methods Choices

As discussed earlier, the choice of appropriate methods depends on the research purpose, and the potential of the situation gradually evolves and unfolds throughout the research process. In order to explore the non-fixed and culturally-sensitive meanings of CS in a specific setting, an ethnographic approach is employed in this research with close associations with the setting (Brewer, 2000). Considering the limited time and resource for conducting ethnographic research for this doctoral study, it was feasible to conduct the research in a single case, in one field organisation, where the researcher can closely observe the 'winks and blinks', and participate in participants' organisational lives (Fetterman, 2009).

Everyday life is presented as realities interpreted by the participants, and subjectively meaningful to them as their organisational worlds (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In order to explore, understand and represent the multiple realities constructed by those people, the representation and interpretation part

of this thesis is composed of the accounts of five main characters from my fieldwork - including, how they talked about the organisation, expressed their emotions and understandings through the drawings, and how I interpreted and connected these narratives together through my observations in the field. Through the cultural representations of how they draw and construct the meanings to make sense of their world, a narrative way of representing this account is chosen (Kunda & van Maanen, 1999).

Thus, the multiple realities of those people's everyday lives in OMG are represented and interpreted through the ethnographic account in the Representation and Interpretation Chapter. It does not intend to provide 'correct' understandings, but the analysis and meanings are constructed through the representations of the participants' voices, and I am part of the construction process.

Additionally, in order to understand the constructed meanings and realities of the participants, this ethnographic account is written as an 'enhanced ethnography' with events occurring within the investigation of a single case, which includes stories, dialogues, characters, emotional responses by me and the participants in the narrative (Humphreys & Watson, 2009; Ybema et al., 2009). As represented in the interpretation part of the thesis, the episodes from field notes are my descriptions about the events that I heard, saw, or experienced. They are written in a detailed and reflexive way, such as stories and reflections from others and myself, in order to offer 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) and provide deep and nuanced understandings.

Also, rather than claiming to tell the 'truth', the combination of observational, qualitative interviewing, and visual methods in this study should be considered as incorporating more 'potentials' to the 'situations', as adding rigor, depth, and richness to the ethnographic inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2002).

In the next section, the research process of this study will be described, including the analysis and interpretation processes.

Research Process

This section will introduce the process of how this research was conducted. There are many unexpected situations and surprises in the field. Every situation needs to be handled with care and sensitivity. With the considerations of being the 'researcher' and the 'intern' at the same time, I concede that ethnographic research comes with quite a lot of stress and anxiety (Fetterman, 2009; Law, 1994). Who I am, where I will be, and how it can work, depend on many influences, most of which certainly cannot be controlled by the researcher. Following the discussion on the philosophy of the 'potential of the situation' in the beginning of this chapter, it might be more beneficial for researchers to adopt an 'opportunistic' approach in the field while continually negotiating between what is theoretically desirable on the one hand, and what is practically possible on the other (Buchanan, Boddy, & McCalman, 1988). It does not mean detailed plans and design from the beginning is not important, but reminding researchers to keep an open mind about various possibilities and be ready for the potentials that might be encountered in the field.

Pilot Study

This is a reflective section to introduce the pilot research that significantly influenced the choice of methods and the approach for the main research. The importance of conducting a pilot study has been emphasised by scholars, as it cannot only test interview questions, but it also has a role in ensuring that the research methods as a whole function well (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Buchanan & Bryman, 2009). Although most of the existing arguments on pilot studies are about questionnaires and interviews, I will argue that a pilot study in ethnographic research should be considered an integral part of fieldwork methodology.

During the pilot study, I could not see how much it could benefit and influence the main fieldwork. The whole is not a step-by-step route that can be foreseen clearly. From pilot studies to the field research is a journey filled with twists of uncertainty, and more often it relies on some instincts about how things should and can be done in practical situations. It can be described as a 'mindset'. For

me, I think the mindset of fieldwork started on a summery afternoon, when I was walking towards the gate of the ABC Company in Exeter. The experience of the pilot study was not just a 'test-drive' of my research techniques, but also provided me a set of attitudes and orientation towards ethnographic research and what it demands. It helped me choose the appropriate methods and provided valuable learning 'experiments' before the fieldwork.

The pilot study started in the first year of my doctoral programme, at an early stage of the research. I was curious to see if the methods could work together before using them for the formal field research, as approaching the ethnographic environment is always delicate and sensitive; and I was also curious to discover how I would feel and act as a field researcher.

Since everyone has a perception regarding CS from their own perspective, the interpretations from them can be seen as the representations of the meanings constructed in their realities. But the question is how I can enable them to express the discursive meanings they might consider relevant. Therefore the visual method, namely participant produced drawing practice, was carried out in the pilot study. Then, when I listened to the interview recordings while the participants were drawing, I realised the associated meanings of CS varied according to the assumptions in their minds, the values they admired. It also depended on the situations in which the interview was conducted. More often I needed to probe further in order to understand what they drew and what they wanted to draw by asking what and why. At this stage, I gradually realised the limitations of interviewing and the dynamics of interpretation (Alvesson, 2011). It was not only from what they did not tell me, but how they would speak in front me, the person in their eyes. It was more than how I should understand and interpret what they said and what they left out, when things would only make sense within a specific context. Then I started to be more inclined to use ethnographic methods, though at that moment I had little experience in terms of observational and shadowing techniques. Therefore I planned to try shadowing and observation methods in professional organisations.

In the following paragraphs a series of observation practices I did in various situations will be described. Then it will introduce the pilot visual method interviews that were conducted with the One Planet MBA students in Exeter

along with some interviews conducted in Mandarin with Chinese speakers to see if the translations of questions could be accomplished appropriately.

Some general observation practices were designed and set up with the guidance of one of my doctoral supervisors in May, 2011. It includes a series of observation practices in various situations at different times, for example classroom, office, café, and pubs. By observing the surroundings and sometimes with a practice partner, observation notes were exchanged and discussed with each other afterwards. Topics were discussed such as: the factors influencing the observation; how to watch closely without attracting people's attention; how differently we observed even being in the same situation at the same time; what the line might be between assumption and judgement; what and how we took notes, even what language we used to take notes. I found that if I wrote in English, I might pause shortly to think of the word I would use. However, if I tried to take notes in Chinese, as my native language, I could not help thinking in Chinese, which was arguably in a different logic with perspectives and values that might not be the same. Thus, observation and note-taking should be considered as culturally sensitive practices.

Subsequently, I undertook a week's non-participant observation in Company ABC based in Exeter, composed of one introductory meeting, two full days of shadowing, and one day of meeting observation. During the time, three interviews were conducted in the company addressing the questions I encountered through the observation. Through this practice, I experienced the access negotiation, getting to know the participants, interacting and maintaining relations in the field, and looking for the appropriate time for interviewing. I found out meetings and interviews can yield much intensively rich information, but informal interactions among people are more subtle and hard to capture. With the combination of ethnographic observation and interviewing, it is easier to understand the participants rather than simply relying on interviews. More information could be gathered if the relationship between the participants and the researcher is positive, which is crucial in some situations.

Considering the novelty and practicality, drawing exercises and interviews were conducted in Exeter Business School with two One Planet MBA students, and two interviews were conducted with Chinese students, one from mainland China,

the other from Hong Kong. I chose them as they had some basic understandings of the research topic. They were more like the participants of this research – the CSR practitioners of MNCs in China, who might have an international background. Before the interview, consent forms (Appendix D & Appendix E) were signed in two hard copies and the recording was saved according to the University's ethical requirements. I listened to the interview recordings, and did member checks after the interview, to see if the participants understood my questions.

The pilot study taught me that there are many 'ways of seeing' and the ethnographic experience of 'being there' perhaps is just one of them, not simply relying on interviewing. Sometimes I cannot help comparing my main fieldwork experience to the earlier pilot study in the UK. At the first glance, most people might consider them as two different worlds. Nevertheless, the differences and similarities between the pilot study and field research both improved my understandings of the methods.

Field Research

Considering the various aspects of my research inquiry, and possible access, a MNC in Shanghai, which I call 'OMG', was chosen as the field organisation for the research. I negotiated to work there as a Corporate Culture Intern. In organisation research, participant observation implies that 'the researcher assumes the role of a member of the organisation or, alternatively, an employee becomes a researcher' (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 13). I worked there for about three months as a full time intern. For most of the time I stayed in the head office for 9 hours a day, 5 days a week; while occasionally travelling with colleagues to other OMG subsidiaries in Shanghai, sometimes because of the work, sometimes specifically for my research purpose. Often on Friday evenings or during weekends, I was invited to some informal gatherings with other colleagues, such as having dinner and drinks. I even hosted a hotpot party for several close colleagues at the studio where I was staying.

My identity as a postgraduate researcher studying in the UK was well-known in the organisation, to those who participated in this research. It was an 'overt'

access in terms of informing the participants and getting their formal agreement (Silverman, 2010). They knew that I was using OMG as the anonymous case for my research, and they knew about my research topic. Sometimes we would discuss my project, and what kind of 'data' I wanted. During the first month I was invited to deliver a talk on 'Corporate Sustainable Development' for the department training, and a visual methods workshop for almost everyone in the head office. In addition, I was also identified as one of their colleagues, while I was working on the same projects with them every day. After a while, some close colleagues would see me as their friend as well. However, the personal information I was aware of will not be included in this research considering its relevance and sensitivity, which will be further explained in the ethical consideration section.

In terms of the linguistic and cultural aspects, OMG was founded in Japan and its Head Quarter is in Japan. Some of the employees at the head office were Japanese, the top management and technicians. The main languages used were Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin and Shanghai Dialect), occasionally English. Chinese is my first language, I am fluent with English, and I can understand most of the Shanghai Dialect as I stayed there for five years, but I could not speak any Japanese. However, the language barrier and the 'strange' feeling toward Japanese corporate culture offered me a 'fresh perspective' to the field while I might still be able to understand their everyday lives as 'one of them'. I had worked in other Anglo-American MNCs in Shanghai before, so the general setting for me was familiar, but not too ordinary. Thus, from the personal embeddedness point of view (Bell, 1999), in the context of a Japanese MNC at Shanghai, I intended to maintain the research interdependency and sensitivity while understanding the participants' experiences with a certain familiarity.

Getting in, Getting on, and Getting out

This section introduces the research process that arguably contains three stages. There are two main points that need to be addressed. Firstly, the negotiating procedure is a translating process that involves discussions with various parties of different interests. Ethnographers gain entry to the field in

various ways. The researcher will have to negotiate and renegotiate skilfully: in some situations to offer something in return, in order to gain the access, develop and maintain a role in the field, and establish trust (Brewer, 2000). This depends on the negotiations between the organisational members and the researcher, also the negotiation between the idealised fieldwork and practical situations. It might be a good representation of the 'non-object' ideology (Jullien, 2012) that the world should not be considered as the object of our study. Instead of directly acting on the world and pretending it is what we thought, a non-direct and reflexive way of exploring and negotiating should be considered. In ethnographic research, change happens constantly, it seems to be more practical to act according to the changing situations.

Secondly, negotiating access should be realised as a continuing process that might have started before choosing the organisation, and lasts for some time, even after the researcher physically leaves the field. The research process is described as 'getting in, getting on, and getting out' phases (Buchanan et al., 1988). I consider the process of access negotiation is a continuing process that goes through these three phases. They should not be seen as three distinctive stages, but as the sequential guidance on the considerations and negotiations. As situations change constantly, the researcher needs to take care of, and maintain the relationships in the field. Also, the relationships with the 'gatekeepers' who have the power to grant access to the field appears to be crucial (Brewer, 2000).

Additionally, it depends on the nature of the research topic and the organisational setting. Finding the appropriate access has been quite difficult and challenging. For this case, the research topic is quite sensitive in terms of responsibilities of MNCs in China. Additionally, the access needed was more than interviewing participants, but working with them for a period of time, which was asking for deep access across the organisation. Therefore it led to greater responsibilities of the 'gatekeeper'. I started looking for possible choice from the end of the first year in the doctoral programme via a convenient sampling approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). I contacted a number of people who might help to find someone was working for multinational corporations in China, through emails and phone calls. Most of those 'key people' were working in CSR or PR departments. There were 15 organisations in total which appeared

to fit with my research inquiry and went into the negotiation stage. In the end OMG offered me the opportunity to have a face-to-face discussion, which was called 'interview' by the organisation. After ensuring the anonymity of the identity of the organisation and any participant, the manager of Corporate Cultural Department agreed to grant my research access on behalf of OMG China, while in return I worked for them as an intern for three months. Nevertheless, we also agreed this research is independent and only for academic purposes. The organisation will not influence the production of this research.

However, getting the consent form signed is just the beginning of the negotiation. The role of the researcher and the relationships in the field need to be maintained continually (Atkinson et al., 2001). Building the field relations is based on mutual trust and normally takes time. Further access to the field, interviews with the top managers and the production workers of OMG China were arranged by the 'gatekeeper'. She was the department manager, also my 'boss' in the field. The negotiation was mostly with her. The interview accesses depended on various factors, such as the availability of the person, their willingness to participate, and personal relations. The negotiation process lasted from the beginning till the end of my field work. In a working role in the field, in order to negotiate for more interview opportunities, sometimes compromises were inevitable, for example doing more work for my 'boss'. Also, thinking about the exit strategy while still in the field, or earlier, is part of the negotiation process (Brewer, 2000). In summary, the research process from getting in, until getting out needs to be considered as a continual process, constantly evolving, and is to be handled carefully.

Ethnographic Self

Qualitative or ethnographic research is always shaped by the researcher's own personal experiences, professional identity, political and moral principles (Bell, 1999; Coffey, 1999; Kamata, 1983). Every researcher has his or her 'baggage', where they come from will have influences on the production of the ethnography accounts and themselves. The interactions with the field setting and environment are represented and constructed by researcher's self experiences

and emotions. Also the production of the writing will be influenced by how the 'ethnographic self' is positioned within the scene (Coffey, 1999). Therefore recognising the role of the 'ethnographic self' and a continually reflective perspective is important. Hence, I chose to write this ethnographic account in the first person, which is based on what I have seen, what I experienced everyday as the 'ethnographic self' in the field (Coffey, 1999; Goffman, 1959; Kondo, 1990).

In this account, my professional identity as a 'student' appeared to be helpful in terms of gaining temporary, but very close access to the organisation as an intern. In addition, other personal characteristics such as being 'female' and relatively 'young' have impacts on my interpretation of what was going on, which also made my entry as an intern to the organisation seemingly legitimate, where most colleagues in the department were female and young. Additionally, my attitudes toward sustainability and responsibility made me more sensitive to related issues, such as recycling, the production environment, and the worker union. Also, my job role in terms of working on projects to promote and communicate the corporate philosophy across the organisation affected where I was, what I saw or heard, and my interpretations.

While the 'ethnographic self' has been influencing the construction of this ethnographic account, on the other hand, this fieldwork research has affected me as well, such as my understanding and emotion (Coffey, 1999). Therefore the fieldwork experience that often can be stressful and emotionally charged, will affect the interpretation of the self and production of the account (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). Whether or not we write about ourselves depends on other factors, but fieldwork should be recognised as personal and emotional identity work (Bell, 1999; Coffey, 1999; Lofland & Lofland, 2006).

Participant Produced Drawing and Interviewing

As discussed earlier, in order to explore the underlying meanings towards CS and stimulate discussions of how the participants felt in the organisational realities, visual method, namely 'participant produced drawing' has been adopted (Vince & Warren, 2012).

For the drawing practice, I put a box of opened 36-colour pastels in front of the participants, and handed them some blank, unlined A4 paper. Participants were asked to 'draw a picture, a symbol or a chart that could represent the meanings of Corporate Sustainability in their mind'. Afterwards they were asked to describe what they drew in as much detail as possible. After their descriptions, I probed by asking them to explain more in terms of symbolic meanings of the contents and colours.

However, there are some risks in using participant produced drawing methods, for example 'in terms of the fears and anxieties that are generated for both the researcher and the participants' (Vince & Warren, 2012, p. 281). As I did not know for sure when the interview would be, I was always carrying the box of pastels and blank paper when I visited other subsidiaries. I was trying to create a light atmosphere by calling it 'drawing practice', which sounded similar to other practices delivered in their training workshops. Also on the cover of the pastels there was a Mickey Mouse pattern. I told them they can draw whatever they want. Some of the participants seemed to enjoy the practice. When it was conducted in a group the atmosphere was quite playful often with laughter. It allowed the participants to discuss among each other after they finished drawing, and other participants' interpretations were insightful too. It was a process of co-constructing and co-translating the reflected organisational realities.

After the drawing practice, interviews were conducted with questions varied to different participants according to the contexts. As shown in Appendix B and C, the interview schedule was used as a general guide, which occasionally I had to email the participants before the interview as requested. Therefore I tended to keep it general and simple. The questions also depended on the relationship with the participants, some of whom I only met for interviewing while some worked closely with me every day. The structure and order of questions varied somewhat (Alvesson, 2011), mostly following the schedule with several probing questions; some were more loosely structured, where the interviewees were encouraged to express freely with little interruptions, when they started telling stories. Nevertheless, as these interviews were not planned to last more than 90 minutes, I tended to draw them back to topics that needed to be covered without too many disruptions.

There are 27 drawings produced in the field work: 16 of them were produced as part of the interviewing process; 11 of them were produced in department training or staff workshop, without conducting interviews at the time. There are 17 formal interviews in total, lasting from 40 minutes to 200 minutes (Please see Appendix A for details). Among all the participants, only one person refused to draw and asked me to stop recording the interview; she was the manager of the Public Relation Department. The further details will be discussed in the following Representation and Interpretation Chapter. 16 interviews were recorded and fully transcribed by me. Considering the time and resource, two of the interview transcripts were fully translated into English. For the rest of the interviews, I only translated the parts that appeared in the thesis. But every passage of the interview transcripts was analysed and coded, together with the drawings. NVivo 8 was employed as a database to keep all the notes, transcripts and drawings together. According to earlier discussion of interpretivism, interview data should not be considered as the 'mirror' of reality, but perhaps a production by itself (Alvesson, 2011). Therefore interviews were interpreted together with the drawings and participant observation notes.

Translating in the Field

As the research context is in China and the participants speak Chinese, Japanese, English, translation has been recognised as an issue in translingual research from the beginning (Steyaert & Janssens, 2013; Xian, 2008). As discussed earlier translation is a necessary but incomplete process, it should not be just considered as a 'messy' and 'problematic' methodological issue, but appreciated for its possibilities in the processes of interpreting and understanding.

The translation process started with my doubts on 'translatability' and 'untranslatability' (Jakobson, 1959) of CS in non-western research contexts. The equivalent term for 'Sustainable Development' (可持续发展) could often be seen in Chinese media, but the literal Chinese translation for 'Corporate Sustainability' (企业可持续性) is not very commonly used. Although there is a literal Japanese

translation for 'Corporate Sustainability' (企業の持続性), it contains an aspect of 'development' as well.

In the beginning of the field work, I tried to mention the Chinese term 'Corporate Sustainability' with many OMG colleagues, when they asked me about my study. They could hardly understand the term and asked me to repeat or explain further. However, if I changed the term to 'Corporate Sustainable Development' (企业可持续发展), generally they would understand this because 'Sustainable Development' is a popular word in China associated with meanings of economic development, environment protection, and social harmony. Therefore for the translated interview questions, the Chinese term of 'Corporate Sustainable Development' was adopted to ensure the questions could be understood. The Japanese interview questions were translated by OMG colleagues based on the Chinese version, which kept using 'Corporate Sustainable Development' for consistency.

During the translation process, I gradually realised that when searching for the exact equivalent words from the source language to the target language, we might have focused more on equivalence and similarities between the languages, but ignored the implications from different common expressions and the translating process itself. Some meanings are inevitably lost, while some meanings are constructed at the same time. Therefore beyond merely a lingual practice, translation should be seen as a more delicate and subtle process in the paradox of absence and presence, which both seem to be coming from and returning to the same path.

This was evident when interviewing two Japanese top managers, simultaneously interpreted from Japanese to Chinese by two other key informants. No matter how 'objective' they tried to be during translating, their working role could not be neglected, nor their interactions with interviewees. While some words were inevitably lost in this double translating process, some other meanings were constructed at the same time.

After designing the interview schedule in English, as shown in Appendix B, it was translated in Chinese by the researcher (See Appendix C). In order to make the schedule as clear and simple as possible, two interviewees were

invited for pilot interview in Chinese, who are fluent in Chinese and English. As some terms were still not absolutely certain, I intended to use those that often appear on Chinese popular media. Also I discussed the Chinese translation of the consent form with them to make sure they could understand the content.

As shown in Appendix A, among the 17 interviews conducted in OMG, there were two interviews with the top managers with the help of an interpreter to translate between Japanese and Chinese. Therefore these two interviews took about twice as long as other interviews. Before these two interviews, the interview schedule was translated into Japanese and sent to the participants by the interpreters. But I still needed the interpreters to translate what the interviewees said before I could probe with further questions. One of the interpreters was the 'gatekeeper', who was my 'boss' in OMG; the other one, a close colleague. After I left the field, I asked another two Japanese and English speakers to listen back to the recordings of those two interviews; their interpretations were quite different to those I had in the field. I do not intend to argue which one is more 'real' or 'better'; but experiencing this 'double' translation process was confusing, sometimes frustrating because some meanings were just lost in the translation. The complexity of the translingual interviews amplified the roles played by the interpreters who were also working in the organisation (Williamson et al., 2011), as well as constructed by the relations among interviewees, interpreters, and researchers at that moment.

It should be noted that I translated the field notes and interview transcripts included in the thesis in a particular way that seeks precision of meanings as much as possible, even if the translations do not read 'smoothly' in English. The translation method is informed by the aims of 'hard translation' (Luo, 2007), but it is also developed with my perspectives and understandings from the field.

Ethical Considerations

According to Diener and Crandall (1978), the principles of research ethics are described as: whether there is any harm to participants, lack of informed consent, an invasion of privacy, and if deception is involved. However these are the general principles of research ethics. In addition to these there are other

ethical considerations that need to be taken into account, for example data management, copyright issues, maintaining mutual trust (Bryman & Bell, 2011). More often, besides 'ticking the right boxes' as an indispensible step for reviewing research ethical issues, it is realised not every ethical issue can be explicitly articulated – there is implicit engagement that might be implying ethical choices including more considerations (Bell & Wray-Bliss, 2009). As situations of research process might change all the time, ethical choices and sometimes ethical dilemmas need to be considered and addressed during the whole research process. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the main ethical challenges encountered in this research and how they were addressed.

Firstly, anonymity is considered highly important. Pseudonyms are given to the organisation and every participant. As the organisation is recognised as a Japanese MNC in China with Chinese and Japanese employees, the pseudonyms chosen for the participants are Japanese names in English spelling with gender difference (See Appendix F). It is suggested the use of visual methods might intrude on participants and non-participants' privacy (Warren, 2002). The drawings were designed to be produced without any identification of names. However, some participants wrote several words in Chinese and Japanese while drawing. The handwriting might be traceable to identify the producer. Therefore, as shown in Appendix A, several drawings are not reproduced in this thesis.

Also, a Non-disclosure Agreement provided by the organisation was signed before I conducted the field work, stating that I cannot disclose any confidential information to any third party, such as their remuneration or technical details. Except the interviews and drawings that formal consent has been granted, other observational information included in this thesis, are not considered as confidential in the organisation.

Additionally, the use of drawings can pose ethical questions for the researcher about the depth of engagement being asked of participants (Appendix G), for example to what extent the participants understood the consent forms, the emotional responses that might be triggered by the visualising process, and if the interpretations are related to sensitive issues (Vince & Warren, 2012). During the drawing practice, whether the participants chose to draw and what

they drew were free, also some personal reflections were not included in this research considering the possible consequences.

As Bauman (1993) points out, matters of ethics follow predefined rules and codes; but understanding what is right, getting to know one's own heart, and to be responsible toward others is seen as the representation of ethics. Also, ethical formalism has been critically examined if it can enhance accountability and responsibility or restrict our engagement with ethics (Bell & Wray-Bliss, 2009). Therefore reflective realisations of the potential ethical situations should be considered during the research process.

Analysing and Interpreting

The analysing and interpreting approaches will be discussed in this section, which can be seen as a process that continues throughout the research process. It can be described as a reflexive, hermeneutic and systematic process. As shown in Table 1, the analysis process lasted for about one year, during which I was immersed in the data, writing and rewriting. It is represented through the process of telling and retelling tales from different perspectives, because 'there is no one correct telling, each telling, like light hitting a crystal, reflects a different perspective on the incident' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 6). The analysing and interpreting can be considered as a crystallisation process, reflecting the rays of light. In addition, a hermeneutic approach of analysing and interpreting ethnographic data can offer a cultural understanding through constructing, reading and writing the ethnographic account (Geertz, 1973; Gummesson, 2000; McAuley, 2004).

Table 1: Analysis Process

Tasks	Time Length	When
Pilot Study 1 in Exeter	1 week	May 2011
Pilot Study 2 at ABC Company in Exeter	1 week	May 2011
Field work	3 months	January - May 2012
Transcribing & Translating Interviews, Writing up Field Notes	4 months	June - September 2012
Writing 5 Main Characters' Accounts	5 months	October - February 2013
Getting Themes and Writing up Analysis	1.5 months	March - April 2013
Total	13.5 months	January 2012- April 2013

The process of analysing and interpreting can be described as followed:

Before data collection

I started thinking about data analysis when I was considering the research design, e.g. which methods could be used and what for. For the pilot study discussed earlier, I went to a local company to do some shadowing, non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with drawing exercise. Although these methods were not conducted in the same situations, not with the same group of people, I had a sense what kind of data I could possibly get from my fieldwork and how difficult to make sense of them all.

By that time, I knew ethnographic writing is one of the major challenges as it is part of the analysis as the result of field work; I also realised interviews take a long time in terms of transcribing and translation; but I was not very sure how to deal with the drawings as visual analysis seemed to be the biggest challenge for this method itself. So at that stage I did not intend to analyse the drawings, I just wanted to use them as a visual elicitation tool to encourage the participants'

talk. Therefore the 'imagined data source' included secondary data, written up field notes, and interview transcripts.

During the field work

Once I went to the field, I realised both the challenges and opportunities that empirical work brought. The continuous negotiation for the access was tricky, and could be seen as 'data'. Through frequent discussions with both supervisors, I was telling or retelling them the stories, my thoughts and confusions. It was not only offering the chance to elaborate and clarify the ideas, but also had a 'therapeutic effect' for not getting lost. By seeing myself as a 'research tool' (Fetterman, 2009) in that environment, both of my clarified perceptions and obscure understandings towards the field iteratively influenced what I should ask, where I would go, and what I could see in the field. For example, a couple of interview questions were based on my earlier inquiry about the organisation, their OMG culture and relationships. Interviews were conducted during the period of time I was working with them. Previous interviews, reviewing company documents and my observations offered some incomplete, preliminary analysis, which was continually influenced the later stage.

After I left

I came back with many company documents and rough draft of field notes, drawings, interview recordings, and a very excited mood to write them all up. Firstly, I transcribed all the interviews in Chinese, and gradually wrote up most of the field notes. At that point I realised the field work itself was merely an action. Written field notes based on the field work can be the source of data. Ethnography is more about the production of the written account and analysing in the process of writing (Humphreys & Watson, 2009). For example, how I describe an event, in what order, how I feature a person, capture the dialogue… They were processed and reflected in my mind in many ways, although I intended to present it 'truthfully'.

However, developing a truthful and 'enhanced ethnographic' (Ybema et al., 2009) writing requires practice. In the meantime, I was looking for opportunities to analyse the drawings as well. I tried 'compositional interpretation', 'content

analysis', and 'semiology approach' (Rose, 2007) to analyse the drawings, but it just did not work very well. I couldn't find any main thread to connect them. At the bottom of the 'tunnel' I even questioned the value of a subjective and empirically driven approach such as this. However conversations with others always helped. Once at a supervision meeting, we put all the drawing copies on the floor, categorised them by different situations, participants' job functions etc. Since then I started to see things I did not see before. I also realised an holistic and systematic analysis approach can be more helpful instead of one single method. Through the process, I gradually realised that if I am looking for something, I would probably shed the spotlight onto the similar items only, and would have missed a lot of other things in the darkness. More often, things might not appear at all as I imagined. Some are just presumptions reflected from our surface experience. Sometimes things are too direct and too obvious to be noticed, and might need a certain distance and timeout before they can be seen.

Thus, the analysis system adopted in this research is developed as an holistic approach on the basis of semiology techniques (Rose, 2007), such as studying the implications of various colours, viewer's position, depicting angles, space left in the drawing. It can be summarised as these 6 main stages:

Stage 1: Separation

Firstly I separated them. I looked at each drawing as an art artefact from someone I might not know, without thinking too much about the context and what exactly they said to me. At that moment I tried to forget in order to have a detached position.

Stage 2: Falling apart

According to ANT perspectives, in addition to human actors, non-human actors and sometimes quasi-objects are inherently constructing organisational worlds (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005; Latour, 2005). The interaction of the visual and the verbal is constitutive of heterogeneous representations (Mitchell, 1994). Thus the data sources started falling apart, not just the people and what they told me, but also the constructions of the drawings, narratives and tales from the field, the field organisation's concepts and motifs. Instead of looking at the

drawing in the way I used to, I tried to see it as what they are. It was not easy as my preconceptions could be quite stubborn and take up a lot space in my mind. So I tried to look at them as I had never seen them before, and thinking 'what it is in the drawing', 'what are they indeed', again and again. Asking another person the same questions could be quite helpful as he/she would bring fresh perspectives. Then the drawings gradually started falling apart to a number of fragments, such as circle, lines, shades etc. I looked at them individually and tried to remember them as snapshots.

Stage 3: Merging

I analysed the interview transcripts and field notes via thematic analysis and interpretation. Instead of treating the field notes, interview transcripts or the drawings as the subject or the focus, I saw each participant as the main thread to link together with all the data sources, as an information 'ball'. From reading each participant's interview transcript, and related field notes, I picked up the common patterns evolved from the thematic interpretation without predefining participant's experiences (McAuley, 2004; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). The themes have evolved when the similar tales from the transcripts was mentioned in the field notes, and could be echoed with their drawings. It could be the words they said, what other colleagues said about them, or my observational notes. Here each personal account included chunks of Chinese interview transcripts, some field notes in English, and colourful drawings, as they were originally. It is like a triangulation process, not as a tool but considered as an alternative to explore the potential meanings, through telling and retelling similar tales from different perspectives, as if in a crystallisation process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2002).

Stage 4: Displacing

Then the data became alive and messy again, I could hear their voices, feel their emotions. I could easily spend a week working on one personal account, with pieces of quotes, chunks of field notes, snapshots of drawing fragments. Then I started constantly changing the angles looking at the pieces and fragments to see if they could match together or tell similar things. I did not think any of the data source was complete enough to tell the whole story, but they

seemed to be 'genetically' related as some traces of similarities and patterns could be found, if I looked at the symbolic meanings. For example, compared to straight lines, a curve line would be a possible symbol representing the changing and dynamic nature of things from their experiences. However these meanings are not fixed, they could vary according to the situations. If every curve is almost the same and the curve line is neat without surprises, it could be representing even when every other things are constantly changing there is something that remains unchanged, such as the boss's command, as said by some participants. By displacing these pieces and fragments into different situations, new interpretations and translations could be constructed.

Stage 5: Organising

Then I tidied up the field notes and translated the Chinese quotes to English, while I was trying to maintain the original flavour and recreate the essence of meanings, as much as I could. With a list of the possible patterns found in a personal account, I was trying to make them in a logical order that is 'truthful' and persuasive. At this stage, talking aloud as if I had not heard of the story was quite helpful to make me think about it again and clarify things. Working closely with five main personal accounts about participants, I intended to find the similarities within the core accounts and complemented with information from other participants. Thus I tried organising them in a logical and persuasive order as the main argument for the thesis.

Stage 6: Holistic understanding

The analysis process can be seen as a search for holistic understanding. The analysis is not just based on the researcher's interpretation. The interpretation has to be consistent with what the producer said, what other colleagues said, and what they might really mean according to my observation notes. This process of interpreting, of moving back-and-forth, is described as a hermeneutic approach of thematic analysis (McAuley, 2004; Thompson et al., 1990): if we want to understand the drawing we need to listen to what the producer and other colleagues said, and in order to understand the interviews the observation notes produced from the fieldwork would certainly help. Because the drawing connects to the interview, the interview connects to the ethnographic notes, in

the end the notes could be better understood while studying the visual depiction. Not always but quite often I found the most common thing from participants' quotes and notes could be traced in their drawings, which was also imprinted by their perceived organisational realities.

These stages are a description of how the representation and interpretation was produced in this account, but not an argument for a step-by-step instruction for similar analysis. Similar as the improvisation of Jazz (Hatch, 1999; Humphreys et al., 2003), the analysis process for an ethnographic writing could not be followed as a step-by-step procedure. In addition to the observation notes, the elements of drawing, the dynamics through translation… they all come together representing the account of OMG. As shown in Table 1, the process of analysing and interpretation can be seen as a crystallisation process through writing and telling stories.

In conclusion, this Methodology chapter starts from philosophical discussions on Eastern thinking on the 'potential of the situations'; continues with the debates on deconstruction and hermeneutics, constructionism and interpretivism. The arguments converge to the encountering of the impossible but necessary translation; and the possibility that a complete or correct interpretation is just a fantasy. Then, ethnography and visual depiction are introduced as the main methods in the thesis. This is followed with a description about the way this research was conducted and its associated methodological implications. The next chapter starts telling the tales from the field via continual interpreting and understanding processes.

Chapter 4: Representation and Interpretation

This chapter is a representation of how CS has been gradually interpreted, evolved, and understood in the organisation network of OMG. As a non-fixed notion that has been continually translated in organisational everyday life, CS does not always appear as a 'macro actor' or even as an actor; in some situations CS seems like a network effect. This *heterogeneous network* of OMG is composed of bits and pieces of human and non-human materials (Law, 1992). Sometimes CS can emerge from participants' words and behaviour, or colourful lines and patterns in their drawings. More often, the interpretations of CS are influenced by various relationships among OMG people. In order to understand the dynamic relationships and their translations of CS, we need to get to know these people first – their realities, characters, feelings and struggles. Hence, this chapter starts with the settings of the field work. I therefore introduce five main characters I encountered, and provide a visual ethnographic representation of how CS has been forever translated and evolved in the case of OMG.

After setting the scene and introducing the main characters, this chapter presents three themes as the main representation of this ethnographic account: *translating CS* from different perspectives, interpreting participants' realities with *'visible structures' and 'invisible axis'*, and the dynamics between corporate realities and their *sense of self*. Among their various interpretations of CS, the *ever-evolving Communal Vessel* from OMG's corporate philosophy is included in the end of this chapter.

During the time I was working in the Corporate Culture Department of OMG, I found CS has been enacted from translating OMG corporate philosophy, constantly from written words to practical events. From interviews and drawings, their corporate philosophy almost has been regarded as OMG's translation of CS, linking with different cultural understandings. And the term *'Communal Vessel'*, as the essence of OMG's corporate philosophy, its meanings have gradually evolved throughout the research inquiry. I do not intend to construct Communal Vessel as another questionable 'macro actor', but it can lead to deeper discussions that incorporate various ideas and traditions via the translating process.

The whole research process could be seen as multiple journeys, from one place to another, and, returns. It involves some travelling: between Exeter and Shanghai; between my messy research desk and the cleaned up office desk in OMG; between Head Office, and the production frontline. It involves much of translation too: between Mandarin, English and occasionally Japanese; between the ancient and current Chinese; between pre-understandings and understandings. This Representation and Interpretation Chapter is not simply a record of my multiple entries through changeable destinations, but is one way to represent the processes of organising 'the unorganised', and translating 'the untranslated' on continually shifting grounds…

The Setting

If a starting point of the field work ever existed, it began with an unexpected phone call at 4am GMT in a January morning at Exeter. At 3pm Beijing Time on the following day, I sat in a meeting room in the Head office of OMG China, located on the 20th floor of a skyscraper at one of the biggest business centres in Shanghai. It was the first time I met my 'boss' Emi in OMG, also known as my key informant. In this meeting, which was categorised as 'job interview' as well, access for my research within the organisation was negotiated. In return I would work as an intern in the OMG Corporate Culture Department for at least three months.

It was a Friday in mid-winter in Shanghai, everything seemed gloomy and cold. I realised it was almost dark when I got out of the building after the meeting. I stopped walking; in order to glance at the building where the OMG China office was located, thinking I would be around here for some time… Growing up in a typical Chinese city, I was still quite impressed by the buildings and architecture. I could hardly see the top of the building as my hat almost fell off. It was a very modern-look, towering building, with tempered glass walls on the outside. It looked like a giant glass transformer from a distance, but more alive, with a breath of commercialisation. Although it was nightfall, it looked quite bright as the strong light of the shopping mall shed on the street, mingled with orange street lamp and spotted traffic lights. The well illuminated building could not but

help attracting people's attention, it was full of dazzling, and elegant shops visible from outside. They all seemed to be international top brands that most people could not afford.

I began my fieldwork on the following Monday. Normally it took me one hour from my 'home' to the company by public transportation, which seems quite normal living in a metropolitan city. At that time 'home' to me was a big black suitcase. No matter where I stayed in the city, the busy, intense feeling toward the 'giant transformer' was always blowing to my face as I got closer. Even the air seemed to be heavier and the time passed faster. Whatever happened before, you just have to drop at somewhere and run - run into a smaller box among many others boxes; you would have to run fast enough to catch up with the present.

The OMG Head Office building was surrounded by shopping malls, where most companies were well-known multinational corporations. The street was always full of people coming and going. During rush hours it was very easy to be overwhelmed by streams of people walking very fast towards everywhere. I could barely see any sign of children or senior people during rush hours. Most of them were in their 30s and 40s, dressed up professionally with suits and shirts. Women wore some make up, but you could hardly see any facial expression, except tiredness and annoyance. Occasionally I could hear them talking on phones about their encounters of the day, but their faces usually resumed a blank expression after they put down their phones. Like many of them, I joined a stream of people flowing into the traffic, and managed to emerge from the flow and walk towards the 'glass transformer'.

Mornings were intense in OMG. Everyone was rushing to somewhere or something, making the morning greetings as efficient as possible. On my first day, the first person who talked to me was not the first person who saw me; it was the cleaning lady Jane. I was standing at the reception, not sure what to do while watching other people rushing around. The cleaning lady stopped mopping the floor, looked at me in a suspicious way, and started my first conversation. When I was waiting I got the chance to look around the waiting lounge by the reception. It was quite neat and clean; two sides of the wall were glass windows. I couldn't tell how big their office as there was a dark corridor

leading to the office area and meeting rooms. The company's logo was on the wall behind the reception. On the other wall there was a framed, light brown chart in the middle, stating the framework of their corporate culture.

I could not help noticing how some people ran passed me, towards a 'grey box' by the glass door. They took out a card to swipe over the box. Once a harsh 'beep' went off, they would look more relaxed and start walking at a normal speed. Later I discovered that the 'grey box' recorded the entry and departure time of staffs, like an advanced punch machine. Although I could not find any official document stating that employees must not be late for work and cannot leave early, and I never heard any manager would actually consider that information for employee evaluation. But everyone would still take the 'grey box' seriously. As long as there was a possibility they could be monitored or 'seen', it was worth running for. I began to realise the essential sense of discipline does not come from official statements, but from what people believe, and what they do every day.

About OMG

OMG (*Pseudonym*) is a MNC with its Head Quarter in Japan. It is a well-known, global manufacturer of industrial automation and electronic products with a 100 year history of contributing to economic and social development in many communities; in Japan it was famous for offering work opportunity to the disabled and helping disadvantaged people in the local community. It has developed an 'OMG Corporate Philosophy System' which advocates service for the benefit of society, and this is promoted in every OMG subsidiary across the world.

Although OMG was founded in Japan in early 1910s and with its Head Quarter in Japan, most members in its Top Management team were Japanese, and a large proportion of its shares were held by western investment companies. Therefore OMG should not be simply considered as a 'Japanese enterprise', but as a multinational corporate group following traditions and cultures often adopted by Japanese companies. For example, lifelong employment is still operating in Japan, and the '5S' benchmark is applied in every subsidiary

106

across the world. Japanese still remains at least one of the common languages used in OMG subsidiaries.

OMG China is one the biggest subsidiaries in the OMG Group, where I conducted the ethnographic field work. Recently, OMG China has passed a series of international environment management system benchmarks, for example: ISO14001, and RoHS. These were awarded publicly for being one of the most socially responsible multinational corporations in China. OMG's Corporate Philosophy is considered to be so important for strategic decision making and daily practices that a new department called 'Corporate Culture Department' had been established, it was the department in which I worked.

OMG China subsidiaries are all following '5S system' to reduce waste and optimise productivity, known as: *seiri* (organisation), *seiton* (neatness), *seisō* (cleaning), *seiketsu* (standardisation) and *shitsuke* (discipline) (Gapp, Fisher, & Kobayashi, 2008). It is a system employed many years before other international environmental benchmarks, and is considered to have higher standards in the organisation. The 5S system seemed to have major influences in the organisation. As soon as I walked into OMG office, I noticed there were five boxes along the corridor labelled in both Chinese and Japanese, as the five categories for recycling. Energy saving tags could be seen everywhere. In their factories, individual light switches were installed above each desk in order to improve the efficient use of electricity.

The OMG China office outlet is depicted in Figure 1. Mr. Dragon's office was intended to be situated at the point marked with dotted lines in the open plan area according to the Office manager Rina, but there was not enough room in this office for that situation. Therefore the CEO office was arranged in the individual office as shown.

		Staff Activity Room			
Men's Room					
Printing Room		Legal Service Department			
	Aisle	Human Resource Department			
Tea & Coffee Area		Shanghai Management & Corporate Culture Department			
		Kouta	Jeni	Juri	Mika
		Me ☆		Rina	Emi
		CEO Office Department			
		Accounting & IT Department			
		Environment Business Department			

Tarou

Michi

Mr. Dragon

		Meeting Room	Meeting Room
	Aisle	Meeting Room	Meeting Room
Lady's Room			
		Meeting Room	Meeting Room

Mr. Dragon

Shindi (Reception)

Figure 1: Office Layout

I was seated in the middle of a big open-plan office for about 70 people, where I found myself conveniently positioned next to the tea and coffee area. The physical environment enabled (Fayard & Weeks, 2007) me to hear small talk and to observe some of the subtle interactions taking place. As the tea area was located in the centre of the office, which could be seen from rest of the office, it was not only the spot where the morning ceremony was held every day, but also a 'self-performing stage' when people waited for the coffee machine (Goffman, 1959). Also I gradually realised that while I was observing the interactions of others, I could easily be watched by others at the same time. Therefore a reflexive perspective has been adopted in this ethnographic account. While I was breathing in the air of OMG, the 'ethnographic self' was experiencing the organisational everyday life (Coffey, 1999; Goffman, 1959; Kondo, 1990).

In the meantime I made some interesting encounters with people there, while working closely with colleagues in the same department. I was impressed by the dynamic relationships among people, including myself, and realised many relationships and interactions could be better understood after getting to know the OMG contexts, and people working there. Therefore I would like to introduce 5 key informants in this account below. 4 of them as my close colleagues I worked with everyday, the other one was the CEO of OMG China who was considered by other colleagues to have greatly influenced the corporate culture. I chose these key informants because I had relatively closer contacts with them in comparison to other informants. Also they were the core team working on communicating OMG culture across the whole group. Although I did not get the chance to interact with the CEO personally on a daily basis, his stories, or even his shadows were often heard or seen in this account.

Though any name mentioned here is a pseudonym, and this account was written in a way to maintain the anonymity of the organisation and people as much as possible, my depiction was based on what I saw or heard in OMG. Due to ethical considerations, some personal issues that most of my colleagues did not know of were never mentioned to anyone, except both supervisors.

Main Characters

- Emi, Department Manager, age: 40s, referred as 'my boss', in OMG for 9 years;

- Juri, Corporate Culture Executive, age: 30s, in OMG for 5 years, reported to Emi;

- Mika, Corporate Culture Assistant, age: in late 20s, in OMG for less than 1 year, reported to Juri and Emi;

- Rina, Administration Manager, involved in Corporate Culture affairs, age: 30s, in OMG for 4 years, reported to Emi;

- Mr. Dragon, CEO of OMG China, sat on the Board of Directors of OMG Global, age: 60s, Japanese, employed by OMG for more than 30 years, in China for 3 years.

Although the narratives about these characters might bring out some of the personal emotions and realities they perceived, it was not the focus of this research. Instead of relying on any material source such as drawings, interviews, observations, I am applying an holistic but systematic approach examining the main themes from all data sources and the interactions within them. In such an organisation, who they were, what they cared, how they felt, what they struggled with… were woven together to construct this account. I would like to represent it as stories of five main characters; once we start to understand the context, and the characters, we might be able to understand their accounts better, and, to understand the organisation better.

My 'Boss' Emi

Emi was the Manager of Shanghai Management/Corporate Culture Department, responsible for administration, office purchasing, and corporate culture communication in OMG China. She joined OMG 9 years ago. Previously, she was teaching Chinese and working as an interpreter in Japan for 10 years. Her subordinates described her as 'a very successful woman' who could maintain a

good balance between career and family, 'a resourceful boss', even as an OMG 'legend' who experienced ups and downs of 4 Head Office CEOs without any stalling. But they would never see Emi as someone easy to deal with. In department meetings, her decisions and advice seemed to be always 'right' with a certain authority. One moment she and her subordinates could be acting as a family, the next moment she could become very scary to get close with. They thought Emi had 'quite a temper'.

The softer side of Emi existed although it was not shown very often. When Emi was telling me how she felt about her subordinates, I was quite surprised by her point of views towards two close colleagues, Juri and Rina, who remained her subordinates for years. When she was telling stories about them, the conflicts they brought with, she almost turned into a worrying parent, who did not only know them very well, but also personally cared about them, a lot.

> Emi: 'Juri this kid is quite pitiful. She is the eldest kid in her family so she used to take care of everyone when the parents were away. She has brothers and sisters. She is always the Big Sister. That's why she's acting so strong sometimes. The poor girl has suffered quite a lot when she's growing up.' [Field notes]

> Emi: 'Rina said I taught her everything (in their previous employment); in the beginning she didn't even know how to handle mails until I taught her. Then one night… she stayed late with me and told me she lost her (omitted here, a close family member) since very young and all sort of things - I remembered this kid, never forgot that. But it was not because of me she joined OMG; just happened to be… it's just fate.'

> [Interview with Emi]

However, what I heard the most about Emi from other colleagues were either direct or vague complaints: how uncertain she is, how ruthless she can be, what a harsh person she is. Her mood could instantly change the working pace of the whole department. Sometimes her subordinates would get so angry about Emi simply because she seemed not to care about others.

> Generally speaking I think she is a demanding boss with a lot of changeable ideas. For each of her 'demand', I have to work for 8 hours, or longer during my holiday. If she changes her mind all the work goes wasted right away. She keeps telling me I can claim my salary back for those extra hours as I am working for them, never asked if I want it or not. I can see she is not one of those bosses who don't care about subordinates at all. She cares, but for us she's just too demanding to be noticed that she cares. [Field notes]

Emi certainly thinks she cares about her subordinates, and even cares too much. She shared her frustration at trying to be a 'good boss' more than once with me. She even felt being hurt when her subordinates misunderstood her good intentions. However, she would never go and tell them the 'truth', and how she meant well. She would rather suffer alone. I wondered why she did not explain herself when they misunderstood her, unless she might consider it as a sign of weakness.

> Emi: 'I am being very nice to them. I could give you 100 examples. Maybe the problem is I am too nice to them. Therefore they don't know I am being nice! If they consider everything from my perspective, they would realise how good I have been treating them! I think I just failed, failed big!' [Field notes]

If she did not care about her subordinates so much, she probably would not feel 'being hurt' when her good intentions were misunderstood. But would that affect how she treats her subordinates? Just before I left OMG I interviewed Emi again. She still believes it is her responsibility to make them feel they are doing something more meaningful.

> Emi: 'I… I want to make their (her subordinates') life better, or make them work harder; it's like I have the responsibility to make these people feel more meaningful.'
> [Interview with Emi]

It seems as if Emi feels responsible for, and to be 'nice' to her subordinates without asking much in return. The responsibility Emi feels appears to go beyond 'making them working harder', or 'having a better life'. Also, when she was engaging other subordinates, she felt 'more meaningful' at the same time. When she is giving away she is getting something in return; when she seems ruling and controlling, she can be constrained by the relationships as well.

I got to understand Emi better outside of the office. She was the most important informant in OMG, and was the so-called the 'gate keeper' for the fieldwork. She was the person helped me to arrange interviews with other participants in OMG. However, it was not easy to win respect and a certain trust from someone like her, quite experienced in dealing with the ups and downs in organisations; and she was in a position that could be very close to people with certain influences. During the period I was there, we gradually became quite close. She would complain and sometimes confess to me in private. I felt she needed

112

someone to listen to her, and understand her. However, at the same time, she could see things from my perspectives. When retelling what had happened, and how she felt, it seemed to calm her down, and make things slightly clearer for her. More importantly, I was just a student intern who would be gone after a couple months. The relationship between Emi and me was based on mutual support, genuine understandings, and the last but not the least - confidentiality. Therefore in the office she was my boss, who would assign me all kinds of work, from daily administration chores to her 'homework'. In private she would talk to me as if I was her personal consultant, someone 'on her side', and witnessed what happened.

'Big Sister' Juri

Juri was a Corporate Culture Executive in our Head Office at OMG, she had been with OMG for almost 5 years, from the time she came back from her work-studying life in Japan. She's about 30 years old, married. She is a Korean-Chinese, originally from a small city in the northeast of China, where the first language was Korean instead of Mandarin.

> Juri is more like a 'big sister' in our department when Emi is not here. But even if she is around, Juri is still the person who seems to know all the details. I noticed at meetings, Juri is often louder than others. She just talks in a logical way, step by step, very clear and neat. I am quite impressed by her'. [Field notes]

She had a nick name, 'big sister' - not only as she is the eldest among her sisters and brothers at home, but also because she sometimes acted as a 'big sister' at work. She worked with logic and efficiency, and was always clear about every important detail. Compared with others, she just seemed to know how to handle things properly. Sometimes I could tell even Emi was impressed by her as well, although Emi did not want this to show.

> Juri: 'The manager who interviewed me asked me later, 'Do you know why we chose you?' As I knew there were other great candidates with great experiences. I said I don't know, thought it might be a matter of the mentality. He said it was because I was smiling all the time during my interview. He thought it would make people feel simply positive. So he chose me he said. I said 'Oh OK!' (Laughter)'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

113

It was not the first time I heard of this story about 'smile'. Juri told us before in other casual situations. For her it seemed to be an unforgettable experience, she was telling the story again, as soon as she started talking about how she joined OMG during our interview. Maybe since then she assured the 'power of smile', which she thought came from a state of mind, a 'mentality' that might lead to satisfaction and even happiness, no matter what happens on the outside. I wondered if she really believed she could achieve that state of detached mind, or it could just be the aspiration towards 'happiness' deeply rooted in her mind. Even when Juri was talking about her other colleagues, she seemed to consider happiness more important too.

> Juri: 'Rina is quite tired recently. I was telling her, oh well work – actually work is only one part of life, being happy is more important.'
> [Interview with Juri]

As many other emotions, happiness can be felt much more when there is a comparison. Maybe what she had experienced made her more sensitive, and to desire 'happiness' more than others.

> Juri: 'I was quite poor at college in Japan. My husband and I had to work part time while studying, in order to pay for the tuition fee and living expenses. Once we both lost our jobs, there was some time we couldn't even afford to buy rice… it was very tough. We owed a lot of debts from families and friends. Although that experience was quite tough, it left me an unforgettable memory. I think the reason I feel happy now, feel satisfied, is because of that experience in the past.' [Interview with Juri]

Maybe because of the bitterness of life Juri had endured, smiling, being satisfied, being happy became so important that Juri almost considered it as the 'goal' of working. But at the same time, the emphasis on 'being happy now' was implying 'look, how insignificant of any difficulty appeared in my life now, compared to the past!' Also I am rather curious what is behind Juri's smile, behind her longings of happiness, what she is experiencing now and how she feels. Then the next question is, what could make her feel 'happy', and what was missing.

Juri's Dream

In our interview she told me that she and her previous boss in OMG had a great working relationship. Although it happened years ago, when she talked about that memory she was still glowing with a sense of satisfaction and pride.

> Juri: 'During that time I learnt a lot, and we did get along very well. Later he left China. Sometimes I do miss him. When he came back I invited him to dinner. But he didn't want to cause any non-necessary issue; he insisted the attendance of the 3rd person. But I haven't found the other person yet. Recently I had a dream that I was asking him again (laughter)! So now I'm thinking if he comes back next time, I must have dinner with him.'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

I heard about Juri's dream at work a couple of times. Mostly, she told others about it as a joke of how she was asking him in her dream. The misunderstanding of the 'non-necessary problem' sounded like a joke. However I wondered why she wanted to catch up with her ex-boss so badly that she kept dreaming, and talking about it.

> The suppliers invited Juri, Mika and me to have a casual lunch after the poster proofing work at their office. The lunch lasted more than 2 hours. For a long time Juri was telling the story how she managed to make one million RMB for the company several years ago, when she was working on purchasing. She was so excited no one would ruthlessly interrupt her. [Field notes]

When someone was always talking about the 'good old days', as Juri's prime OMG time, it seemed as if something was missing in the current, or at least it was not as great as before. Maybe the pride from old times made her to be able to feel the contrast more. Let's see how she described the relationship with her current boss, Emi.

> Juri: 'In the beginning I did not get along with her (Emi) very well. But later I could really see she's very hard working, and to be honest as a woman she is quite successful. Maybe her efforts or attitude… affected me. Actually I did not really realise - how to see things from her perspective, I only considered my problems - How could she do that? It's so unfair to me! But once she told me, you should look at all the problems from a manager's position. Emi has been mentoring me actually. Because my personality… I'm a bit straightforward (laughter). She told me to improve my emotion management hehe. Last time, as you saw, I had a row with Rina in the middle of a meeting.'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

Was Juri angry with Emi, because Emi was changeable, and was 'unfair' to her in terms of evaluation for promotion? Did she worship her, as such a 'legendary' successful boss? Was she looking up to Emi, to teach her, to 'mentor' her, to be a successful manager? Currently Juri was no longer the person who surprised everyone with astonishing performance. She was confused, she felt frustrated, being treated unfair, even being bullied. Under the management of Emi, Juri had to be more flexible, more considerate, she had to change.

> It was so quiet in the meeting room, but the air was so intense and even hot although the air conditioner was on. Juri stood up and almost yelled at Rina, 'How could I tell them? You haven't sorted out what we should tell the subsidiaries, how would I know? Stop pushing me!' Her voice suddenly became weird and I heard her breath got stuck in her throat… Was she crying in the meeting?! I was so shocked and not sure what to do. I lowered my head and stared at the desk in front of me. It was such a contrast with their professional calm looking usually. I could barely look at her.
>
> [Field notes]

It was quite an unforgettable meeting. It was probably the first time I saw people crying in a business meeting. Juri might have a straightforward personality, but as someone who had been working in OMG for more than 5 years, and had been through many 'twists and turns', who always remembered keep smiling and saw 'happiness' as the most important thing. However, it might be more complicated than accidentally losing her emotional control.

> Emi: 'I had to admit I'm very impressed by Juri's competence sometimes. She's very logic and can handle tricky things - but only sometimes! She's like the wave line she drew, she can be super when she feels great, or rubbish if anyone makes her feel uncomfortable. She was questioning me why I promoted Rina instead of her. How can you trust someone who's so unstable? A manager shouldn't act like that!'
> [Field notes]

At this point I do not want to argue which one is the real 'Juri', the 'big sister' or the 'smiling Juri', or the 'dreamy Juri'… or which one led to the other. I intended to understand her perspectives on the realities she was facing in OMG. Therefore, we can understand them better, and their relationships in OMG.

My 'Friend' Mika

As Emi and Juri, Mika was another major member of the corporate culture team, responsible for communicating OMG's corporate culture across the organisation. Among all my colleagues in OMG, Mika has a friendly face, and was someone that I would seek help from. She is considerate, warm hearted, and she could get along with almost everyone, although she had only joined OMG about a year ago. She was good at controlling her emotions and sensitive about the situations. I often found she was the one who could soothe tense situations.

> Mika: 'I was a mandarin teacher in Japan. My students were from all walks of life. I was just teaching my mother language, but actually I was quite happy to learn how to communicate with various people of different age, different social class, and different ethnic groups.' [Interview with Mika]

Because of that experience, it would not be difficult to understand why Mika seemed to know how to communicate with people very well. During the time I was working closely with them every day, I never saw her lose her temper. Emi told me in private that she was quite impressed by Mika's good personality, and that she could control her emotions very well. However I had experienced many stressful and dramatic days, as an OMG intern. I could only imagine how Mika felt behind her friendly smiles. I wondered how the water was travelling underneath the iceberg that always seemed peaceful.

> I: 'Do you like your current job'?
>
> Mika: 'Um… I can't say I don't. There's surely no 'dislike'. If you say 'I like it very much', then perhaps I can't say I like it very much. I can only say - because it's very difficult to do what you like. Once you start liking it, you can't treat it as a normal job. As a normal job, I don't think people should add in these personal emotions. I feel like now I'm based on 'like it a bit', treat it as my occupation, do it seriously. Because if you 'like' it, there will be a kind of… emotion in it. Once I stop liking it then I cannot do this job any more. I think I should focus on studying more and re-studying.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

In the beginning I did not expect such a long answer to that question. Clearly, there was never a simple conclusion in Mika's mind. Also as asked by a close colleague who had been working with her every day for 3 months, her answer was subtle but kind of honest. Mika seemed to try really hard not to stand at either the extreme of 'liking' or 'disliking', rather like wandering in-between

instead. She managed to keep a certain distance from work as necessary so she could keep calm or stay 'professional'. Outside of work she appeared to be a nice outgoing young girl. She could easily tell her favourite restaurant and favourite clothes brand. I was surprised how she could be so detached from what she was doing everyday without 'adding in any personal emotions'. Was she afraid of the situation if she started adding personal emotions? Her showing of neutrality might be the outcome of intentionally suppressing her feelings and emotions, and the detached self position revealed conflict between her free will, and the reality she felt. Under the structured job roles and responsibilities, she did not have to face her own feelings and true emotions. The 'working Mika' might be able to make some tough choices that she couldn't as the 'life Mika', so did many others.

'Passionate' Rina

Rina was one of my close colleagues; she sat only one seat away from me. She was the administration manager in the OMG Head office. She had worked at other Japanese companies for years before she joined OMG, where she had been for about four years.

When Rina was asked to draw the picture in her mind to represent CS (See Figure 6), she drew four items: a person, a laptop, three people, and trees, representing 'people', 'corporation', 'society' and 'nature' correspondingly. The laptop symbolised the 'corporation', and also 'work' in general. Also, among the four items, the laptop was drawn in more detail when compared to the other items, with keyboard, and even with a touch pad. It was represented as a three dimensional figure, while the other three items were just in simple stick figures. In Rina's eyes, 'corporation' and 'working' meant a lot for her, more than just one of the four most important things, maybe it was the focus in her life as well.

> Every day Rina was the first person came in the morning and the last one left in our department. She worked really hard, could barely have any spare moment. Actually you could barely see her head as it was often buried among a bunch of documents. 8 o'clock in the morning she started working, 8pm she was still sitting there!
>
> [Field notes]

OMG was not a company that encouraged employees to work overtime. Occasionally Emi and Mika would stay late too, but I could see they did not want to. Rina was different. Working had taken up most of her time in a day and she never complained about it. I did not understand until I realised she was really passionate about her work, which was necessary in her view.

> Rina: 'The laptop was here because I wanted to draw the company, but it's too abstract. I didn't know how to draw it. Then I saw Juri drew a building is a good idea. But every day I work at the laptop. When I think of company, the laptop comes into mind, so I drew a laptop. And the colour red represents my passion. Indeed I think… because if I'm working for a sustainable company, I surely got to have lots of passion for this job. If a job just taken passively, I would say… myself is not sustainable yet, don't mention bringing… sustainable development to the outside. Therefore I should be passionate about my job first. So my first description to it was passion.'
>
> [Interview with Rina]

I was not surprised as people were telling me various things they thought the most important for a sustainable company. Often those things were the most salient qualities they perceived in their daily life as well. I was very impressed by her demonstration of 'passion' towards her work. I wondered why and what made it so prominent.

Differences are usually created by comparisons. Rina was not so sure about everything.

> Rina: 'The yellow one is people, because I was thinking Chinese people, yellow skin. Except those people (society), I chose to colour these three specifically: people, corporate, and nature. This (blue one) is society - ignore the colour, as I couldn't find an appropriate colour. This (green one) is tree, it is environment.'
>
> [Interview with Rina]

Rina chose the colours specifically: yellow for people; red for corporation; green for the environment; she even drew the arrows in green representing sustainable relationships; but, she just could not decide the colour of 'the society'. In a way it was not hard to understand because society might be a colour neutral institution for many people. Although she couldn't find an 'appropriate' colour for society, in the end she chose blue, as a cold tone. Emi talked about this privately after the drawing workshop and noted.

Emi: 'Rina certainly had a rough childhood. She lost her (omitted here, a close family member) when she was a kid. The situation in her family was not very good. I knew she suffered quite a lot. Since very young she thinks the rest of the world is grey and cold, except work. That's why she drew the laptop red, that's what was left. I know this kid.'

[Field notes]

During my field work, I never asked Rina about her family, and she barely talked about it. It was too personal for me. Somehow it did not matter if this was true or not. At this point, the colder the society was possibly felt, the warmer the work appeared to be: work was Rina's passion as that is what she could rely on. The personal distinction between red and blue, warm and cold, might have more impacts on her perspectives of other relationships, which revealed from the direct arrows in her drawing, as direct influences and relations.

Rina always seemed to be quite busy, maybe that's why she tended to use the most direct and simple language to talk to people, as if it was easier for them too. In the beginning I witnessed Rina caused some problems because of her communication with others. A couple of times I found she made other colleagues in the department upset because she tended to push them hard to do things without adequate guidance. [Field notes]

The understanding of people's relationships had influenced her ways of doing things. Rina's boss Emi complained to me in private about her, and about, on one occasion she caused some misunderstanding between Emi and Emi's boss.

Emi: 'Rina always tends to oversimplify things. Sometimes she has no idea what trouble she causes me. She has only one string in her brain or what? From A to B, she thinks just a straight line will be fine. She just won't get the idea to take a detour which makes things much better, will she?! That's why I could not totally trust her work at all!

[Field notes]

When Rina recognised people's relationships as 'benefit related', she tended to see things too directly and somewhat simplified. I could imagine how problematic it could be in an organisation as OMG.

During the meeting for OMG Day, I noticed Rina kept asking questions, some of them were a bit random. Her questions seemed too detailed to be considered at this stage, and the way she asked made people feel uncomfortable. It was more like pushing others to admit their ideas were faulty. Rina might see her role as identifying flaws from whatever other people suggested. In meetings, Rina always looked confused. I was impressed as she would not give up just because of the pressure, but sometimes it could be annoying. I wondered if she just didn't understand sometimes. At some point Emi lost her patience to explain

everything, and respond to Rina's endless questioning. She explained it in a harsh tone, then turned her head towards Rina, said: 'You got it? Got it?' Finally Rina stopped asking. It was very awkward.

[Field notes]

In the beginning I was not sure whether Rina realised it, but she had to stop in the end. Maybe she cared about too many things too much, so she had to talk, even when everyone in that room knew she should just shut up. Interestingly, she knew she should have stopped, but she had her reasons.

> Rina: 'Um… how to say… I'm one of those subordinates who just have lots of questions. Sometimes I just feel I have to ask, otherwise I would feel something stuck in my chest makes me uncomfortable. And it's my job to let other people know. No matter what they do, I still have to tell them what I think, it's my job. Sometimes I felt a bit upset and confused. If I don't say anything, they think I don't use my brain; if I say something, they would tell me off. Here is much better. Emi listens to me sometimes, although sometimes she would just tell me to stop as well. Maybe I'm that kind of person bosses just don't like, hehe. But like I said, it's my job to tell them what I think, as it's the boss's job to decide whether to accept my suggestions or not.'
>
> [Field notes]

Rina expressed the same feelings in her interview. She cared about what she was doing so much that she would risk speaking out, even when it was not the 'right time'. She felt obliged to let people know her ideas because that was something she 'should' do for her work, which was her responsibility. Although, again, she oversimplified things, assuming other people would appreciate them as she thought. It seemed as if the more she cared, the more confused she might become in the end.

Tales of Mr. Dragon

> Suddenly a girl in the CEO Office shouted 'Boss is coming!' Like a stone thrown into a peaceful lake which brought ripple effects, the office was suddenly awake! A girl rushed into tea area but so nervous that she almost knocked over some mugs. She was embarrassed and shouted to her phone: 'Where is the boss's tea? He wants coffee or tea? Make them both? Gosh he has come up now?!'… [Field notes]

It was a very common scene in OMG. The tensions drawn from the big boss's entrance was just a representation of the 'kingly' treatment for the top managers in the organisation. From office documents, to his lunch, anything related to Mr.

121

Dragon was looked after with extra care. As time passed, Mr. Dragon might have become as the name of the hirarchical position, as the simbol of the power; but what did he think about himself, how did he feel being up there…

This account about Mr. Dragon is different with others, which with the experience of listening to what they said, and opportunities to observe what they did. He was the CEO of OMG China, it would be difficult for me to be able to have direct contact with him, as I was just an intern. With the language barrier, I could not even talk to him without an interpreter, which often brought in other perspectives. My manager Emi was the interpreter when I interviewed Mr. Dragon. The interview took 3 hours as we endeavoured to make sure the meanings were clarified, although I still think we both were confused with some meanings that might have been lost in translation.

Afterwards, I checked my transcripts with Emi according to the recording in case she had missed something he said at the interview. After I left OMG I found a Japanese and English speaker to double check the transcripts, and I gradually realised the interview was inevitably influenced by the interactions between Emi and Mr. Dragon. Therefore, I was trying to understand him through others people's eyes, and the stories they tell. Although things about Mr. Dragon appeared to be covered with some mysterious mist, it provided the opportunity for further interpretation and continuous exploration. Therefore the account of Mr. Dragon was more like a collection of tales based on my understanding as myself being the research tool, instead of claiming to produce the 'truth'.

> I saw Mr. Dragon sitting on a comfortable chair, smiling, surrounded by cheerful colleagues giving him birthday wishes. He looked like a happy grandpa. The room was filled up with people and happy atmosphere very quickly, so different compared with several minutes ago. Among the sound of clapping, he stood up and gave a small speech to thank everyone and the presents. He spoke in rusty Mandarin mixed with Japanese. It was quite funny as he missed the tones and spoke very slowly. But people just loved and laughed at whatever he said.
>
> [Field notes]

Mr. Dragon had a 'soft' side. He often came out of his CEO office, grabbed a chair to sit among staff, and started chatting. Sometimes they would talk about work, or anything, from their hometown to what they had for lunch. He would insist to speak very rusty Mandarin with Chinese staffs, sometimes it seemed as

if he was learning and practising his Chinese, often causing laughter in the office. After a while I thought, as someone who had been serving OMG for 37 years, Mr. Dragon might deserve all the hustle, considering the traditional respect for the senior and superior that Japanese culture brought with.

> They told me 'our CEO', Mr. Dragon really cared about corporate social responsibility issues. And he was very good at explaining their corporate philosophy to people, through telling interesting and funny stories. Mika told me recently she accompanied Mr. Dragon to factories giving speech about corporate philosophy to OMG employees all over the country, to first line workers. 'It's like going on a performing tour!' She told me proudly. [Field notes]

Since I started getting to know about OMG, I often heard stories of Mr. Dragon from other colleagues. They loved quoting what he said as 'the version' of interpretations concerning corporate culture. Unsurprisingly, as the CEO, Mr. Dragon had turned into the official spokesman for OMG philosophy. I witnessed my colleagues and factory workers enjoyed very much listening to his speeches. It was really interesting and fascinating, with stories of original OMG traditions and flavour of humanistic care. I often heard from Mika and Juri that he went to every subsidiary in China giving a corporate philosophy speech to first line workers, even when it seemed like an extra burden in his daily busy schedules.

> I am actually moved by Mr. Dragon's speech, the video clip about the disabled workers in the end… Suddenly the light is up, people stood up, several seconds later I was with the crew following Mr. Dragon. We got in the Mercedes with 7 doors, quickly left the old factory building behind. He looked tired; nobody said anything in the car. [Field notes]

Compared with the enthusiastic interactions with the workers during the speech, I gradually understood why Mika used the word 'performing tour' to describe this. He seemed to be quite a good actor. Therefore I just could not see which side of him is more real.

The acquaintance with these OMG people was developing along with our day to day work relationships; also through what they said in interviews, and, what they told me about their drawings… The representation and interpretation is not the simple combination of various methods and findings, but as a systematic organising and translating process, with meanings produced and mingled together. When looking at a drawing, there are things that can be easily seen, the lines, the colour, and words. However, some things might not appear obvious, but can still be considered from various angles. The producers were

not just my 'research participants', but also my close colleagues. What I appreciated the most was my close contact with these people, which offered me more possibilities to see, and learn about the organisation. Until the drawing starts moving, the picture comes to life, it seems possible to view the clips of stories and incidents, feel what they felt, and struggle what they've been through. Their laughter hasn't gone far away, their anger is still striking… and in the end, with their last tear drops, crystallising to colourful simple lines and stick figures on pieces of paper.

Theme 1: Translating Corporate Sustainability

The journey started from my inquiry about 'untranslatability' (Jakobson, 1959) between English and Chinese (occasionally Japanese) after I decided the context of this research. As suggested in previous chapters on translation, some theoretical concepts could not be taken for granted in the field, when they might have different implications for participants in various contexts. In this case, the commonly perceived definition of 'Corporate Sustainability' (van Marrewijk, 2003) was challenged due to the 'untranslatability' (Jakobson, 1959) in different lingual contexts. For example, the equivalent term for 'Sustainable Development' (可持续发展) could often be seen in Chinese media, but the literal Chinese translation for 'Corporate Sustainability' (企业可持续性) is not commonly used, which might be found in translated Chinese versions of sustainability reports from MNCs. Although there is a literal Japanese translation for 'Corporate Sustainability' (企業の持続性), it perhaps contains an implication of 'development' as well. More often it seems to have gone beyond the translingual translation practice, and started to reveal the dynamic understandings of the discursive construction of CS. Through examining the translating processes, the realities of people could be revealed, and the images of the organisation might be glimpsed.

The Development View

'There's no sustainability without development'

Although many of the interviewees associated 'development' with the notion of 'sustainability', it was clearly stated by Mr. Dragon, the CEO of OMG China, that 'There's no sustainability without development!'
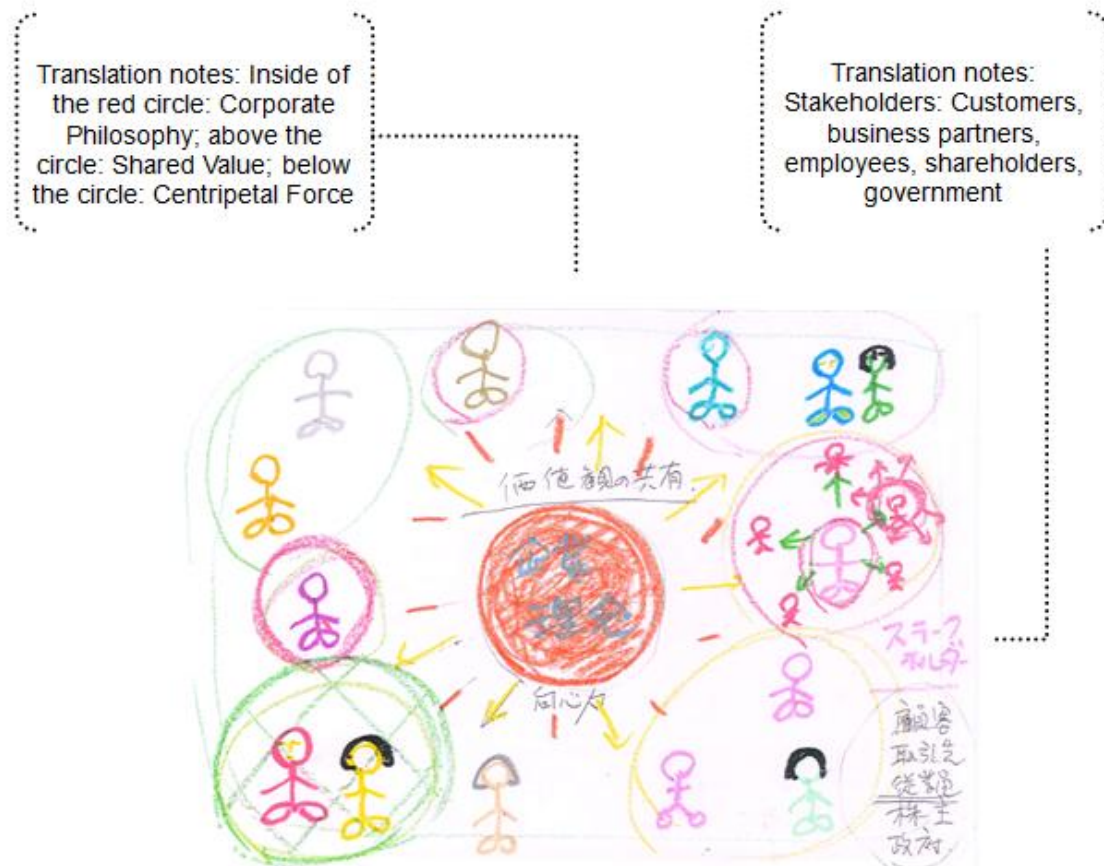

Figure 2: Drawing from Mr. Dragon, with translation notes

In the drawing which Mr. Dragon produced during interviewing (Figure 2), he drew a red circle in the middle to represent a sustainable corporation, just as the sun. Surrounded with various colours of stick figures to represent people in other subsidiaries all over the world, they can also be seen as OMG's various stakeholders.

> Mr. Dragon: 'Sustainable Corporation exists like the sun. The sun has to give everyone its benefit. In another word, the company must make profit through its business; otherwise a cold sun won't make any sense. What is the sun, how the sun thinks, and the thoughts of the sun are actually corporate philosophy. The company must make people understand why this company exists, continuously communicate to everyone.' [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

Inside of the red sun, he wrote, 'Corporate Philosophy' in Japanese, which was almost the same with Chinese characters. The sun was positioned in the middle of the paper, while shinning over the others. It was the most distinctive feature in his drawing. As the official spokesman of the OMG Corporate Philosophy, he used some strength to draw the sun, filled with thick red lines, but with a very round boundary, looked solid and perfect on its own.

Compared with other interviewees' drawings depicting the meaning of CS which were mainly picturing harmonious, balanced and even happy futures, Mr. Dragon wrote quite several words to identify and give exact names to almost every item he drew: he seemed worried if anyone got the wrong idea. By focusing on the importance of the 'culture system' for a corporation to survive, it is the core of the red circle, the warmth of the sun, the stories he tells everyday, the meaningingful purpose of a corporation… it is not just about what he 'believes', but the exhaustive ways of 'making people believe' (de Certeau, 1984).

> Mr. Dragon: 'You can't survive without support. It's like if you are getting benefit from the sun, you would pay money back for the benefit. Therefore they can make the business successful. The sun can be developed and become bigger and bigger. And bigger sun can provide more benefit. This win-win relationship supports/sustains the development. There's no sustainability without development.'
> [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

In addition to the economic benefits that sustaining relationships, and therefore a successful business, he considered 'development' as a major aspect for Corporate Sustainability. It was about 'being successful', 'growing', 'becoming bigger and bigger'. I wondered what 'development' mean to them.

Kasumi: 'I'd like to emphasise that the business development of a company is more important in terms of corporate sustainable development. Only an operating, developing, and profitable company could contribute to the society trully sustainably.' [Interview with the Environment Business Department Manager]

As agreed by many others participants, development is crucial to the company itself also with other stakeholders. They believed development is not only beneficial but neccesary for the future.

Teiko: I think the founder said that… to be honest is also for the development of this company. If you just pursue the final profit, the company surely can't… develop sustainably. In a broad way it was for actualising people's self value. I came here not only for… making money, I did lots of contributions to society. So this kind of company I think… can be recognised by the society, by its employees, therefore… a sense of accomplishment, therefore it could be developing sustainably and continually.

[Interview with Head of Production Department]

The Interdependent View

A sustainable relationship is a reciprocal relationship

The key thing which sustaining relationships, was often seen as 'the sunshine', the benefit, or the 'development' in OMG. Many participants also tended to consider the 'win-win' situation as the ideal situation for a 'sustainble development'.

Teiko: So here's an X axis and Y axis (Figure 3). X might represent the development of company itself; then Y might represent the development of society, or might also represent the interests of employees. So… I think sustainable development hopefully is a situation when all the stakeholders can achieve 'win-win'. So I drew it like this, and the arrow means, all… the interests or the development both sides could get is going upwards together.

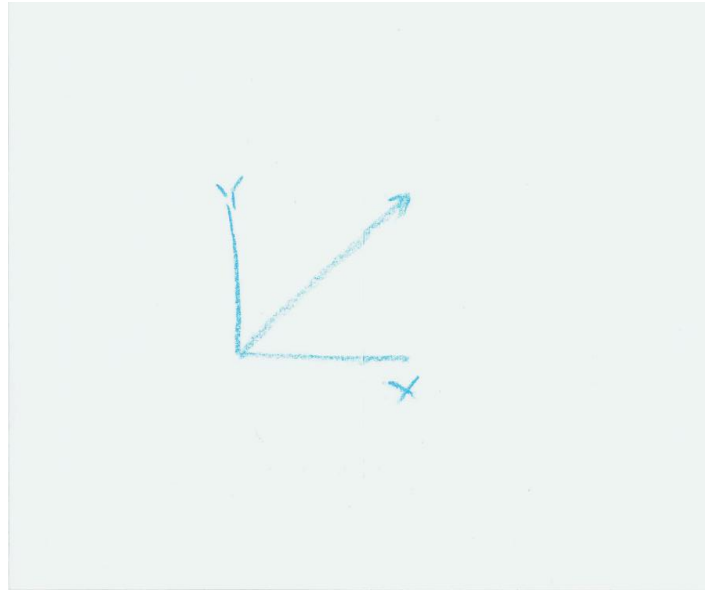[Interview with Head of Production Department]

Figure 3: Drawing from Teiko, the Head of Production

This X-Y pattern could be found in several participants' drawing, representing the balance among various interests. Teiko, an experienced production manager, simplified the complex, and challenging situations to the classic X-Y model. They seemed to see CS as 'the ideal' situation which maintains the balance among all stakeholders in order to develop a reciprocal, and therefore sustainable relationship. Looking at the X and Y axis, there is one arrow in the middle, which might represent the aspiration of achieving an indefinite growth.

A sustainable relationship is a reciprocal relationship. However, 'reciprocal' doesn't just mean 'mutual benefit'. It describes a long term relationship that is sustaining but not always flourishing. A sustainable relationship cannot just rely on mutual benefit either, as the relationship will break when the benefit is gone, when the hard time comes. If people come together just because of benefit, one day they will go apart to look for more benefit too.

Cost-effective happiness

In the meantime, what else is also important for people there? 'Being happy', seemed to be pursued by many participants too.

> Translation Note: The Chinese characters mean 'Sustainable Development'

> Translation Note: The Japanese characters mean 'Smile'
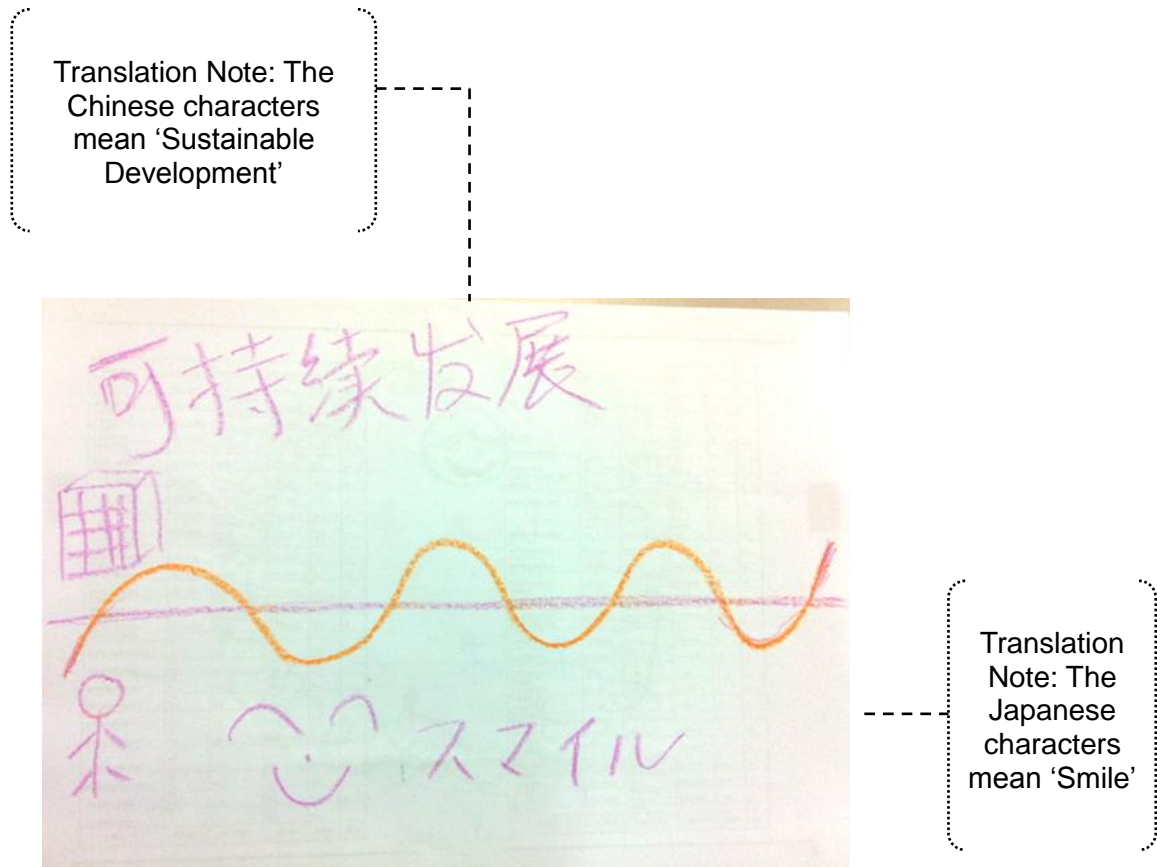
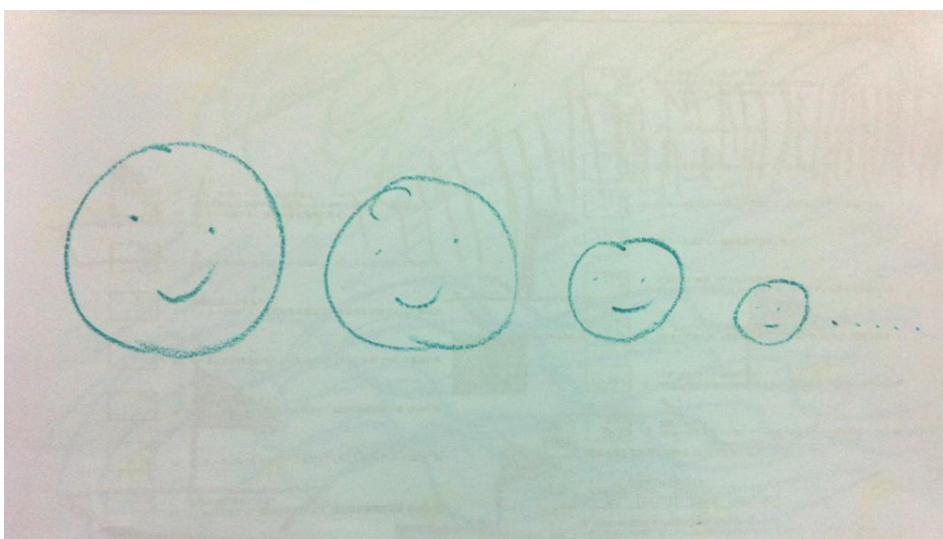Figure 4: Drawing from Juri

Figure 5: Drawing from Jeni, Purchasing assistant of OMG China

Juri: 'First of all, Corporate Sustainability is about corporations. So here is a big building (see Figure 4) – I don't know other companies but our company is in a skyscraper like this. I chose pink because I just like pink and it's at my hand. My point is a company can't always be great. It has the ups and downs on its way of development. Although there are some twists and turns, it's always moving forward. Look, that's why the last turn, the last bit is up. What I'm saying is no matter what in the sustainably developing process, employee's happiness is also very important. And this is lines of Sustainable Development so I wrote the words (in Chinese) on top of it'. [Field notes]

When Juri drew the Figure 4 to show her understandings about Corporate Sustainability, she drew a cube with lines as a building, as where she works; a straight line and a wave line; a stick figure was at the left bottom; in the middle of the bottom, there was a big smile and Japanese words 'Smile'.

Juri: 'That's why I drew a smiley face in the 'sustainable development' drawing. Actually… what I am pursuing all the time is working happily, this is my goal. Although I would get angry sometimes, that's inevitable.' [Interview with Juri]

A smile looks simple but might mean much more. In Figure 5, the other colleague in our department Jeni used these five smiley faces to capture the meaning of Sustainable Development – not only current generations (big smiley faces) are happy, the future generations (smaller smiley faces) need to be happy as well. In their eyes, the happiness of themselves, and the employees (including first line workers) was seen as the biggest challenge in developing a sustainable corporation.

As an intern, my job there would be helping them to promote the corporate philosophy and communicate it to their employees. It was my first day at my orientation with Juri and Mika. I asked why they wanted to promote their corporate culture to everyone even including the first line workers. Juri explained to me that the reason was 'to make them feel happy working here - therefore to decrease the turnover rate, without actually giving them more money.' [Field notes]

'Happy', 'happy' again… I understand that people would tend to stay at their jobs, if they feel happy working in a place. But I was surprised by Juri's answer, as I did not understand that getting to know the history and values of a company could make people happier. However, it turned out to be the main challenge and task for me as well during my fieldwork - the institutionalised and cost-effective 'happiness'.

In addition to 'reciprocal relationship', the interdependency was also addressed. When Rina was talking about her drawing shown as Figure 6, she had a strong emphasis on the relationships between the four most important things. Also, they were interdependent relationships that having continuous and various influences on each other.
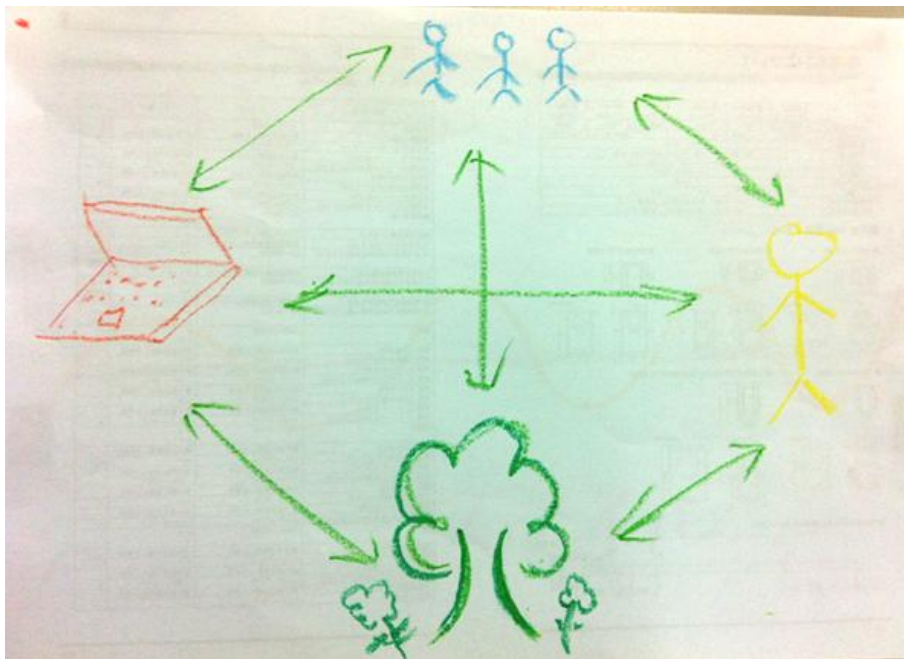

Figure 6: Drawing from Rina

> Rina: Simply thinking Corporate Sustainability is the harmonious development of *people*, *corporation*, *society* and *nature*.
>
> I: How to be harmonious then?
>
> Rina: Being harmonious is… influencing each other; restraining each other; helping each other to improve… always within each other.
>
> I: Can you tell me more about these influences? Any example?
>
> Rina: Um… can't think of any. It's just like what I said, just like that.
>
> [Interview with Rina]

The arrows were all double sided. In her view, everything was about 'each other'. But when she was talking about these interdependent relationships, she seemed to be quite objective and not very attached at all. I asked her to describe more about these relationships. She considered for a while, just couldn't say more. Later in her interview, when she was talking about the relationships between us, the Head Office and other subsidiaries, she described it rationally and incisively.

> Rina: And actually inside of the group, where there is benefit there is friend, there is… 'us', hehe; without benefit, there is only trouble, that is 'you', hehe. When they need us they would treat us as 'us', when they don't need us they would see us as 'them', hehe.
>
> [Interview with Rina]

It was quite common for them to see different identities from other OMG subsidiaries as they were separate sub companies, but she gave one neat and simple explanation about the reason: benefit. I wondered maybe that was how she felt in her previous experience. So now she tended to be detached and saw 'benefit' as the only connection between these 'interdependent relationships'. As for her, maybe other interdependent relationships did not exist. Therefore, in order to have more of these 'interdependent relationships', she thought 'work' was the only way to make her having 'benefit', or 'value', maybe that was why she was always willing to work much harder than others.

The Nature View

'It's a feeling without boundary'

When Mika was explaining Figure 7 she drew in the workshop, she preferred to describe corporate sustainable development as a 'feeling' rather than a fixed concept. She thought the feeling of 'endless sea' would match with the feeling of sustainability.

Figure 7: Drawing from Mika

Mika: 'Well, the sea is endless. So I think it matches with the sustainable development feeling.'

I: 'Feeling? What kind of feeling?'

Mika: 'It is sustainable development, therefore it's indefinitely prolonging, without any boundary. The future can't be seen.'

I: 'You think the future is unknown?'

Mika: 'I think it's… unpredictable. But I think it's more like looking forward to, it's a feeling. Because I can't see what is ahead of us, I'm a bit excited. I really want to know what is in the front. But I hope it is going forward, towards a good and bright direction.'

[Interview with Mika]

As Emi and Juri, Mika was a major member of the corporate culture team, responsible for communicating OMG's corporate culture across the organisation. In OMG, a rational, structured, and 'lean' corporate life seemed to be the main key, with a strong focus on efficiency and productivity. Every day it was about looking for profit maximisation, making rational choices, providing clear justification of the choices, and being sensitive to what extent you could talk or act. I was surprised when someone in OMG started talking about a 'feeling without boundary'.

Compared with other pictures, Mika's drawing is quite distinctive. It is a picture full of free strokes with colourful expressions. The things she drew were not definite as they were not fixed to certain shapes with clarity. Various lines and circles were tangled together, one thing was emerged from another and it seemed to sink back into the other gradually. Unlike other drawings, this one certainly had more dimensions with an indistinctive landscape as background, and prominent sailing boats travelling in the glimpse of sunshine… Instead of just the representation of a still, fixed image, it was a lively picture that was constantly emerging and submerging.

Firstly there was not much space left on the paper. Most drawings would leave some space at corners, headers or footers. Her drawing was filled with many intensive strokes and bold colour representations. She must have used considerable strength as the lines were quite thick. One was overlapped and mingled by the other. She drew it spontaneously and freely, but also with texture - she used two shades of blue to draw the sea.

Secondly there was no division in the landscape, no separation between the sea and forest. Mika mingled many light blue and dark blue wave lines to represent the sea; random circular lines in green and brown lines underneath as forest in the background. She then drew five purple big boats with sails on the sea and two smaller ones in bright yellow. In the end she drew the sun on the top right of the picture, filled with dark red… Everything in the background seemed a bit blurred, but well blended within each other as a sustainable dreamland that was tranquil and promising. In contrast, a group of sailing boats were brought up as the main actors here leading the viewer to move towards the future.

During the workshop they were asked to draw 'What is Corporate Sustainability in their mind'. While Mika's colleagues were spending time depicting the keyboard of a laptop, or making portraits of people, she seemed to have a lot to get off her chest. Looking at this piece of paper full of colourful strokes and blocks, it seemed as if Mika was saying more than what she could by words: confusion, frustration, complexity. Something she might not be able to clarify by

talking, something that may not be very clear. Maybe something as a 'feeling', that needs to be felt and expressed, rather than to be spoken.

'A spirit with no shape'

> I: 'Do you like your current job'?
>
> Mika: 'Um… I can't say I don't. There's surely no 'dislike'. If you say 'like it very much', then perhaps I can't say I like it very much. I can only say – because it's very difficult to do what you like. Once you started liking it, you can't treat it as a normal job. As a normal job, I don't think people should add in these personal emotions. I feel like now I'm based on 'like it a bit', treat it as my occupation, do it seriously. Because if you 'like' it, there will be a kind of… emotion in it. Once I stop liking it then I cannot do this job any more. I think I should focus on more studying and restudying.' [Interview with Mika]

In the beginning, I did not expect such a long answer for that question. Clearly there was never a simple conclusion in her mind. Additionally, as asked by a close colleague who had been working with her every day for 3 months, her answer was subtle but not exaggerated. She seemed to try really hard not to stand at either of the extremes of 'liking' or 'disliking', more like wandering in-between. Her showing of neutrality might be a sign of intentionally detaching from her emotions, and the outcomes of the confliction between her free will and the organisation's reality effects. Conversely, her choice of neutrality might have revealed the uncertainty and frustration she experienced in 'reality'.

> Mika: 'Now I'm working on 'corporate culture', hehe. Actually when I first came I had no idea what is corporate culture. If you want me to tell you what it is in one or two sentences I still cannot. I feel like it is more of a 'spirit' that you need to understand gradually. Because corporate culture is very difficult to be quantified, or summarised to a certain shape. It's more like a spirit'. [Interview with Mika]

After Mika described CS as 'a feeling without boundary', she gradually realised that 'corporate culture' was more like a 'spirit with no shape'. In her mind, she saw things changing constantly rather than fixed for representation. Therefore, we could only capture glimpses of moving things – things were not clear, not in 'certain shapes', and probably things could only be described with colourful blocks and arbitrary strokes, as expressed in her drawing. Again, it might be because of the uncertain and complicated realities she had to deal with everyday.

135

Was there no shape, no boundary in her drawing? There was no neat separation between the sea, the forest, or even with the sunrise, as the natural background. However, the sailing boats jumped out from the paper with distinctive straight lines and edges – a quadrangle base at the bottom of boat, and a triangular flag as the wind sail.

This is a story about interdependence and contrast: wave colourings compared to angled lines; the non-fixed pattern compared to clear shapes; the great nature compared to organisational machine; the feeling without boundary compared to the feeling of being imprisoned, perhaps. The dreamland for CS in Mika's mind was painted intuitively and skilfully: when the contrasts were resolved with each other, and slowly emerged together; the nourishment from the great nature provided a vast canvas for the marching corporate fleets, which might seem to be extremely and intentionally huge.

The Ideal/Reality View

When she was asked to draw what Corporate Sustainability meant to her as Figure 4, she firstly drew the pink straight line, and then when she just started drawing the wave line, she stopped and changed to another colour, as shown in Figure 8.
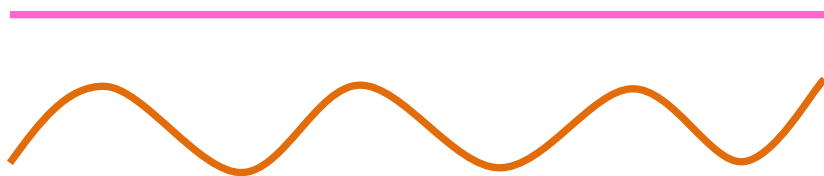
Figure 8: Adapted from Juri's drawing

Juri did not draw a coordinate graphs with X and Y axis, like many others. She chose to draw two kinds of simple lines together that might have other implications: a straight line and a wave line, which could be suggesting 'what

things should be', and 'what things really are', the ideal aspiration and the reflected reality effects.

> Juri: 'Maybe this (straight line) is what we hope for; this (wave line) is perhaps how it looks actually.'
>
> [Field notes]

According to most of the drawings in OMG, a clear distinction between the ideal and the reality did not exist. They tended to mix them together in various ways. It could be traced from their idealised views of CS in the beginning. When studying their transcripts, realities were reflected in their idealisation constantly, sometimes even more prominently, as that is what they see and how they feel every day, which in many cases is not very easy to escape from. In Juri's case, the differences between the ideal and the real was recognised. They were in different colours, although the lines were overlapped and tangled together, to compose a whole picture.

> Juri: 'Um... how to say it, before I went to Japan, I think I was still very innocent. However after some tough time, the same words could mean other things to me. I can't give you an example right now. But clearly I felt, my understandings have changed after those experiences.'
> [Interview with Juri]
>
> Juri: 'Now I'm working on Corporate Culture. Before this I was not really paying any attention to corporate philosophy, and whatever Mr. Dragon talked about. Now every time I would listen to his speeches, I would listen very carefully. Because for something, even though you've heard of it – but now your position is different, your thinking has changed. And also, they speak Japanese. If it was me, how I would translate that in Chinese, was one of my challenges as well hehe.'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

'My thinking has changed', as she said: Juri recognised the belief that things should be what they think was 'innocent', ideal, simplex, single explanation, direct. She gradually realised that things in life might be more complicated. She learnt to embrace different understandings, and various translations according to situations, enjoying the 'twists and turns'…

Pink straight line: Things that should be

Red wave line: Things look like, as the 'translated'

Figure 9: Pink and red lines, adapted from Juri's drawing

> Juri: 'Last time I didn't say – compared with mentality, it's similar to Corporate Philosophy. I really think our Corporate Philosophy is quite positive and encouraging, but how much it can be achieved… we just don't know.' [Interview with Juri]

As with the OMG Corporate Philosophy - it had been written, in Japanese, in Chinese. The main job of Juri and the rest of us in Corporate Culture Department was translating and communicating it to various audiences in OMG China. Sometimes it might be just some hollow statements on paper, sometimes it could be translated with exciting and relevant messages. It depended on the interpreter, and the situations.

> Juri: 'Actually the concept of environment protection is always in my mind. How to say it… there are many things that are contradicted. For environment protection, considering the whole world and human kind, environment protection should be started from Corporations. But corporations are just for corporate profit, no matter in what country, I think. It will consider profit and then other things. It won't consider environment and then these stuff hehe. So last time the OMG Day meeting, if I were the boss I would definitely choose to plant trees. Therefore the attitude from boss is very crucial to every company. But I understand, like planting trees, it's easier said than done.'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

Facing the multiple realities that continuously change, Juri was confused, and struggled. As a well-educated young professional working on corporate culture, she cared about the environment, the society, the planet. Interestingly she was the only one in that meeting who was insisting on planting trees - although she knew 'profit' and 'practicality' were always more important.

138

Therefore she thought if people with certain power in OMG, they could help making the decision, such as 'to plant more trees' by taking advantage of their power. When everyone else was just trying to find a way to avoid extra work, but still achieve the seemingly same effect, Juri thought it might work if a boss could stand up and just say, 'let's plant trees'. It might cost more and be troublesome, but if that's what should be done. Although the discussion on whether planning trees would do 'more good' is not the focus in the thesis, I did wonder why Juri would think the word of a boss might be more effective.

Theme 2: 'Visible structures' & 'invisible axis'

Like many organisations, relationships among people in OMG are very important, as they could affect almost everything, but in an elusive and subtle way. It seldom reveals itself if you look for it intentionally, but it exists in many shapes. Sometimes an argument in the office would apparently attract attention, but more often the almost 'invisible' interactions could exude something more, which might be captured or traced through people's monologue, casual conversations, or even some subtle eye-contact and smiles that disappear in seconds. Usually, relationships among people were not the things discussed freely in public, as the unspeakable 'secrets' everyone knew. It is hard to capture these things in a fast changing working environment, and certainly difficult to assert that I knew better as I had been there. Here I am just trying to offer an account based on what I saw, what I heard and what I experienced there. It might not be the 'truth', if truth can ever been discovered, but it was intended to be more truthful. The discussion points arising from this account could not be generalised broadly, but might seem to be more common in today's organisations.

The Big Moustache

After I looked at the complicated and even slightly twisted relationship among Emi and her subordinates, again and again, it possibly can be interpreted by the archetypes of leaders in Emi's mind - Emi's idea of what she thought a boss or

a good leader should be, has influenced how Emi thought she should act in front of her subordinates.

When she drew Figure 10, demonstrating her idealisation of a sustainable organisation in our department training workshop, I asked her to describe what she drew.

Figure 10: Drawing from Emi

> Emi: 'The green circle is the sustainable organisation. It is green, no pollution. If there is a company, there has to be a boss. Here is the boss, the head with the moustache.'
>
> I: 'Does that mean you think the boss should be a man?'
>
> Emi: 'Of course. The big boss is certainly a man.'
>
> Other colleagues: 'Wooooo!'
>
> Emi: 'No no, I mean the big boss in our company is a man.'
>
> [Field notes]

Here the head with a big moustache represented the ideal image of a boss in Emi's mind. Regardless of other qualities, it has to be a man in the first place; then an experienced man, a man is leading others, positioned in the superior centre. In a hierarchical Japanese organisation like OMG, most top managers were male and senior, which had influenced the image of leader from Emi's

140

perspective. In this account, the boss of a company or a department with the top official position would be assumed as a leader, who could have the most influence on others.

Therefore, if Emi thought a leader should look like a man in the first place, there might be a gap between 'who she is' and 'who she wants to be'. Without that physical appearance to be a 'leader', she might try to behave like a male leader; sometimes, even more than that in order to be as good as other male managers. Therefore she should be tough, ruthless, task oriented, and demanding to her subordinates. She could not show her soft side, if she considered caring as a female or a motherhood trait, which conflicted or 'softened' with the male leader's image.

But when her role changed from a leader to be a subordinate, she was not that strong anymore. Sometimes she acted like a 'school girl' in front of Mr. Dragon, the big boss in the company. It was not only shaped by OMG's distinctive organisational culture, but also Emi's personality, which could be seen from her monologue.

> Emi: 'Yeah, I… my personality, is - I'm not good at… uniting everyone. Things with people are… a bit shallow. But… long-term… relationships are relatively not deep, but with relatively more relationships. I'm not very good at it. It's like I could get along with anyone, but no deep (close) relationships, not good at it. I'm a bit… slow. But… with just a few people, I can be quite close. This might be my personality. So probably I'm not very suitable to be a… boss (leader)'. [Interview with Emi]
>
> Emi: 'I don't know why. I think I always fail to maintain a good relationship, always. Also convincing people is my weakness, I think. Basically I'm not really good at convincing others. Sometimes I just don't want to argue too much'. [Interview with Emi]

Maybe acting as a strong, demanding leader was a cover or even a compensation for the weakness she felt in herself. But why did she think she had to act like that, therefore to be a 'good leader'? In OMG, top management positions were occupied by men mostly, but there were still several female department managers at same level as Emi. Although I did not get the chance to understand how they considered themselves as female managers, some did manage to maintain relatively good relationships with their subordinates. Nevertheless, the gender effect Emi perceived might not be true, but it would be her account of interpreting the organisational culture.

141

Before Emi joined OMG, she worked in several Japanese multinational companies in Shanghai, mainly in administration and human resource management. Prior to that, she was in Japan for about 9 years, working as a language teacher and interpreter. She had the chance to be influenced by Japanese both national culture, and typical organisational culture. I was not surprised that when we were having private conversations after work, she seemed to prefer Japanese food and drinks than Chinese. However, when something happened, it would trigger her reactions, attitudes and emotions, which were largely influenced by her prejudgement towards OMG's organisational culture.

'Why he's not under me?'

When Japanese resource specialist Mr. Kouta came to work in her department, she felt threatened, and kept questioning the 'special' arrangement of his position. Mr. Kouta was a Japanese male manager who was just transferred to China, about the same time as me. He was about 40 years old, specialised in professionalization of administration. Interestingly, he sat in her department, and technically belonged to her department, but he did not report to Emi. He reported to Emi's boss, the General Manager Tarou, who was in charge of both Administration and HR. As the administration department manager, Emi thought it was extremely unfair that Mr. Kouta was put in her department without being 'managed' by herself. Although Mr. Kouta was employed on a different evaluation system, as an expat specialist manager, she still considered that as an outrageous overreaching of power, mainly because she is a female manager who might look, 'not that strong'.

> Emi: 'Now they want to drag Kouta in to do professionalization or something, there's nothing wrong about that, but why, he is not UNDER ME, I just don't understand!'
>
> I: 'Isn't he?'
>
> Emi: 'He is not! Now he said he's just… in our department, yes… Tarou is his boss. But he has no personnel power, he only offers the professionalization service to us. But… if you consider, another Japanese guy who's in similar situation, he belongs to the CEO Office.

Why Kouta isn't in the CEO Office? I think this is just quite an artificial phenomenon! This is just too… unfair!'

(6 seconds long pause until I said something)

[Interview with Emi]

When she told me the story in her interview, she got so excited that she gazed at me with those angry eyes as if I had taken something away from her. The reason why she was so angry about this may be explained by considering it as undermining her authority in the department. It is not hard to understand why Emi felt threatened following the previous discussion. Mr. Kouta was a specialised, Japanese, male manager. In many people's eyes he already looked like a 'boss' before he did anything. Also, the action of 'not putting him under her management' deeply confirmed, and reconstructed her assumptions about herself and others: as he was a specialised Japanese male manager, he could not be put under the management of a female administration manager.

'The boss should be the sun'

Looking back at the drawing Emi produced in Figure 10, within that green circle representing the sustainable corporation, most people were small stick figures in various colours, with few details; except the head portrait of 'the boss', with a distinctive black moustache, eyes, and the halved fringe style. The head figure became the most outstanding element in the picture, in terms of the size and the position. It was placed in the middle of the green circle, right above the others, who were arranged around the image of the head.

In Emi's mind, maybe the necessity to obey the boss was derived from the leader-centric perspective she perceived from organisations she had worked with. She saw the boss as the person who matters the most, and as the focus, or the superior centre in the organisation, while others should be following 'him', or herself in the example of her department.

E: 'Corporate culture here… it's different at different times. Once CEO is changed, the culture will be different. The corporate philosophy remains the same, but the corporate culture has been constructed, it won't be the same.'

I: 'Is the CEO largely influencing the corporate culture?'

E: 'Yes… processes can be changed; policies can also be changed - as long as the CEO thinks it should be changed.'

I: 'So whatever CEO says is to be, has got to be?'

E: 'Yes. Therefore I think it's highly problematic actually.'

[Interview with Emi]

Here, as the Manager of the 'Corporate Culture Department', Emi addressed the distinction between corporate culture, and corporate philosophy. She described corporate culture as something which could be changed, and largely influenced by the big boss in the Head Office of OMG, the CEO. Therefore the boss, as a person, and also as an image, an icon, was so prominent in an organisation. This, perhaps again explained, and maybe amplified the inadequate feeling she had toward herself, who was nothing looked like 'him', as her version of the ideal boss.

Although she realised the problematic nature of the organisation's culture, she had never properly addressed the possible reason of how it could be improved in any of our conversations, or my observations. In a way, she had become used to obeying her bosses, but, at the same time expected her subordinates to obey her. Also, if the interpretation of the superior male boss image revealed from Emi's drawing was tentative, she would not reflect on her drawing like this in her interview a few months later.

E: (5 seconds pause)

'In my mind boss is the sun isn't it? I drew it like the sun, and it's a man.'

I: 'Yes maybe. Do you think the boss is the sun?'

E: 'Um… I don't think boss is the sun. But I do think boss should be the sun, he should be shinning all over the place. He shouldn't be shinning at one place, unless a cloud has come.'

[Interview with Emi]

144

At this point Emi confirmed again, that it was a male image used for the head portrait. She emphasised the 'shining effect' from an ideal boss, who would not be partial to any side. The 'sunshine', is metaphorically used to describe a certain kind of benefit or glory that maybe power could bring with it. On the other hand, the idealisation of an equal distribution of power reflected the 'unfair treatment' she had experienced. Also, fairness could be another characteristic for the idealised leader in her mind, besides the male, experienced image.

Even if sometimes the boss was unfair, Emi might not see it as the boss's fault. Instead, it was because the 'sunshine' was blocked by 'cloud', as if it was some random and unexpected but common incident. Emi realised although people have bias that might block their normal judgement, it could not affect the ideal image of the authoritative leader in her mind.

In addition to the 'incidental cloud', she also emphasised the diversity of people in the organisation by using four different colours to draw the stick figures representing 'the people'. And she indicated the 'pink area' closest to the boss as her department from which almost all the staff was female.

Emi: 'People are very important although it is always like blood, renewing constantly. And people… there are all kinds of people, with different personalities, nationalities, ideologies.'

I: 'What do you think as your scope of responsibility then?'

Emi: 'I… I think it's the pink area, maybe they are my subordinates.'

[Interview with Emi]

The 'Visible Structures'

Looking at Emi's drawing carefully, there are some patterns could be drawn as shown in Figure 11: (a) the arrangement of the stick figures within the green circle were not only clearly positioned as rows, (b) but it was also symmetrically distributed around the boss's head portrait. It is not unusual that alignment was found in drawings as visual characteristics, but it is interesting the axis line also happened to cross the centre of the boss's head figure.
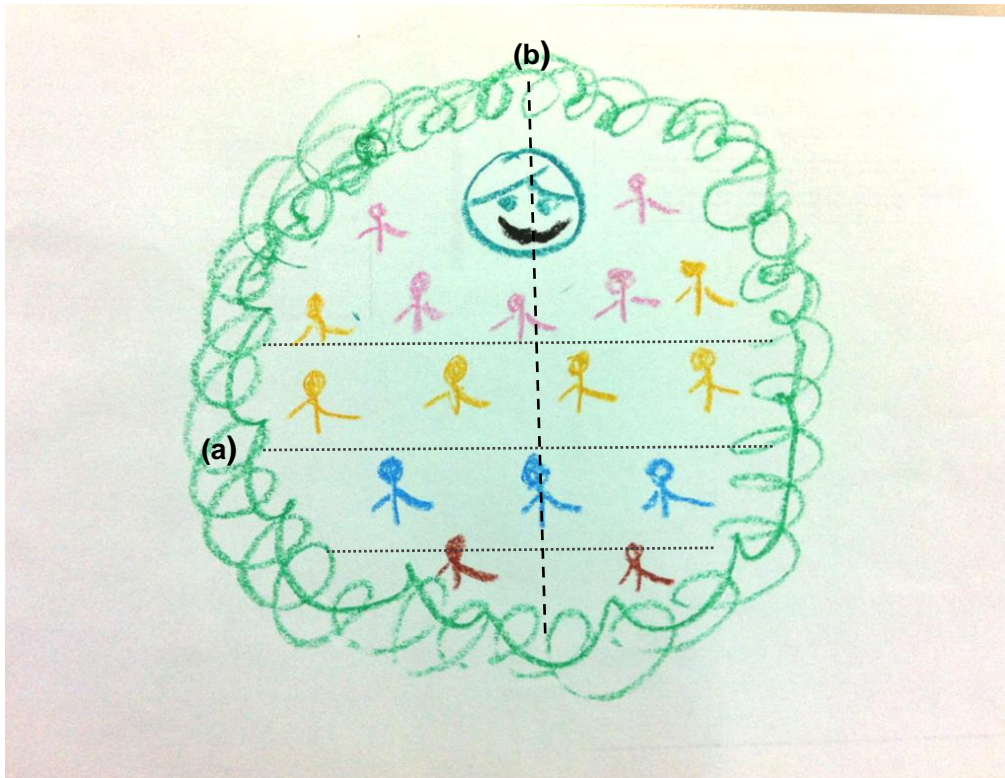
Figure 11: Drawing from Emi, with lines shown as (a) and (b)

As shown in Figure 11, the rows of the stick figures could be interpreted as the clear structures Emi had imprinted in her mind as one of the distinctive features in OMG, which I call the 'visible structures'. They are like the structured hierarchies in the organisation, just like these lines, seemed so evident that everyone could see in the situation, even no one had to draw it out.

Other participants could not help reflecting on the 'visible structures' in their drawings as well. As shown in Figure 12, the assistant in the Environment Business Department drew a square field with straight lines as the OMG office, while she saw herself in a department with different culture, which encourages people to explore, just like in the sea. She even drew a line of trees to make this distinction even clearer.

Figure 12: Drawing from Aiko, Assistant of Environment Business

Maybe the neat square with clear structures was what Aiko saw in OMG? I remembered that when I joined OMG, the physical seating arrangement was one of the first things I struggled with.

> I could not help noticing the office arrangement from the moment I walked in for the first time. It is an open plan office, which is perfectly normal in many companies - two rows of desks which colleagues facing each other. Interestingly, in the end of these desks, there is one seat facing the group - department manager generally. After a while I was told if there is enough space the general managers are supposed to sit behind that row as well. All in all, it would look like a living organisation chart, where the hierarchy can be visually represented by the ordering of sitting. [Field notes]

Looking back at Emi's drawing in Figure 11, I doubt to what extent these identical stick figures were really representing 'the people' as she said. They were organised so that I could not help reflecting on the structured sitting arrangement in OMG, where each row belongs to a different department in the office. Emi did not draw these stick figures in various colours arbitrarily, but used mainly one colour in each row as if they are in one department. Maybe it was not 'the people' she saw, but 'the structured positions' instead, which could be considered as a distinctive organisation feature in OMG.

147

Additionally, the distance between the departments was further than it appeared. Also I found that different departments appreciated different sub cultures. Maybe this was the reason Emi chose to draw in different colours.

> In that open plan office I could hear people talking several rows away if it was quiet enough, mostly when they were talking over phones. One day I found two people from two adjacent departments were on the phone, talking to each other. Their seats were just in less than five metres away. I was quite surprised but I understood if they wanted to have casual conversations without bothering other people, and it could be quite efficient. Later on I learnt to do the same.
>
> [Field notes]

Although most people appeared to be working in this big open plan office, there was not much communication among them, compared to the interactions in corridors or even restroom. After working there for some time, I gradually learnt to pay some attention to my 'act' in that big office too, as I knew I could be seen by others. Also after a while, I gradually 'saw' the separations and structures between departments, or between boss and subordinates.

'It depends on the structure, not person'

> Mr. Dragon: 'In western companies, boss has personnel authority to fire subordinate. In America, direct boss can fire subordinate. If he doesn't want to be fired, he would follow/obey the boss. But in Japanese company, boss only has evaluation rights. So the boss can't just fire the subordinate.'
>
> I: 'Then who can decide to fire someone in Japanese firms?'
>
> Mr. Dragon: 'It's not by person; it depends on the system of the organisation.'
>
> [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

Following the discussion of the tendency of people obeying the boss, Mr. Dragon declared that it was not OMG's fault, nor the Japanese companies' fault. Through his careful justification, he seemed to blame the organisational system itself rather than people in the position.

Figure 13: The left bottom corner adapted from Mr. Dragon's drawing

Figure 13 is a screenshot focusing on the left bottom of the drawing produced by Mr.Dragon. There are two people in a green circle with crossing lines, which looks like they are inside of a sophisticated and structured green cage. It could be considered as other people's realities, working in organisations such as this. However, it is not very important in the picture, it is just one bottom corner of the whole page, surely not as central as the impacts of the big solid sun.

The 'Square'

However, like me, some people living within the lines could certainly feel caged on occasions.

> On the way back to the office, the taxi could barely move in the traffic jam in a late Friday afternoon. However it created a rare and great opportunity for me to talk with Rina. I asked her what she thought about working in OMG. She was honest, and told me working for Japanese companies could be quite 'gloomy' because there were too many restrictions and structures that could make people feel almost suffocated. I did not know she felt like this before.
>
> Rina: 'In Japanese companies, everything is set rigidly: what time you have to arrive, when to leave, what to do when you say hi to people, how long your skirts should be, how many minutes you can take for lunch break… everything is set. It's the same with work. There's very limited space for you to imagine, to think. OMG is better actually, those companies I was in were much worse. You have to do whatever the boss says. No exception.'
>
> [Field notes]

149

Although Rina repeatedly said OMG was much better, in terms of how much someone has to listen to the boss, it still showed she was concerned about that. The company regulations, detailed restrictions, hierarchical structures, were like the square cage in her drawing, which made her feel struggled, confused, and even 'suffocated'. In this 'cage', she was required to be someone else - a considerate, sophisticated admin manager, who should have known a lot about taking detours rather than just throwing ideas.

> I wondered if Rina is not really popular here. She always seems to be stressed by work. I could see Juri and Mika are closer in the department. But Rina seems trying hard to get close to others. She would prefer to sit with others at lunch even though the table is quite full already.
>
> [Field notes]

As shown in Figure 14 with Rina's drawings again, it is not hard to see a green square below composed of six double sided arrows, which were all direct and straight lines, drawn without much hesitation. According to Rina, the yellow stick figure represents person, or self, the group of three blue ones the society, the laptop represents work, or company, and the trees represent the natural environment. In OMG, there is a tendency or preference towards simplicity. Rina might have picked up on that, and found it might be simpler to look at the individual, society, work, and environment as separated and distinctive entities. They are influenced by each other, but the influences might essentially be direct relations act on each other. Maybe she saw relations in OMG mainly as transactional relations.
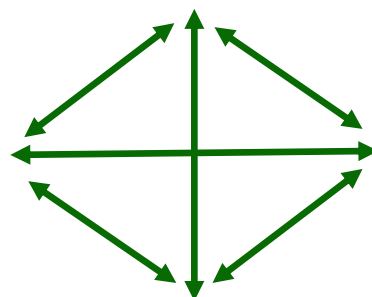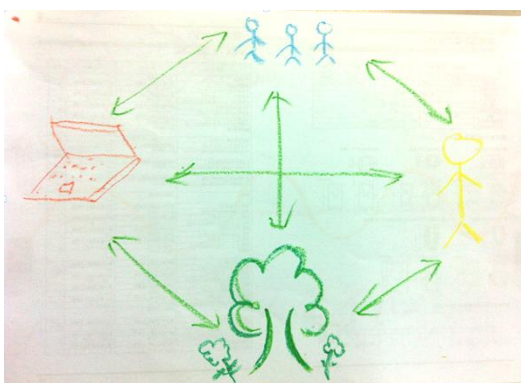

Figure 14: The square, adapted from Rina's drawing

Conversely, the square is more than the symbol representing her idealised 'interdependent relationship'. As shown in some other drawings, for example Mr. Dragon's, see Figure 13. They all could be associated with the structured hierarchies in OMG, or the invisible 'cage' that might have been restricting and trapping people, just like Rina. It almost became herself - a square among others, a square with angles which could not fit in.

The 'Invisible Axis'

> Fast, everything is moving so fast, changing all the time. You cannot have one second break without checking emails and calendars, thinking what's going on, where your boss is, what the others are doing. The interactions among people are changing constantly and irregularly. If there is one rule, is watching your boss, and the boss's boss.
>
> [Field notes]

In a constantly changing business environment, the roles for top managers seem to be very crucial. It is a non-sales directed organisation, just like OMG China. In Emi's mind, the boss is not only the superior leader in that hierarchical organisation, but also the 'invisible' axis in the organisation that constantly influencing and motivating almost everyone.

In the interview with Mr. Dragon, he described the differences he identified between the American style of doing business, which is based on objectivity, and the Japanese style of doing business, which is humanistic-oriented. As shown in Figure 15, he wrote 'people' and 'business' on the white board, emphasised the distinction between the two by drawing a giant axis line in the middle: as if telling us people and business are two totally different subjects.

> Mr. Dragon: 'In the US, they think mainly from a quantitative way, and they also want to make people behave quantitatively. As if they don't do that, it won't be scientific. But in Japan, they are separated - the 'people' and 'business'. People are irrational and emotional, but business is rational, but they are separated. Because that in Japan they look at them as separated. Therefore it is complicated and hard to understand. But it's not contradictory. They are separated - business should be rational and scientific, while people are irrational. But people are the ones who are doing business.'
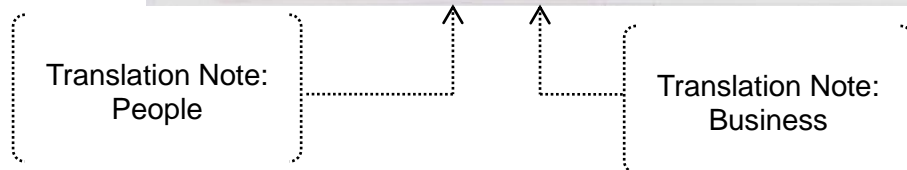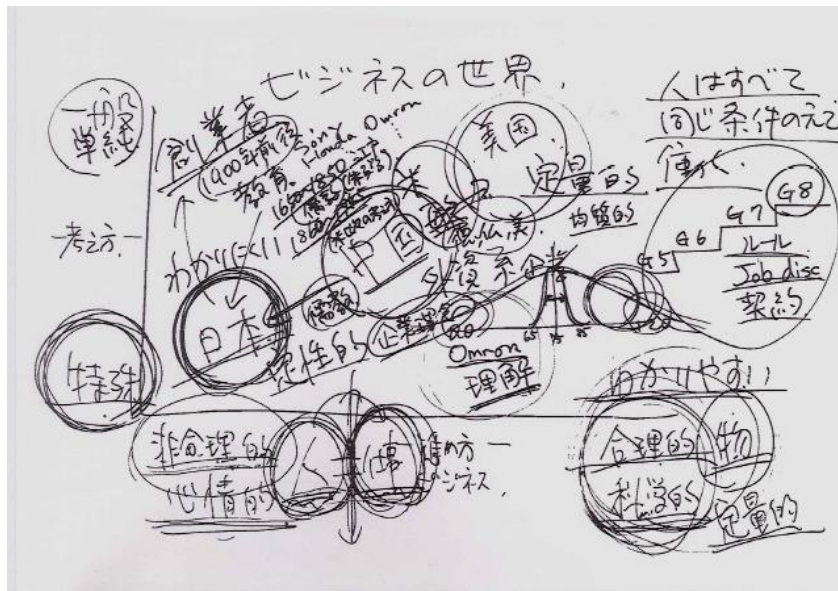>
> [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

Figure 15: Whiteboard diagram from Mr. Dragon, with translation notes

When I was interviewing Mr. Dragon, Emi was the interpreter, as I could not speak Japanese and they preferred someone working for OMG to help me with that. It was very interesting to hear her opinions of what Mr. Dragon had said, when Emi and I later had lunch outside of the company.

> Emi: 'He said people and business are separated, what's the division? Who decides when to think business objectively and when to consider irrationally and emotionally? Himself! The division line he drew between 'people' and 'business'… It's not standing still, the line can actually move, move between the two! It's spinning all the time! It's spinning like an axis, and actually the boss is the 'invisible axis' in the middle!'
>
> [Field notes]

It was one of the initial conversations we had in private, and I did not really understand at that time. She became quite excited and rather angry, spinning her right index finger to show me the 'invisible axis' she interpreted from Mr. Dragon's interview. But interestingly, prior to this conversation, she had already drawn the 'invisible axis' in her drawing, as the central axis (b) (See Figure 11). It is invisible, without certain shape, but most people knew it did exist; it seems to be neutral and keeping balance, but is controlling everything without being seen.

What Emi said about the 'invisible axis' reminded me of Juri's drawing. As shown in Figure 16, if we turn Juri's drawing clock wise 90 degree, we can see a different picture, with the pink straight line in the middle, and the red wave line around it.
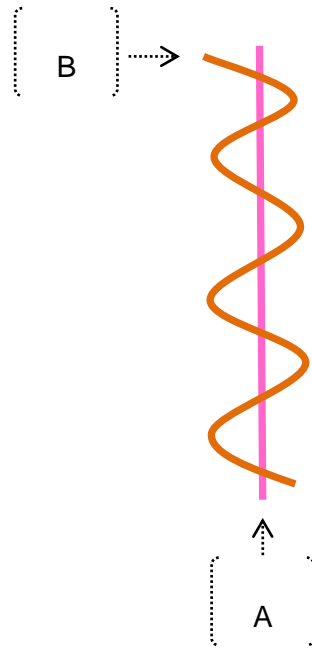
Figure 16: The Spiralling Axis, adapted from Juri's drawing

The axis A could represent the structure, the hierarchy that appeared from other drawings, the central power in OMG, for example the boss. And the wave line B represents things around the axis A. If we imagine it is a 3D image that line B is moving around line A, suddenly the picture becomes familiar; it was just like the 'invisible axis' in Emi's account.

> Juri: 'Lots of things are like corporate culture, I don't think it can be changed in a short time. Like in our Japanese companies, you see the CEO personnel changes every 3 years. Therefore… every time the CEO is changed, all the thinking is different. Everyone will be certainly doing various strategies and activities according to the boss's ideas.' [Interview with Juri]

The strategies, the activities happened in OMG… they have to follow the 'invisible axis' – the structure, the hierarchy, the boss. In an organisation like OMG, it is not a customer oriented company. Instead the performance is mainly decided by their superiors. Therefore many other factors could have an impact. That was the reality effect Juri, and possibly many others were facing. However, it might not be as straightforward as that.

> Juri: 'But I think… I'm quite honest. I'm from the north, I like talking openly. I think in terms of current situation, inside of our company is lack of team working. Between departments, the relationships between the top managers… some crucial concerns… are inevitable.'
>
> [Interview with Juri]

What were the 'crucial concerns'? Benefit, evaluations… Argument, power struggles… 'Lack of team working' seems to be the lightest touch of description here. Imagining there is not just one line B, there are other lines you might have to watch, any change of the situation could suddenly have an impact on you. The lines are moving, perhaps faster and faster… Everything is changing so fast, leaving people confused, maybe dazzled. I wondered how they had been coping with it.

Invisible Control

Looking back at Mika's drawing in Figure 7 with the sailing boats in the sea… is having a 'correct direction' enough for drifting boats? What has been really influencing the sails? When I asked Mika what her biggest challenge was, her answer led me to ponder what else in her drawing that I might have missed.

> Mika: 'Um… the cooperation with other subsidiaries. I found it's quite difficult -there's a balance point in the relationship between our head office and other companies (subsidiaries), very difficult - to balance.'
>
> I: 'Do you think this kind of situation can be improved?'
>
> Mika: 'This got to… have a good connection with… the CEOs in every company.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

The big boss, the official leader, has been identified as the determinant for the corporate boats sailing in the sea. It is not only a return of the leader-centric point of view, but re-confirmed the impact of controlling power from the top

management regarded by these characters in OMG.

> Mika: 'In the end the differences between Japanese culture and Chinese culture are quite many. Chinese people normally don't have such a strong sense between superior and subordinate, personal opinion. Of course it's another story in government. Well… it's the least strong in Europe and America, I heard hehe. Chinese people… I think normally we can't imagine this kind of strong sense between superior and subordinate like Japanese, for those who don't know much of Japanese culture.'
>
> I: 'How strong?'
>
> Mika: 'It's just whatever the boss says, we say 'Yes', in normal situations.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

The 'strong sense between superior and subordinate' that 'people normally cannot imagine', was the realities that Mika and her many other colleagues were dealing with every day. The determined submission to the boss was recognised significantly by her, and also seemed to be controlling these sailing boats in her drawing. Sailing on a vast sea with fast moving surroundings, the direction of the boats is certainly crucial.

Nevertheless, Mika would rather to consider the distinctiveness arising from national cultural differences, than organisational realities. Perhaps she wanted to make it seem harmless - nothing to do with OMG or people here, it is the 'culture' should be 'blamed'. Although the sense of submission to superiors might be from the Japanese militarism or other traditional ideologies, somehow she took it for granted as an expectation for people working in a Japanese company. Additionally, it could demonstrate how common that kind of organisational culture is for Japanese MNCs in China today, so that it would be seen it as a 'tradition'.

> At that moment I was just prepared if I would be asked to leave at any minute. After a long time, Emi finally came out from the CEO's office. She and I went to a meeting room. I can't believe her tears kept dripping down. It turned out, the CEO denied almost everything Emi and our department have been working on recently. She felt all the hard work wasn't appreciated at all, personally and officially. Then I asked her, how about my research access? Can I still be interviewing others? She said she didn't know; she had to ask the CEO even if she signed the agreement and hired me… At that moment, I realised the 'definite truth' exists, exists in the words of the boss.
>
> [Field notes]

That was the day my research access was almost jeopardised. Emi and I proposed a research plan for conducting an employee's survey in OMG, including firstline workers. The survey was one of the main projects I worked on during my fieldwork, and possibly one of the main reasons they granted my research access. Now if Mr. Dragon decided to shut down all the work that might involve going to subsidiaries and asking questions to their workers, my research access sounded very much in danger. At that point, I was very likely to be asked to leave without permission to any of the data I had already collected. Luckily Mr. Dragon confrimed my access was different, therefore 'I can stay'. It was also one of the moments that I realised the risks of jeopardising my research, if I stayed in the field for longer. It was also one of the last days before his retirement. I had the chance to experience a day full of twists, surprises and shocks. When everything seems out of control, one word from the boss is everything.

The 'Centripetal Force'

During the interview with Mr. Dragon, I gradually realised it was not normal sunshine he was talking about in Figure 2. It also provided some 'magic power' that could attract people to come towards the sun.

> Mr. Dragon: 'What I'm saying is, our corporate philosophy needs to be 'seen' by these stakeholders from everywhere. Then it should be visible, can be seen quite often, can be experienced. Centripetal force, this is our 'centripetal force' (He pointed at the arrows). It could be the centripetal force for the employees, and the force for the stakeholders to attract them coming to us.'
>
> [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

It was as if the sun has a certain power enabling it to attract others to come towards it. Maybe the power came from the benefit, the corporate philosophy, which might make it more attractive. The ideology had to be 'seen'; the philosophy had to be 'experienced', therefore it would have that control. As the spokesperson for the 'sun', I wondered if Mr. Dragon would consider himself in a centred place. However, from Emi's account she had stated that she thought, the 'boss should be the sun'.

Below here is a piece of discussion between Emi and Mr. Dragon, about 'challenging the boss'. It was almost missed in the translated transcripts, but unexpectedly it was found when I double checked the recording with another interpreter in the UK. Something needs to be noted, which is a couple of days before my interview, Emi and Mr. Dragon had a work related argument, she did not agree with him. Interestingly they seemed to be implying that during translating our interview. Maybe Emi thought it was not relevant to my research, therefore she did not translate this conversation to me.

> Mr. Dragon: 'The boss's word is absolute. It's very common, everywhere, not just in Japan.'
>
> Emi: 'Another thought, in the western business school now one of the ability (they are learning is) how to challenge the boss as a subordinates.'
>
> Mr. Dragon: 'Challenging doesn't mean being against the boss.'
>
> Emi: 'But saying the opposite opinion to the boss?'
>
> Mr. Dragon: 'Having opposite opinion doesn't mean being against the boss, it doesn't mean people have to obey the boss. Challenging means, if you have other opinions, speak it out. Once the decision has been made eventually, you will have to follow. Otherwise is the violation of the order. Order is absolute, employees have to follow.'
>
> [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

This dialogue between Mr. Dragon and his subordinate Emi seemed irrelevant in the beginning. They looked as if trying to clarify the translation and discussing 'what challenging the boss means'. However, it revealed the dynamic interactions between them. At first Mr. Dragon was trying to clarify 'obeying boss' as a common phenomenon that could be found in many organisations, instead of considering it as a national culture trait. But Emi brought in the notion of 'challenging the boss' by using the example from western business education, taking advantage of the 'translating', which led Mr. Dragon to distinguish what is 'challeging' from what is 'being against'. At this point he seemed to be annoyed by Emi's questioning, which was not very common in OMG. I had never seen Mr. Dragon questioned by any surbordinate in this way. But all in all it was in the name of the interviewing. He took the challenge, and explained different meanings between 'challeging, speaking up personal opinions', and 'being against the boss'. According to Mr. Dragon, having different even opposing opinions was allowed, but obeying the boss once the decision was made seemed to be necessary, the violation of power should not be permitted.

However in Emi's perspectives, she seemed to know he was just playing with words; she knew Mr. Dragon - the boss's word is the order, the order is absolute, everyone needs to follow.

It made me realise in studies like this, how the processes of transcribing and translating need to be dealt with care, and sensitivity, sometimes things missed in the beginning would come up later. We cannot have the entire control over interviews, or assume it is possible to note everything from the field, it would be stopping us from seeing further. Perhaps truth only exists in people's minds; therefore it might be unfolded gradually, but not fully captured.

Feel 'Suffocated'

> Mika: 'I haven't worked for other Japanese companies. I heard those big companies, with more rules and regulations, people would feel more suffocated hehe.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

Within such a distinctive environment, I wondered how Mika would feel working on the OMG fleet of corporate boats. She seemed as if she was talking about other Japanese companies which could be even worse, 'more suffocated', when compared to OMG. She had already onboard on one of the missionary corporate boats among the vast ocean as she drew in Figure 7, although she might feel 'suffocated', it would not be easy to escape.

> Mika: 'Now it's an open age. Too much governance would make it not easy to develop, to move forward. Well, when the leader doesn't really have the ability to lead, but we still have to listen to the leader when nothing is convincing. It is really hard, hehe.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

Looking back to the full picture filled with various lines and colourful strokes, I could almost feel her frustration. Here she could be implying her relationship with Emi, as her boss, Emi seemed to be the main source of Mika's confusion and frustration. In a way it could be due to Emi's insufficiency in planning or convincing others. In this instance, the problem Mika was addressing could be the challenge she had in figuring out a way to 'lead' the 'leader' in an organisation with 'so much governance'.

Had Mika had any thoughts about other alternatives?

> Mika: 'Actually, not only the boss should give the employees comprehensive evaluation, the employees should also give a comprehensive evaluation to the boss, in order to complement with each other.'
>
> I: 'Do you do 360 degree evaluation?'
>
> Mika: 'I… can't see it, hehe. I heard there is, but I haven't felt it. Maybe it's too soon since I came here. But you've been here for 3 months you can already feel that – it's quite complicated here, hehe.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

Mika chose to mock it cynically in the end as she might be suppressing her feelings towards the unequal distribution of power in the organisation, which could be exemplified by the 'evaluation' system. In addition, it demonstrated her hope for an open, equal and in a way simple organisation, which seemed to be lost in her drawing.

> Lunch time is the moment people put away the 'work face', and actually communicating more emotions and feelings with each others. It is just one hour but often regarded as 'the best hour of a day' by Mika, and surely by many others. Sometimes it is the only hour we can get out of buildings to enjoy some 'free air', addressed by Mika. [Field notes]

It might seem rather exaggerated to compare our longing for the free lunch hour with the 'exercise time' in prisons, but the description of 'the best hour of a day', certainly reflected that employees felt imprisoned in such a structured and intermingled environment. More interestingly, is how the 'sense of self' is still rooted from the corners, growing quietly every day, even blossoming towards the sun, or maybe just reflecting on the empty shadows of the modern bricks.

Theme 3: Sense of Self

Living under the structures, and spinning around the axis, Juri seemed to have developed a certain kind of mindset to cope with all of this.

> Juri: 'I don't mind doing something extra. Something I wouldn't know if I didn't experience it, it's quite nice. I found out when I was doing purchasing, learning something new every day, it's quite nice. Now I'm working on corporate culture, it could use my knowledge of purchasing as well, quite nice. Actually I think every journey you walked will leave some trace, and some experience. I really feel that - feel quite nice if people are always in the state of learning.' [Interview with Juri]

Juri kept saying 'it's nice' when something unexpected occurred to her. She did not mention the fact that Emi refused to promote her even after her 'convincing performance', or how she had been struggling between the tangled 'lines'. It seemed as if she has been trying to 'keep smiling' really hard.
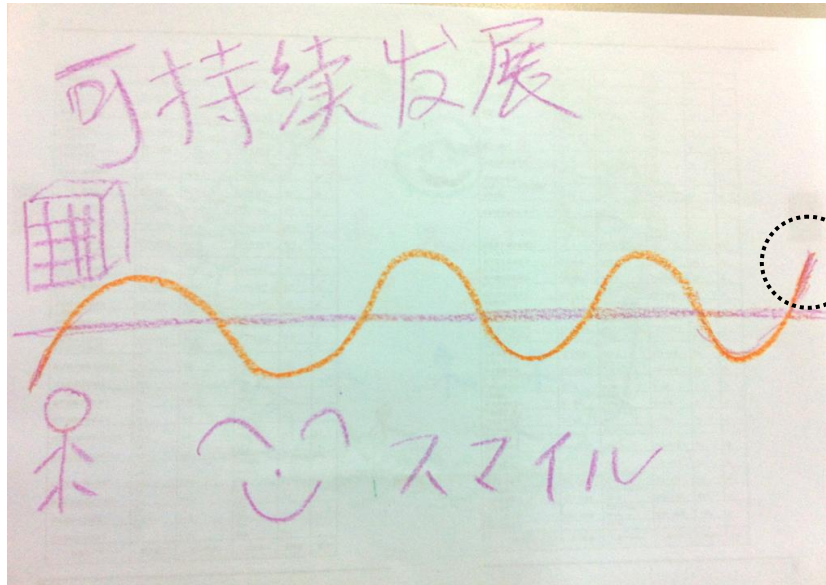

Figure 17: 'The end of wave line', adapted from Juri's drawing

As shown in Figure 17, there is one stick figure at the left bottom of Juri's drawing, as if it is the picture of herself - looking up both of the tangled lines. The changing and complicated situations might have made feel confused, but the big smiley face still captured her aspiration. In the end of the red wave line, she used two colours to address 'it is up', hoping that things would be 'up' in the end.

> Juri: 'I realised lots of things can't be (categorised as) right or wrong. So I think… even when you go through a detour path, you can still learn a lot. Indeed, many words, many choices, I really don't think there's right or wrong. It varies to everyone.' [Interview with Juri]

When she realised there is no definite judgement of 'right and wrong', she might wonder what is the meaning of a shortcut, or what could a detour path mean to her? Various experiences sublimated through twists and turns: the memory of a prime time could bring more than just pride and glory; sometimes a seemingly desperate and painful drawback could also be the starting point of a new rising opportunity. Nevertheless her longing for happiness does not change, where

160

her hope holds onto. Therefore once the hope fails, the meaning disappears, even the goal for working could be missed, and one day she might be lost.

A couple of months after I left the company, I heard Juri quit her job in OMG, even before she found a new one.

Corporate Self

Others in OMG seemed to have quite clear opinions of their positions in the organisation.

> Kasumi: 'I see myself in the tree. My position is just one of the members standing up there, just one of the players. Everyone performs his/her own functions, contributing for the healthy growth of the tree together. My responsibility is in the tree. And among them all, I'd like to become someone who can't be replaced (She tapped her index finger on her drawing repeatedly) by other members.'
>
> [Interview with the Head of Department in Environment]

Kasumi used the metaphor of a healthily growing big tree, and expressed the determination of contributing to the sustainable development of the company. Also she candidly expressed her concern of being replaced by other members, which showed hers, and perhaps many more others' feelings of insecurity in pursuing functions and performativity. Compared to others, she seemed to have a distinct impression of herself. Kasumi was the only female manager in an individual business branch - the environment business. It could also be related to the strong emphasis of OMG on the new environment business.

> Young: 'I think I should be part of the cannon. As a cannon, it certainly needs commander, where is the commander, of course on the observatory or the cockpit. Only if you got the order to fire, you can fire. I will be needed in fighting; I'm fighting when I'm producing things… so I can make better products than other companies, so I can beat them! There's no best, only better!'
>
> [Interview with a first line workers' headman]

Figure 18: Drawing from Young, a first line worker headman

A couple months ago, Young was one of the thousand OMG first line workers. He had just been promoted, as the headman of his old colleagues. He saw himself as the cannon in Figure 18, ready to fight at any minute. The production in OMG was described as fighting by himself, which was perhaps the battle he and many workers were facing every day. As a 'cannon', he could be direct, and productive, he just needed to 'follow' orders. No need to think, no need to hesitate, just 'fire'! In that case, it would not be necessary to consider who this 'cannon' person is, where he is from, as long as he can follow orders and fire when needed. Every day and night, the loyalty, and determination are gradually becoming part of the efficient and cold cannon.

'Leading the boat toward the correct direction'

In Mika's drawing (see Figure 7), the group of boats seem to be united, and going towards the same direction, what made this so? Was simply because of all the subsidiaries were OMG companies? Interestingly, at the interview when I

asked her where she was in the drawing she produced months ago in the workshop, Mika seemed to consider 'leading the boat to the right direction' as her main responsibility.

> Mika: 'Where am I… I'm on one of the small boats, on a small boat among these small boats.'
>
> I: 'What kind of role you are playing?'
>
> Mika: 'I think I'm just playing a very tiny very insignificant part. I just… want to try - to follow this boat, with everyone else, to lead the boat toward the correct direction.'
>
> I: 'A bright direction?'
>
> Mika: 'Yes. My responsibility is mainly about the direction, keeping the shipping course, hehe. To avoid the iceberg if we see one hehe.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

She surely did not see herself as a leader who would have a major impact, when she described herself as just playing 'a very tiny and insignificant role on a small boat among small boats'. Her attitude of self worth seemed to have passed from just being modest, but was expressed with a sense of insignificance and powerlessness on the vast ocean. However, even if she addressed that she was 'with everyone else', she believed that her job was to 'lead' the fleet of OMG boats moving towards the 'same but correct direction'.

Therefore here she was not talking about any power derived from her position, but more of a mission or responsibility that Mika and her colleagues were asked to fulfil. What was keeping the fleet towards the same direction, or what was the direction for the OMG corporate boats…? From the time I came to OMG's door, their Corporate Philosophy was claimed to be the key that united OMG people globally, among all the subsidiaries. One of the main job responsibilities Mika and I were sharing in the Corporate Culture Department was to make sense of, and communicate OMG Philosophy, which seemed to be the 'correct direction' that unified the fleet of boats.

Translating the sunshine

Looking at Mr. Dragon's drawing again in Figure 19, the whole picture is full, barely with much gap left on the paper, which might be implying his full involvement with what he was trying to depict here for a sustainable organisation.
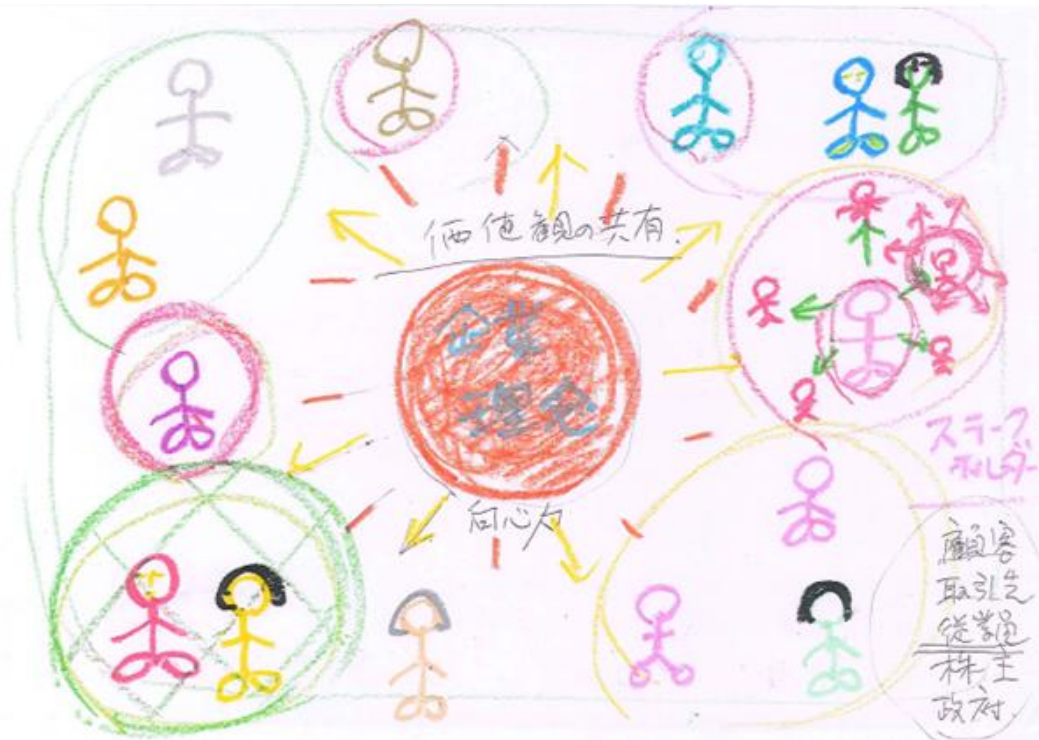

Figure 19: Drawing from Mr. Dragon

Beside lines, the most common shape in his drawing is circle, those colourful circles around the sun as other entities - other subsidiaries and stakeholders. In a way it may resemble the image of 'Communal Vessel' for society, which was regarded as the essence of OMG's corporate philosophy. The big circles here are like many vast vessels, included various human actors and things in organisations.

> Mr. Dragon: 'Because I'm a manager, one of the board directors in OMG group, everything is my responsibility, the whole thing, the whole picture (He drew a green line along the side of the paper to include everything). But mainly, it's here, it's this part (He pointed at the red sun) – making all employees in the world to understand our corporate philosophy.' [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

As a member of the top management in OMG, his job is organising this network, activating and empowering these actors to become a 'communal vessel', through the translating of the corporate ideology. Due to his assertion and efforts, an ambitious, determinate, solid self gradually converged to the centre of all the forces and power, day to day for more than 30 years… until one day, he might have become to the sun.

> Mr. Dragon: If OMG wants to be a sustainable corporation, it cannot be seen as a sun only from Japan, but can also be seen from everywhere in the world: Brazil, China, America, Arica etc. Giving the sunshine is like communicating the message-the thoughts of the company to everyone, everywhere, and it has to be conveyed in the way that people can understand. If everyone thinks and accepts this company is great indeed, then it becomes a sustainable company. If it is seen as a sun from everywhere, it can develop sustainably. [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

Around the solid and dazzling sun, he drew many short but thick lines to represent the sunshine, some of them were with arrows toward other people. In the beginning he drew them in red; he added some lines in gold later. In addition to the economic benefit he mentioned previously, the strong wish to communicate the corporate ideology could also be seen.

However, it was realised as a more complicated but still very necessary process in order to develop a sustainable company. An MNC like OMG, with many subsidiaries all over the world, and including several industries, the communication surely could not be that 'direct', as people are diverse. He specifically chose many colours to draw people to express the diversity he perceived. In the diverse world, how to translate the corporate philosophy, and proposed value system, to all walks of life in ways they would understand, was considered by him as the biggest challenge.

Nevertheless, these short but solid thick lines for the sunshine could be seen as traces of their determination. The difficulty was recognised, but it would not stop the transmitting and translation of OMG ideology.

> I: Based on the corporate philosophy, would you develop some values recognised by local people to help them understand?
>
> Mr. Dragon: There's only one value. At any place in the world, OMG's value is the same, just like there is only one sun exists for those people. Otherwise the corporate philosophy won't be acceptable by everyone. [Interview with Mr. Dragon]

165

Regardless of the diverse nature of people all over the world, the corporate philosophy 'would not' change; there would be 'only one' corporate value – the 'pure one' among this complex network of actors. Through looking at the powerful sun and its missionary sunshine, gradually it appears to be quite similar to the Japanese flag, with the blood-red sun in the middle. The sun is not just 'translating the sunshine'; it could be seen as subtly invasive, arising from a deep belief in the 'pure' sun. This problematises the nature of the 'warm sunshine'. Maybe the warmth comes from belief.

Disciplined Self

The Four Action Principles

OMG has a corporate philosophy pyramid, which was the chart on the wall that I saw when I first came there. As the essence of OMG's corporate philosophy, many of our tasks in the department were focused on it, such as interpreting meanings, translating it to other company documents, or even reprinting it as posters for other subsidiaries.

> At the bottom of the pyramid, four points of the 'Action Principles' are outlined as 'the guideline' for 'disciplining' OMG employee behaviour:
>
> 1. Quality goes first;
> 2. Challenge continually;
> 3. Justice behaviour;
> 4. Self-discipline and coexistence.
>
> How could we understand?! They are not even common Chinese words! What is coexistence? With whom? And what is 'justice'...
>
> [Field notes]

I think these four Action Principles were originated from Japanese company's management thinking, such as the '5S', 'customer goes first'. When I first looked at it, I could not really understand it. It reads as a combination of Chinese and Japanese. Interestingly, traces of 'Corporate Sustainability' could be sensed here. It includes the economic, social and environmental pillars already, also with a strong commitment to ethics and justice. These four principles looked like their interpretations of CS in OMG. Also I was surprised considering the OMG corporate philosophy was proposed more than 50 years

ago. I believe many colleagues would feel confused about what it really means, not just me who just joined OMG lately.

> Rina didn't realise she was reading it out loud, 'coexistence, what is coexistence? I only heard of harmonious coexistence. Confusing, I can't understand.'
>
> Emi seemed to be losing her patience. She decided to have four events corresponding to the four principles. She wanted to assign these four principles to each of us. There were Rina, Juri, Mika and myself there. She let us pick one principle; make a plan to discuss with others in the next meeting; and that person will be responsible for the communication with correspondent subsidiaries too. Juri always knew better. She said she can do 'Quality goes first'. I said I could help with the 'Justice behaviour'. Rina couldn't decide which one she wanted. Emi asked Mika to do the 'challenge bit' so left 'self-discipline and coexistence' to Rina. [Field notes]

I was surprised that she made me responsible for one of the events. She said Mika could help me in terms of the communication with people outside because I was still an intern. I didn't think it would be difficult to plan something like this because I had done something similar before when working in Shanghai. But I felt as if Juri didn't think I could do it, as I was still a student. She told me later I could ask Emi for help if I had any difficulties, 'planning something is different', as she said.

In the end of the first meeting involved with endless discussion, the four principles were temporarily interpreted like this:

1. Quality goes first: something to do with OMG products, which is known for its quality; the events could be a quality contest, or a public fair to increase people's awareness about healthy living.

2. Challenge continually: it is about the spirit, so the events would be sports matches, maybe a basketball game or badminton competition.

3. Justice behaviour: justice was considered as doing something 'good', such as visiting welfare house, or nursing homes.

4. Self-discipline and coexistence: something to do with contributing to the society and local community.

Although the term 'self-discipline' only existed in the last principle, it was emphasised repeatedly in some participants' interviews. Additionally, if anyone is trying to follow and practise these principles in their everyday lives, it is the representation, and translation of a disciplined self.

Cultural Self

Although Mr. Dragon and some of his colleagues were trying to deny the effect of the Japanese national culture in OMG, it certainly left its shadow. At this point I am not intending to justify any phenomenon by claiming the origin of any culture's propositions, for example, which culture is more male dominated or more hierarchical etc. Instead I am more interested to see the reflected 'culture' through the participants' eyes. This section is trying to offer an organisational culture account reflected and translated by my OMG colleagues.

The bright blue and dark blue

Earlier Mika described Corporate Culture as 'spirit with no shape', something difficult to understand completely, and hard to define. For a young woman who stayed in Japan for her higher education, and had just came back from Japan less than a year ago, she might have recently experienced some 'reversed' cultural shock. This experience might have made her more sensitive to the cultural differences, when compared to other colleagues.

> Mika: 'Japanese culture is very rigid, stiff. Although Japanese are gradually changing as well, have more self consciousness. I think Japanese company in China is quite interesting. It has Japanese element, with Chinese element blended in as well.'
>
> I: 'Do you think they blend together very well?'
>
> Mika: 'It reached at an embarrassing point hehe. It wants to keep its original culture, but it has to blend in the local culture.'
>
> [Interview with Mika]

In the landscape she drew in Figure 7, the indistinctive landscape as the background, she used both dark blue and bright blue wave lines to symbolise the sea with a sense of movement and complexity. As she had probably seen, the two kinds of culture were blended within each other, which created a special organisational culture. It is as if the dark blue and bright blue wave lines in her

168

drawing, representing the complicated and intermingled nature of the organisational culture.

Why did she think it is 'embarrassing' for the Japanese OMG culture as 'it has to' mix with Chinese culture? She might think companies like OMG wanted to 'keep' their originality as their corporate character so it would be 'embarrassed' to fit into other cultures in the process of localisation. She perceived the differences so much that it would be more like a contrast, imagining how a giant man would feel sitting with a bunch of dwarfs, and vice versa. But which one is the giant?

> Today I was helping them to check the design sample for the posters that were going to be posted in every OMG factory in China. I told Mika my suggestions and corrections. She accepted most of them, only one design, which I thought weird to combine English words by 'X'. Mika responded very quickly, said it was absolutely right, as this pattern was from the OMG Head Quarter in Japan. Therefore it did not matter people in China understand it or not. It was 'good' because it was from Japan. Mika also told me that there were a lot of things I might see in the future, but I would get used to it very soon, as part of 'our lively corporate culture'. [Field notes]

It was an example among many - if any doubt emerged, Mika would choose to believe the Japanese version was 'absolutely right'. She might have considered 'Japanese' as a more superior culture. She was not alone. It was developed as a common justification on meeting tables there. Japanese interpretation, like Japanese managers, seemed to have higher status with a born legitimacy.

Many things in OMG: the language they talked, the phrasing in writing, their behaviour, or even women employees' sense of fashion were imprinted with a strong flavour of Japanese. In our team of Corporate Culture, Mika and other colleagues were quite proud of the special syntax that looked like Chinese phrasing, but was mixed with lots of translated Japanese. Therefore it appeared strange for people outside of OMG, and difficult to understand for people did not speak Japanese. Sometimes the phrasing of a sentence requires a long time negotiation to figure out, in order to keep both the Japanese originality and the correctness in Chinese grammar. The two languages were mingled together, just like the two shades of blue in Mika's drawing, just more difficult to distinguish. They created a special new shade, continually changing and dancing.

OMG Language

When I was reading company documents, the public website, and reports, I noticed they favoured terms such as: 'maximisation', 'optimisation', 'the greatest', 'the best match'. In the beginning, it sounded aggressive, even a bit 'naïve' to me. Then I realised it was part of their culture, or the idealisation of the idealised corporate culture. They believed in the existence of 'the best', the 'pure one', and they believed or showed their faith, as the requirement in order to achieve it.

Once, when I was drafting a document for the OMG Culture Festival, after I sent them the first draft, Emi replied with a picture of OMG's vision in Japanese and email copied to everyone in the department. She wanted me to 'read' that and amend it right away, if I had any questions about translation I could ask Mika. Mika gave me an 'I told you' look, and tried to tell me what was in the vision statement. Maybe she was right, I should have not asked for it from the beginning. I was a bit embarrassed, but I knew it was a great opportunity for me to get closer to their essence of corporate culture. Let her correct me!

However, I did not think Mika's translation was very good, or that piece of message was not very direct for translation. But it did sound a bit familiar to me. I looked through some documents I found on their website, and realised the vision statement was the same one I had seen on an HR recruitment advertisement online. Based on that, I changed it into the second version. Some of the Chinese translation was not very smooth, so I changed it to make it more appealing. I felt like this time I was making it 'more OMG'.

Here is the English translation of my first version:

> The Goal and Vision of OMG Creative Culture Festival

> Can you imagine the future in the year of 2020? Is it going to be the world disaster because of the overexploited resources and the deteriorated environment? Or is it going to be people oriented, really actualise the perfect match between human and machine automation…

> In order to actualise the OMG Vision with wonderful imagination of the future, promote OMG's challenging, teamwork, and entrepreneurship spirit, motivate creative thinking and enrich our life besides work, every OMG person is specially invited to attend 2012 OMG Creative Culture Festival! No matter where you are and what you do, you all have chance to show your best creativity!

Emi found me quickly to amend the second version together. She was surprised I found the translation, which apparently none of them had ever seen before. She wanted to keep the original Chinese translation, although some of the sentence structures and phrasing had a strong flavour of Japanese, and might not make sense in Chinese. It would be strange from an outsider's perspective, but totally fine by them. I imagine when it acquired an original Japanese Head Quarter's flavour; it 'must' look more professional, authoritative, and convincing. I started to get a feeling about 'what was normal' and 'what was strange and not OMG enough'. I suddenly realised Emi was teaching me how to speak the 'OMG language'!

After the third version, it finally seemed to be OK as Emi did not suggest any major changes. Although they were not sure about the name I gave, 'OMG Creative Culture Festival'. They liked the words 'Culture' and 'Festival'. But they were not sure about 'Creative'; somehow it was because 'Creative' the word itself, was not commonly seen in our OMG corporate culture documents, although this word was quite popular in Chinese.

This is the final corrected version:

> The Goal of OMG Creative Culture Festival
>
> Imagine the future in the year of 2020? Is it going to be the world disaster because of the overexploited resources and the deteriorated environment? Or is it going to actualise people oriented and the perfect match between human and machine…
>
> In order to actualise sustainable development of the Earth and society, create new values for all stakeholders with both quality and quantity, we must inherit the entrepreneurship of the Founder; promote the challenging (*spirit from*) Corporate Philosophy of OMG; and also motivate and encourage more teamwork and creative thinking from OMG people. Now 2012 OMG Creative Culture Festival is specially held.

Here, I am trying to translate from the Chinese text directly to English, to show the differences in phrasing. The 'spirit from' in brackets did not exist in the corrected version. It was added by me to avoid misunderstanding for my readers. It certainly was not meant to encourage people to challenge their corporate philosophy. The sentence 'create new values for all stakeholders with both quality and quantity' (in Chinese: 质量兼备), brought with it a strong flavour of Japanese. In Chinese, 'quality and quantity' is not commonly used to

describe 'value'. I assumed here the 'quality' and 'quantity' was implying providing a number of products and services with good quality, which could be seen quite often in a manufacturing company.

As I said before, the method was used for translation in OMG - it did not have to make good sense in the target language, sometimes it did not even have to be grammatically correct. The taste of the originality of their Japanese styled Corporate Philosophy shall not be lost! More importantly, through the correcting and translating process, I was gradually leaning the OMG language. It was like Emi tried to 'enculturate' me to be more 'OMG'. It was a valuable learning process.

Lost self

Imprinted by the strong and demanding OMG culture, sometimes people might feel confused. When I asked them where they saw themselves in their drawings, they often could not see themselves in a clear and explicit position; occasionally they just did not know the answer.

I: So you are not inside of the picture? Are you outside?

Emi: No… I'm probably not inside. I can't remember now, seems not.

I: But you can see everything is happening?

Emi: Yes, yes yes. Maybe these people are around me… at places very near.

[Interview with Emi]

'An ant among many other ants'

I: What role you are playing in the picture?

Rina: A little ant among many other ants. Firstly I need to deal with things of my within my responsibility. And influence as much as I could – after all my ability is limited, so my influence is very limited too. [Interview with Rina]

172

A little ant among many other ants, Rina used the metaphor of 'ant' to describe her role. No matter how passionate she seemed to feel about her work, she saw herself as a hard-working but very insignificant actor, similar to others. Mika also mentioned she was on 'a small boat among the boats' earlier.

During Mr. Dagon's interview, he spent a long time explaining the inclusiveness of Japanese culture to me. From the chart on white board which he drew while he was talking, I saw a very complicated diagram drawn with the determination of making distinctions among Japanese, Chinese and American cultures, but also with a strong ambivalent feeling towards 'people' and 'work', in the sense of 'warm humanity' and 'cold business'.
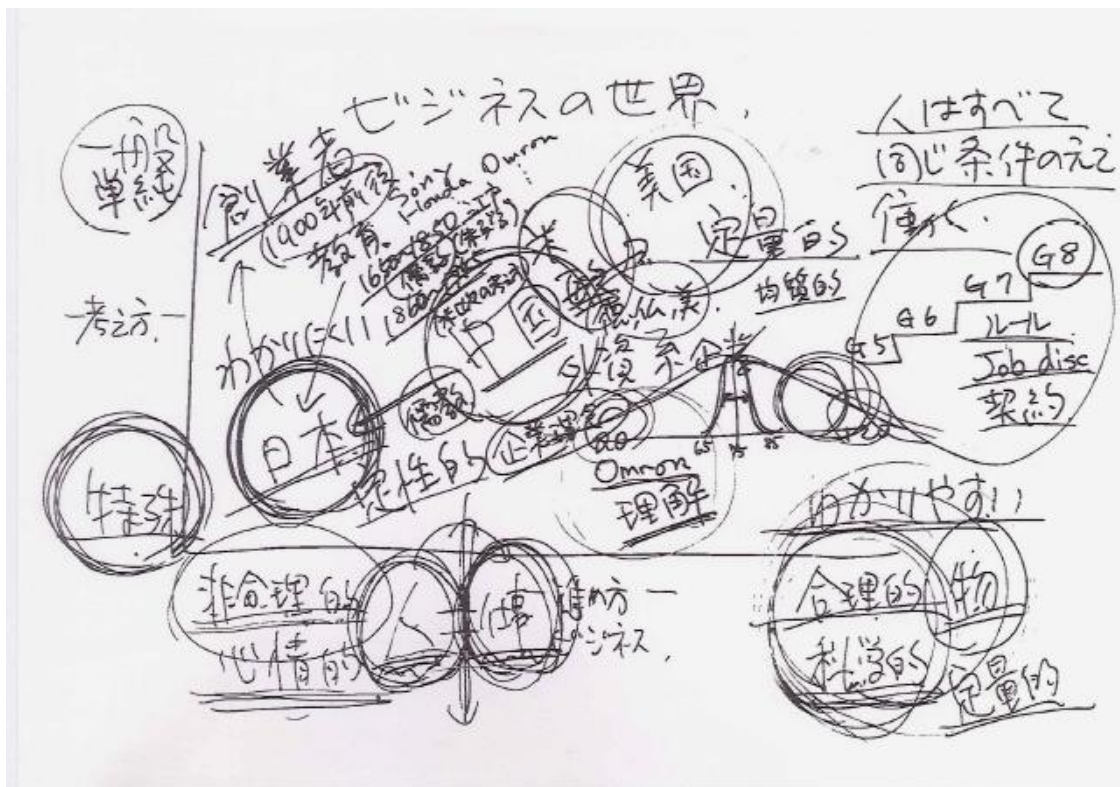

Figure 20: Diagram on whiteboard from Mr. Dragon

Mr. Dragon was showing me what the differences between Japanese, Chinese and Western thoughts on the axis from 'irrational, emotional' to 'rational and scientific' In terms of language itself, Japanese was a mixture of traditional Chinese characters and European words. It would not be difficult to understand the possible 'loss of self' rooted in the Japanese culture.

Mr. Dragon: I'm not in the picture. I'm looking at these issues objectively. A manager shouldn't be in the picture, should keep some distance in order to see the whole thing. But if necessary he must go to other positions immediately. If it's always here (he pointed in the air above the sun from the drawing) then it is becoming a bystander. But I'm going to retire soon so I'm going to be a bystander too.

[Interview with Mr. Dragon]

After I clarified my question as where he saw himself instead of his responsibility, he seemed did not want to be inside of the picture. Maybe behind or above the aggressive corporate self, there was another self - an autonomous self was wandering around, outside of the picture, perhaps occasionally looking at the other self acting at positions in the network. He seemed to be quite looking forward to his retirement, when he did not have to act as or on behalf of 'the sun'. He could choose to be back to his 'bystander' self, assuming he could still find it.

'What is the goal?'

Once we had a meeting with colleagues in CEO Office to discuss how to organise a new event - OMG Festival with all the OMG employees in Shanghai, as another event we were organising for promoting corporate culture. In the beginning my boss Emi was presenting her ideas. Then Michi, the manager of CEO office gave his suggestions, some of them were more like critiques.

He asked: 'what is the goal? Why we are planning such a big event that's going to cost a lot of money?'

Apparently Emi did not expect this seemingly simple question, but directly hit the point.

The next morning, a department meeting was set to discuss what we should do next for this OMG Festival. They were all quite excited about the idea having a festival, and they knew it had something to do with the OMG corporate philosophy. But they were not clear why we were doing this festival. Emi wrote the 'Goal' on white board. She suddenly paused, did not know what to write.

'So, what is the goal?' Emi asked.

…

The whole conference room went to silence.

'Um… let our employees have more fun?' Rina said, causing some laughter.

'Encouraging our OMG spirit of challenging? I think.' Even Juri was not sure about what she is saying now.

Everyone seemed to be a bit nervous.

'I think nothing will be wrong if it relates with the stuff of corporate culture. So, we are doing this for corporate culture infiltration.' Mika finally gave an answer that some of us were nodding.

Emi considered for a moment, 'then what part of the culture?'

…

The whole room went back to silence.

Emi embarrassedly suggested we gave it more thought, perhaps writing a draft about the objectives and also its name. It went back to silence because they were thinking, who was going to do such a task? I knew this sometimes happens in companies, but it still seemed a bit ironic that they did not know what to call it and why we were doing it, after they had come up with a lot of details about specific activities already.

'How about I give it a try?'

I broke the silence, and apparently surprised some of them. At that moment, any of them had already a lot to do. If I had not said that, the first draft would fall to me eventually. So, why not suggest it in the beginning? Emi seemed to be happy to hear this. So I would write a draft about the purposes first, and then send it to all of them to amend.

[Field notes]

It was quite interesting to see how they dealt with a 'conscious blank' like this. Emi was criticised as she did not convince other managers to hold this event, even though she obtained the permission from top management. We still needed to make it legitimate and imperative in the corporate language. Mika realised that, and she believed as long as it had something to do with 'corporate culture infiltration', it would not be too wrong. The word 'infiltration' is a hard translation, in order to describe the accumulative, slow process of the corporate culture seeping into the earth, just like liquid water.

On one hand it would give the event a legitimate name, as it represented the core corporate strategy; on the other hand, the difficulty of defining and confining notions like 'corporate culture', 'corporate sustainability' would also leave more room for interpretation, which might be exactly what this event was looking for as it couldn't be categorised as usual. Also, the time we named it 'corporate culture festival', it was declaring to others we, as the newly established 'corporate culture department', would be mainly responsible for it. Nevertheless, it was not enough, as shown in the section of 'OMG language', it

had to represent the latest corporate strategy published by the Head Quarter in Japan, as the solid foundation behind this organised event.

This was one of the most unforgettable incidents that happened in OMG which makes me question the thinking underneath the seemingly busy and ordinary everyday life in organisations like OMG. People were claiming and even complaining about what kind of boundaries or limitations they were facing, from hours to days, from days to months, from months to years. It seems to be easy to take things for granted without really questioning whether they were really happening. However it was quite difficult to stop the ongoing 'taken-for-granted' way of dealing with things, and the process and details could look so exciting and fascinating sometimes. 'You, go for the admin, I'll take care of the logistics'. Everything seemed to be running perfectly in the OMG machine… until a voice comes in from somewhere - 'Um… why we are doing this? What is the goal? ...' Sometimes the worst strangeness comes from the familiarity of everyday life.

It is like letting the running man to stop for a second to make him to question the direction. He might be ending up feeling lost, lost in this vast familiar field which suddenly became strange…

The Ever-Evolving Communal Vessel

Communal Vessel, as another main finding will be introduced in this section. More importantly, how did it evolve and haunt along with the exploring journey in OMG, echoing the various translations and understandings of Corporate Sustainability. Communal Vessel is emphasised by OMG's corporate philosophy as a key term, which offers an understanding of what the corporation is and its purposes. Although Communal Vessel (*gong qi, 公器*) originates from classical Chinese literature, most Chinese employees including me did not recognise it. As a 'foreign' term which OMG colleagues found so hard to translate into English or contemporary Chinese, it was considered by then, as a product of the Japanese inherited corporate motif.

The first time 'Communal Vessel' appeared was in the department induction meeting, as OMG corporate motto proposed by the OMG founder many years

ago. It can be translated literally as 'Corporation is society's Communal Vessel'. It was proposed by OMG's founder when he started OMG many years ago. Since then it has become embedded as the essence of the OMG corporate philosophy, guiding strategies and practices in every subsidiary across the world. Field notes of that first induction meeting showed:

> 'You don't understand what 'Communal Vessel' is? It is very normal! It needs time to be cultivated by our corporate culture! It takes time to really understand such a deep meaningful word that our founder proposed decades ago. You need to experience that word slowly and gradually, not too many people really understand the meanings of that term. But our job is to let more people to understand that word. It's not easy, it's very hard, but we have to do it. You will do it with us.' [Induction Meeting, Field notes]

However, Juri and Mika told me there was some 'translation problem' with this sentence. As in the official documents, the sentence was interpreted as 'Corporation is for contributing to society'. They explained to me that communal vessel was a Japanese term so it could not be directly translated into Chinese. However, Mika told me their CEO, Mr. Dragon always preferred the literal translation of the corporate motto, which is 'Communal Vessel'.

During the first meeting with them, I was constantly confused, as they would mingle quite a few Japanese words when speaking Mandarin to me. I did not think they had forgotten the fact that I do not speak any Japanese. It was just the way they talked. Mika saw my confused look and said, you may not understand some terms we use here, please feel free to ask questions. But when I actually asked, quite often they could hardly translate some Japanese terms into Chinese or English that I was able to understand. Some words like 'Communal Vessel', they appeared as Chinese characters but I was confused with the meanings because they are not commonly used Chinese words. They told me 'it is our 'OMG language', you will get used to it soon!' They had realised their Chinese occasionally mingled with Japanese terms, but they called it was the OMG language, as a symbol of profession and authority; to what extent they understood the corporate philosophy - as well as the promoter, speaker, and communicator of the corporate culture. They had to be able to show to others their ability of speaking on behalf of the Japanese OMG, the Head Quarter.

Later I found OMG is not the only Japanese company that mentioned the term of 'Communal Vessel'. It represents a perspective adopted by those Japanese enterprises that considers corporations as part of a society, and led to further discussion about the purpose of corporations. It has been argued that corporation should be considered as an entity inside of society, and should be mainly contributing to society, instead of the shareholder focus. Therefore it should be based on stakeholder theory and complement to the notion of 'corporate citizenship' (Garriga & Mele, 2004), instead of seeing corporations exist to maximise shareholder value (Mintzberg, Simons, & Basu, 2002).

> Jane: Because our corporate mission is 'serving for the benefit of society. CSR is not only about doing philanthropy. Our founder said: corporation is communal vessel of society. Our products are actually serving for the benefit of people. For the environment, for the society, corporation should be used for actualising the social value.

> [Interview with the Public Relation Manager]

In the interviews with colleagues in OMG, many of them would refer to the corporate motto, and the founder of OMG Corporation, who had passed away, when talking about corporate responsibility and sustainable development. It seemed that they were convinced their corporate motto was the 'right' or 'standard' answer. Also, there were many stories told about their founder in OMG. Some of them could be traced from historic company documents and books. Although some of them were merely gossip, and not even a complete story, the mystery the stories brought with would only increase their fondness for him. Almost everyone had a version of their favourite stories of him. On many occasions the participants could not remember the whole story, but they would complete the stories with their interpretation and imagination (Gabriel & Griffiths, 2004). When they did so, the founder seemed to be a hero, with a combination of unbelievable determination and incredible kindness. They revived and recreated the founder in their stories.

> Juri: 'Sustainable development could be found from our corporate motto, which our CEO Mr. Dragon always talked about. Corporation is one part of the public society. Now many companies are big groups, are multinational corporations. But they don't belong to the managers, but becoming part of the society.'

> [Interview with Juri]

More often, they would refer to Mr. Dragon, current CEO of OMG China, instead of their founder, as the speaker of the corporate motto. His stories could be heard everywhere, and his shadows could be seen regardless of his appearance in the company. In comparison to the founder, not all of his stories were positive, and the production of his stories was much more complicated as they were woven within living interactions and instead of the fictional entity of OMG. Mr. Dragon represented the OMG they worked for, and could be experienced. At that point 'Communal Vessel' was seen as a foreign term with a Japanese flavour, to describe a claim in terms of the purpose and the ownership of corporations. On the other hand, it was the 'voice' of the OMG founder, creator of everything, as the 'life' of OMG, and as the heroic leader who conquered all the difficulties, and built the company.

The understandings of this term gradually evolved through the exploring and translating processes, which will be explained further in the Discussion chapter. The interpretations and understandings of 'Communal Vessel' in OMG have incorporated various meanings, CS, responsibility, the tendency of organising, as well as things that might be unorganised. It contains contradictory meanings but embraces the coexistence, representing an indigenous way of thinking CS. The discussion of the role of a corporation can lead to the re-examining and re-discovering of the classical Chinese philosophies, with implications on current organising processes.

In summary, this Representation and Interpretation Chapter introduces the settings and five main characters; it contains a series of colourful tales from the field with 'my' voice. Each sub-sections and themes are like episodes that are describing what it was like working in OMG: from the various views on CS via the translating process, to the structured and leader-centric organisational effects reflected through people's voices and drawings, until the various understandings encountered and interacted with each others, OMG people constructed realities for themselves in many ways. In the end, 'Communal Vessel' as an OMG translational construct, how it is evolved from the field has been introduced. In the next chapter, the translations of Communal Vessel will be addressed as a key idea for understanding CS, and the processes associated with.

Chapter 5   Discussion

This chapter discusses how the various understandings of CS and Communal Vessel are developed through the translating processes. As the 'starter', the first section '*Translating CS*' reviews how CS has been translated and interpreted in OMG, and the importance of a translational perspective for CS-related studies in non-western contexts. As the 'main course' for the chapter, CS is examined through a translating process, rather than suggesting a static, conclusive definition. '*Translating instead of Translation*' is addressed as a gerund to capture the temporary, continual, and hermeneutic characteristics of the understanding process. As the 'dessert' for this chapter, '*Translating Communal Vessel*' will be described via translating processes. As a translational construct of OMG's corporate philosophy, Communal Vessel's oxymoronic meanings are unfolded gradually. This, in return, offers indigenous understandings of CS, and organisations.

Translating Corporate Sustainability

Translation as 'Impossible'

My doubts on CS started from questioning its meanings and translations. If the meanings associated with CS in the source language remain opaque, I wondered how they could simply be 'translated' to the target language without questioning its cultural implications. As discussed, a standardised definition of CS does not exist in current field (Dahlsrud, 2008; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014), and it is rather difficult to reach a consensus on what CS means based on various theoretical perspectives (van Marrewijk, 2003). In addition, most extant CS-related studies are based on perspectives from Anglophone contexts, whereas the compatibility of CS and CSR research in Eastern contexts has been questioned (Kolk et al., 2010; Moon & Shen, 2010; Tan, 2009b). Thus, the construction of CS needs to be problematised through organising processes.

According to 'untranslatability' (Jakobson, 1959) in translingual practices, the term CS is not necessarily 'translatable' in Chinese. The equivalent term in Chinese has not been widely recognised, not mention other CS-related notions,

such as stakeholders. The cultural implications in the use of CS-related terminologies need to be discussed in a specific context. For instance, some eastern thinking has been influenced by Chinese classical philosophies, such as Confucianism and Taoism. Classical Chinese way of thinking is differentiated in many levels, for example it follows an ontology seeing flux and transformation as the principles of life (Chia, 2003; Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Low & Ang, 2012; McElhatton & Jackson, 2012). Furthermore, the limitation of the representation of language itself in eastern thinking has been addressed (Chia, 2003). Thus, it has been recognised that meanings can never be safely, or totally translated from translingual perspectives (Derrida, 1985; Eco, 2003).

When the ideas of CS travel across time and spaces, from western contexts to organisations in China, its meanings are inevitably altered and modified to fit specific needs and situations (Abrahamson, 2006; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). In the case of OMG, CS has been translated as economic development, or interdependent relationships. But often, CS is described as a 'feeling without boundary', a 'spirit with no shape'. For many participants, it cannot simply be categorised as a fixed concept, and it is difficult to clarify CS as a straightforward process. Therefore, translation is needed, as the process to investigate what is happening at the stage between when an idea is constructed, and when the idea becomes taken for granted (Mueller & Whittle, 2011).

Therefore, the 'impossibility' and 'incompleteness' of translation addresses the necessity of adopting translational perspectives. In the following section, '*translation as necessary*' will be explained further.

Translation as Necessary

As discussed, translation is also necessary in understanding organisations and constructions of non-fixed and contextual actors, such as CS. In addition to linguistic interpretation, translation is clarified from ANT, which is often called the 'sociology of translation' (Callon, 1980, 1986). From ANT perspectives, translation is seen as the displacement, transformation, negotiation, and the construction of a new link among heterogeneous actors, that might not exist before (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1993a). In summary, translation has been

regarded as the key and necessary process for understanding organisations, and explaining why some actors act in the way and how they associate with each other (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996; Latour, 1986, 1993b). Thus, in this thesis, translation is considered as the key to explore what CS means in the context of OMG, and how it mobilises and negotiates with other actors and networks.

As presented in the previous chapter, various meanings and understandings associated with CS are represented in the ethnographic account of OMG. It contains the interpretations from participants discussing the interdependent relationships among business, society, and natural environment, the consideration of wellbeing and the purposes of work, or the roles 'leader' should be playing in the organisation. They seemed to be rather curious and tempted to discover the 'essence' of CS, such as 'there is no sustainability without development', 'a sustainable relationship is a reciprocal relationship'. With the seemingly strong emphases on CS within the organisation, there is a close attachment between such an imaginative and broad notion, and their daily job commitments in the organisation. The 'development view' could be driven by the financial performance and economic growth of the company; the 'interdependent view' considers CS as reciprocal relationships, which might have been used to express their frustration to balance various interests as someone 'in the middle'. Nevertheless, through translating and interpreting their understandings of CS, how they saw their organisational realities has been reflected.

This study suggests examining CS from an evolving network perspective, and associates CS with other 'impossible but necessary' translations, such as 'Communal Vessel', which will be discussed later. After stating the importance of translation, the following section will explore translation in OMG network with the visual materials.

Translating CS with ANT

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, participant produced drawing method complemented interviewing and observations in this research. It has encouraged the participants to reflect on their interpretations, not just speak by using the official words. Also, with 'me' negotiating a working role in the network of OMG, the production of this ethnographic account is based on my interpretations of the organisation, and my understandings of CS. This section will examine several participant produced drawings as examples by using concepts and metaphors from ANT.

Figure 21: Drawing from Teiko and Mika

When looking at the drawing from production manager Teiko, initially I thought he divided X and Y clearly as two separated goals. However, the arrow in the middle balancing between X and Y axis should be seen as the main thing he was trying to say. As someone who works in the middle management of OMG, he could be seen as an actor connecting, balancing, or even reconciling two networks with different interests while practising CS. Similarly, the drawing from my colleague Mika expressed her imaginations and aspirations toward the natural scenery: there is hardly any distinction or boundary among the sea, the land, and the sky. Every network is emerged from and submerged in each other, and the representation of constant evolvements might have just captured the understanding of CS networks and actors, which is non-fixed and hard to define.

In the theme 'visible structures & invisible axis' from previous chapter, the structured, power-centric and hierarchical organisation was expressed by some participants, and relationship dynamics among them were emphasised. They

regarded these effects as things influencing their daily life in OMG. Additionally, these dynamic effects in OMG have influenced the construction of CS, such as what CS means, and its implications in practice (Bondy, 2008). Although the notion that power is possessed by people is questioned from an ANT perspective (Latour, 1986), power can be considered as a network effect, in which translation can help to understand its organising process (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005).
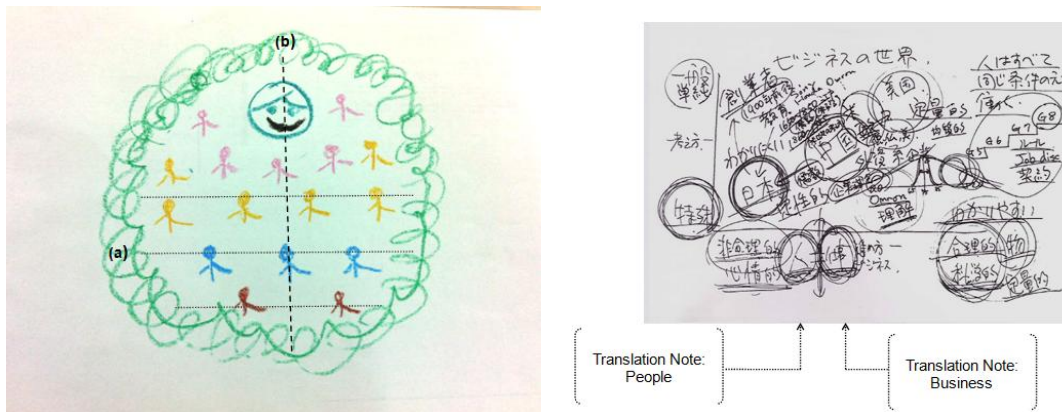

Figure 22: Drawing from Emi and Mr. Dragon

Among the network dynamics in the case of OMG, some organisational effects such as hierarchical structures can be 'seen' through the participants' visual representations. Also, the ethnographic inquiry enabled me to recognise the translational interactions between networks. For example in Figure 22, the 'axis' drawn and described by Mr. Dragon that differentiated between 'people' and 'business', Emi interpreted it as the 'central axis' just like the line (b) found in her own drawing. The central axis, the 'big boss', was seen as a powerful actor 'controlling' many other things in the organisation network. However, as the interpreter during the interview process (Williamson et al., 2011), both Emi and me have inevitably affected the network of understandings.

Through the interactive process of translating, she became an actor translating various actors and networks. Like most translational actors described in the '*lost self*' section in previous chapter, she remains 'invisible' in her drawing. Similarly, me, as a translational actor in this research process, it never occurred to me to provide a drawing. In the light of the deconstructionist perspective on translation, the limitation, incompleteness is always part of the translating process (Derrida,

1985). Sometimes the absence in networks might speak more than the presence.
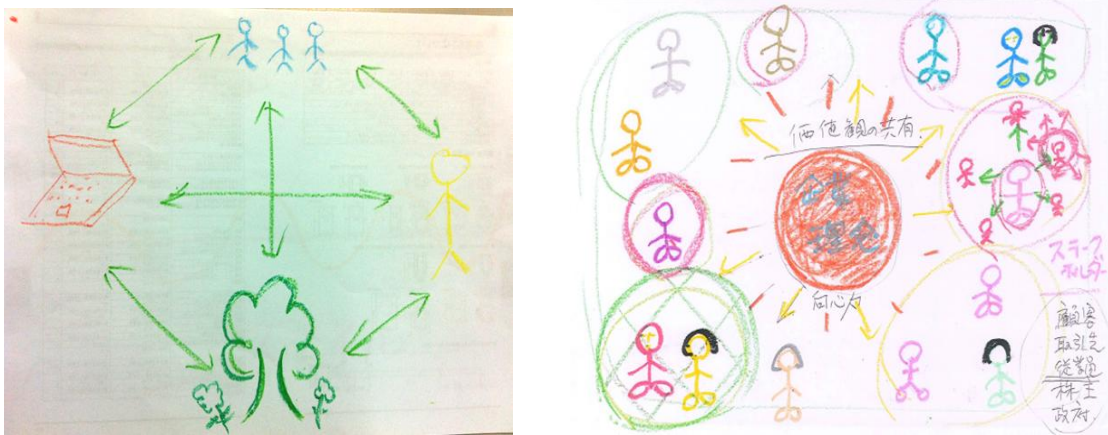

Figure 23: Drawing from Rina and Mr. Dragon

Some dynamic translations that happened in the network of OMG are quite intense and expressive; especially when you look at the lines, patterns, and colours they drew. Sometimes the drawing itself could look like a 'visualised' network already, composed by various actors and the possible relationships among them (See Figure 23). In those heterogeneous networks they drew, sometimes an actor can also be a network (Law, 1992) – such as the stick figures (e.g. an employee of OMG) in Mr. Dragon's drawing, it can also be a network with impacts on others.

Mr. Dragon described OMG as an MNC which has many subsidiaries in the world, across several industries. Despite the cultural dynamics in these subsidiaries, they can all be united by the 'OMG culture', which was called 'centripetal force' by Mr. Dragon. This metaphor echoes the description for narrative suggested by Boje (2008): although the 'centripetal' force of narrative conveys control and ordering, sometimes the narrative can constitute a counter-force, the 'centrifugal' decentering force of disordering and diversity as well. As an intern working to promote the OMG culture across the organisation, my job in that network was translating the 'centripetal force', and communicating the 'sunshine'; however more often I witnessed the possible counter-effects, such as the confused and even 'suffocated' feelings of the participants, or the objectified self as a 'cannon' that determined to fight for productivity.

Additionally, these network dynamics can be explained by the notion of 'eco-ordering' (Newton & Harte, 1997), which is often associated with organisational culture change or control (Kunda, 1992). In the case of OMG, the idea of 'eco-ordering' can be seen from the eternal sun shining across the world, or the distinctive and mechanical corporate boats. These iconic images seem to be contradictory with the occasional whispers and random corners, represented by angled lines and iron cage in their drawings. However, they are not considered as two extremes in this account, but translated as interplays and dynamics developing along with each other. More importantly, the dynamics of the heterogeneous OMG network are evolved through translating.

Through the research process in OMG, translation has appeared crucial in understanding organising processes of CS. It has incorporated various perspectives, such as ANT, translingual, and philosophical stances. Translation has been a tasty 'flavour' for whetting one's appetite: the next section turns to the 'main course' to develop this further.

'Translating' instead of 'Translation'

Translating as Process

It has long been recognised that the English language is built around the use of nouns with the effect that objects and their properties are given more attention than actions and processes (Sapir, 1921). In contrast, Chinese verbs usually can also be nouns according to the contexts in which they are expressed. In organisation studies, verbs and often their gerunds are adopted in preference to nouns where process or action is considered more crucial (Czarniawska, 2008; Law, 1994; Weick, 1969). Thus in a 'verb-sensitive' language like English, the choice of the word has further implications. For example, Weick's book (1969) famously proposed the social psychology of 'organising' rather than 'organisation', and articulated why organisation scholars should pay more attention to processes rather than structures. By combining verb and noun (organising and organisation), researchers study organising before concluding that something has already become organised, or that organisation already exists (Czarniawska, 2008).

'Translation is a process before it is a result' (Callon, 1986, p. 224). In the emerging processes, everything is under continuous modification and reproduction (Hernes, 2008). 'Folding and unfolding, enveloping and developing – these are the moves of translation, and with every single move, there (dis)appears a new, yet hidden reality' (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2004, p. 40). Organisational phenomena should not be treated as entities or as accomplished events, but as unfolding processes and interactive enactments (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Thus, 'translating' as a gerund is employed in this research rather than 'translation', as a noun. Translation refers to the process, and also the results of that process (Callon, 1986). But it can foreground the way in which something has been 'translated' from one form to another, without questioning if it is actually 'translatable' in the first place, or whether or not equivalent translations ever exist in the target language.

Therefore, this research can be seen as a translating process which offers a plausible and defensible representation of the situation. 'Translating' is considered as a constructed process continually happens on drawing boards, in the field, or from writing. Instead of producing a fixed concept of CS that could be generalised to many contexts, this research finds value in understanding the ongoing process of how CS has been translated and negotiated, in the context of OMG.

Translating as Temporary

Developing this 'translating' instead of 'translation' framework also brings out a reflection of 'time' in the translating process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Cunliffe, Luhman, & Boje, 2004). The translating in OMG is also temporary while relationships and meanings are continuously being enacted. Their translation is never fixed as their relationships, their understandings continuously change. The words on company documents might appear consistent but the interpretation of them changes according to the situation. Some considered the influence from a wide environment; some who perceived a strong impact from subordinates, claimed it largely depends on the top

management. When the notions of CS are translated from Japanese to Chinese, from management to workers, interpretations and understandings have been constructed to fit in the situation.

Thus, the temporality of translating emphasises the importance of the time and place when translating happens. For example, the 'direct line' and 'curve line' found in drawings from Juri and Rina have constructed different meanings almost every time they were interpreted in different situations, associated with different networks. In summary, it needs to be noted that translating processes are only temporary attempts in networks, so they are rarely complete (Law, 1992). Therefore, this research offers a temporary representation of how CS evolves in the case of OMG, emphasising the non-fixed ideas of CS.

Translating as Understanding

Hermeneutics is often mobilised to explore the understanding of underlying meanings instead of offering the explanation of causal connections (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, the representation and interpretation of field notes and drawing illustrate the hermeneutic process between pre-understanding and understandings; going forth and coming back, and once again and again. Similarly, the analysis process exemplifies that the understanding and interpretation of CS can also be seen as a hermeneutic process, which will be explained further in this section.

Hermeneutics is rooted in the Renaissance, which includes the Protestant analysis of the Bible and the humanist study of the ancient classics (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). One of the main hermeneutic claims is that the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole and we should understand the whole in terms of the detail (Gadamer, 1975; McAuley, 2004). This is known as objectivist hermeneutics, while the alethic hermeneutics dissolves the polarity between subject and object into a more original situation of understanding, mainly considering the 'revelation of something hidden' through the other circle between pre-understanding and understanding (Heidegger, 1959). While travelling between the part and the whole, between pre-understanding and understanding, deeper understanding could be gained.

Thus, through the 'translating-translated' circle in Figure 24, relationships are woven, more meanings are constructed, and deeper understandings are enacted.
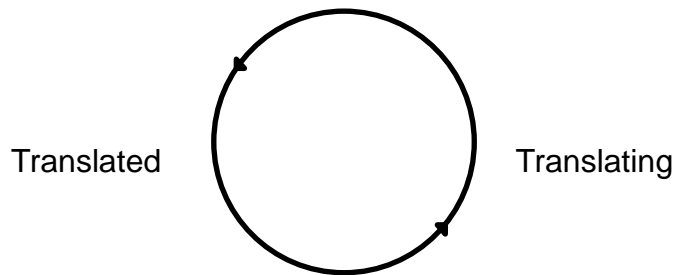
Translated ( ) Translating

Figure 24: The 'Translating' Circle

Following the hermeneutic circle in Figure 24, each of the research participants had their pre-understandings toward sustainability and CSR until they were asked to draw and clarify in the interviewing. Then further understandings were gained after they interpreted the thoughts that had not been clarified before. Additionally, as shown in the analysis of the 'OMG language', certain ways of translating were adopted by the department where I gradually learnt to 'speak' the corporate language. For example, the emphasis of the uniqueness of their corporate culture, the reference to their OMG founder with a hint of heroism and benevolence, the legitimacy and power indicated by the flavour of Japanese in their Chinese and English translations. The promotion of corporate culture starts from the morning ceremony every day, every internal email, the magazines sent out to every employee, to the posters sent out to every subsidiary… a 'one company' approach seemed to be used to tame the diverse, complex, messy organisation towards an OMG community (Ailon & Kunda, 2009).

Therefore, translating process should also be regarded as the process of weaving relationships, the process of an actant associating with others and becoming an actor or network (Greimas & Courtes, 1982), also representing the process of constructing macro actors (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005). Through the hermeneutic 'translating/translated' circle, the unfolding processes could be shown, the interactive enactments could be examined, and therefore, deeper understandings could be gained.

190

It will be discussed further in the next section how these evolving understandings of CS are reflected in and by the translating of Communal Vessel in cultural contexts. And CS, as a non-fixed notion with various implications, both its meanings and the meaning of existence, in other words both the translating and the translated, will be explored.

Translating Communal Vessel

My understanding of Communal Vessel, (*gong qi,* 公器), first introduced in the Representation & Interpretation Chapter, has been evolving during and after my fieldwork in OMG. Its translations have been found to echo various understandings of CS, and in the case of OMG, it offers a cultural understanding of commonly held beliefs about what the corporation should be in a society. Although Communal Vessel appeared to be very difficult to translate in the outset, many participants referred to it as the essence of understanding OMG's corporate philosophy, and therefore CS. Through the process of translating, various understandings of CS gradually become apparent, which could be 'contained' in this indigenous symbolic term, each interpretation interacting with others. In summary, Communal Vessel not only encapsulates OMG's Corporate Philosophy, it also incorporates various understandings of CS in OMG, with its inclusive and complex features.

As a Translational Construct

In order to explore what Communal Vessel could mean in various contexts, a hermeneutic process can be adopted as shown in Figure 25. Following the part/whole hermeneutic circle, if we want to understand a classical word or term, we need to understand the related text where the term occurred; and we cannot understand the text without getting to know the claims from the author, conceived as a collective authorship; then we have to examine the context behind the author to make sure we understand the meaning (McAuley, 2004). Similarly, Aristotle's notion of 'heuristic' is often used to describe the way meaning is co-created between orator and audience, emphasising the

interactive process of sharing participatory meanings (Enos & Lauer, 1992). As a translational construct, the heuristic meanings of Communal Vessel have been continually constructed through interactive processes of translating among different texts, authors and their cultural contexts (see Figure 25). I will discuss this further in the next paragraphs, from the context of OMG, to different Chinese classical philosophies.
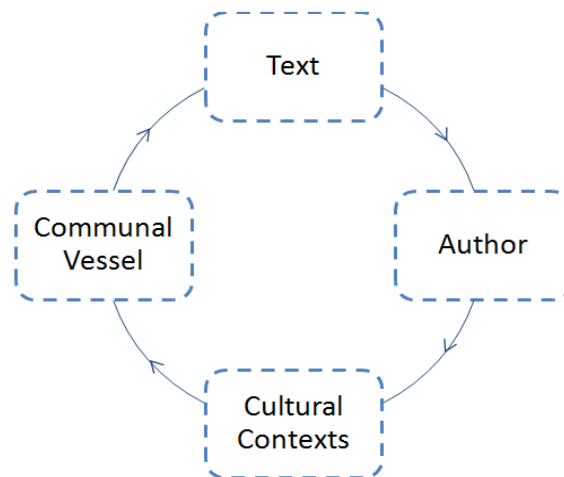
Figure 25: The hermeneutic process of 'Communal Vessel'

During this inquiry I gradually realised that the so-called 'Japanese inherited' term 'Communal Vessel', originated from classical Chinese literature. Interestingly, the term 'Communal Vessel' itself does not immediately suggest the various meanings I later discovered; actually I had no clue of its value the first time I heard the term from my OMG colleagues. At that point I was told that the term 'Communal Vessel' was a direct translation from Japanese company documents, and the Japanese characters just happened to be the same in Chinese. At OMG's annual conference, Mr. Dragon was advocating that the 'right' and sustainable way of doing business comes from the notion of 'kingly governance', which is a quote from Confucian and Mencius's claims that how people should act and govern with benevolence according to ethical standards.

The 'vessel' is also a key word underpinning the Chinese way of thinking (Jullien, 2004; Wu, 2009). As a popular metaphor in contemporary Chinese

society, it usually refers to people with certain specialities. 'Vessel' can also be a verb: as in, to choose people according to their abilities (Ames & Rosemont, 2010; Mencius, 372-289 BCE/1979). Firstly, the word 'Vessel' is found in *the Analects* (Confucius, c. 500-400 BCE/1979), the main work of Confucian philosophy advocating kingly governance, further developed by Mencius (372-289 BCE/1979). Both sought to strengthen the tendency of organising and ordering in society

> Tzu-kung asked, "What do you think of me?"
> The Master said, "You are a vessel."
> "What kind of vessel?"
> "A sacrificial vessel."
> (5:4, The Analects, Confucius, c. 500-400 BCE/1979)

Here, Confucius used a Chinese word 'Hu Lian' (瑚璉) to describe a special sacrificial vessel. As a precious appliance, it was used for containing grain in those extremely honourable rites in temples, to worship the gods and ancestors. These vessels were delicate pots, normally made from bronze or jade. Subsequently the 'vessel' has developed as a symbolic word implying the best example in society. It expresses the importance of social ordering, and in praise of virtue and achievement in society. Nevertheless, the vessel itself does not belong to anyone; it becomes a symbolised communal entity shared in the human world (Jullien, 2004). Thus, from Confucius and his students' point of views, 'Communal Vessel' could be praising functionality and valuing social ordering.

In addition, from the perspective of an advocate of social order, society is an object which a human could act upon, as something that can be controlled, as a communal 'pot' (Jullien, 2004). However, often not everything can be constrained or held. After I left the field and came back to the UK, the term 'Communal Vessel' was found in more Chinese classical literatures. Huai-Nan-Tsze's (206-195 BCE/1937/1960) treatise translated as 'The History of Great Light' is said to derive from Liu An, a Han Dynasty politician of royal lineage, about whom many mysterious stories are told. He is remembered mainly because of this influential book. His perspective is regarded as the bridge

between Taoism and Confucianism, although in the book, he seemed to consider Taoism as the foundation through shadows of Confucius. He suggested that our human world is a 'Great Vessel' that cannot be 'done' (completed) or held; whoever thinks he/she can hold and control it, will certainly fail. Looking for traces in this and other literature, I realised that Communal Vessel could have deeper meanings beyond social ordering and ethical standards.

While I was immersed in the data analysis, I recalled some casual discussions with Emi about reading Lao-Tzu. I found more descriptions of the 'vessel' in the Book of Tao and Teh (Lao-Tzu, c. 500 BCE/2008). Allegedly it was written by Lao-Tzu, as one of the most significant works of Taoism. As Lao-Tzu believed, the world cannot be an object for action; it is made up of things both visible and invisible; everything in the vessel now appears, now disappears, nothing is fixed once and for all. Additionally, 'Communal Vessel' can be found in Chuang-Tzu (c. 300-200 BCE/1968), as the successor of Lao-Tzu in Taoism. He associated 'Communal Vessel' with the tendency of 'naming' things, and expressed the concern of 'naming' too many things. Since Communal Vessel became related to Taoism, its translations have recalled a deep appreciation toward Tao, the great nature, and the belief that many things we thought could be controlled, may not be 'held' or be 'done'.

Thus, the meanings of the 'vessel' can be associated with the simplicity from 'non-action' (wu wei, 无为). 'Non-action' as an iconic, but complex idea from classical philosophies, and has influenced contemporary thinking in a number of ways. It is not advocating that one should do nothing, but appreciating the natural processes that take place; perhaps it can be interpreted as having 'left nothing to be done' (Jullien, 2004). Some aspects of these philosophical traditions seem contradictory, for example the claim from Confucius on ordering and social control, compared with the Taoist belief of non-action. Nevertheless, every philosophical stream could represent one way of understanding and translating 'Communal Vessel'.

Therefore the process of translating 'Communal Vessel' can be seen as a hermeneutic process providing the potential for various understandings. It has been translated in the OMG company documents, in the Analects of Confucius,

in Taoism, also in Huai-Nan-Tsze and Chuang-Tzu. These continual translating and interpreting processes all contribute to the understandings of 'Communal Vessel'.

The Oxymoron of Communal Vessel

> Thirty spokes share one hub.
> It is just the space (the nothingness) between them
> That makes a cart function as a cart.
> Knead clay to make a vessel
> And you find within it the space
> That makes a vessel as a vessel.
> Within a house built with doors and windows
> You will find the space
> That makes a house function as a house.
> Hence the substance (Being) can provide a condition
> Under which usefulness is found,
> But the Nothingness (space) is the usefulness itself.
> (Chapter 11, The Book of Tao and Teh, Lao-Tzu, c. 500 BCE/2008)

While understandings were evolving through translating processes, the oxymoronic nature of Communal Vessel gradually attracted my attention. Although either the character of 'communal' or 'vessel' can be traced back to different Chinese classical literatures, the understandings focus on the word of 'vessel', or 'pot'. As discussed earlier, the communal 'pot' could include various actors and networks. The inclusiveness of the 'vessel' can capture the discursive and extensive features of the notion of CS. However, intrinsically oxymoronic, it is the emptiness inside of the 'vessel' that provides the possibility for the inclusiveness for a vessel; and the 'emptiness' echoes Taoist idea of non-action. Here, the 'emptiness' does not mean 'nothingness'; it still has the sense of inclusiveness, but without planned ordering; and various things could naturally involve with each other without any forced distinctions. The emptiness can be associated with the non-fixed, decentred, and sometimes unnamed nature of the network of CS.

Thus, in the processes of translating CS, Communal Vessel is found to incorporate both inclusiveness and emptiness simultaneously via its intrinsic oxymoronic nature. In this way, the subtle but profound meanings of CS can be gradually understood. For example, in those ancient rituals described earlier, the vessel can symbolise giving back what has been gained from working in the past. The act of 'giving something back' should be considered, such as 'to whom', and 'why'. In terms of giving back to whom, it could be the symbol of god, or the great nature, or the society. It relates to another important notion in SHA that emphasises the interdependence between firms and various stakeholders, which are often in dynamic groups (Parmar et al., 2010). In addition, the act of giving back what has been gained enacts and reinforces the shared and collective nature of beliefs that construct meanings for people (de Certeau, 1984). This, perhaps, has distinguished the act of 'giving back', and possibly has transformed the seemingly ordinary 'vessel', which could have implications for contemporary CSR contributions. The meanings of CS may have the same function: to affirm the belief in contributing back to society and the environment.

Also, from the inclusiveness view, Confucian understanding can imply a planned and even forced way of practising CS, and praise for purposes which are 'big' and 'good' for everyone. It might seem too good to be true in the case of OMG, but it is needed in some situations: for executives it could be the source of the 'authority', when they were weaving the net of interpreting and translating; for first-line workers it might be a sign hanging on walls with glass frames to remind them OMG is a 'nice' place to be; and the idea of Communal Vessel could offer people there a sense of belonging and meaning from work.

Intrinsically oxymoronic, the inclusiveness also brings emptiness. The strong emphasis of Communal Vessel within OMG did not clarify the meanings it is associated with. The term has left much room for interpretation. Many participants considered it as a Japanese inherited concept, symbolising the Japanese corporate culture. Mr. Dragon, as the spokesperson of OMG culture, he associated this term with the founder's entrepreneurship, and the cultural roots of Mencius claiming kingly governance. Nevertheless, as Taoism suggest, the world cannot be an object for human action; it can be made up of things both visible and invisible. Everything in the vessel can appear and disappear,

196

nothing is fixed once and for all (Jullien, 2004). Although it is hard to set up Communal Vessel a definite meaning, when every time it is interpreted and translated, it associates with specific actors according to the situations.

Therefore, through the processes of translating, Communal Vessel could offer diverse and evolving cultural interpretations of CS. Sometimes the absence could triumph over the presence. Through the oxymoronic meanings of Communal Vessel, it exemplifies how translating processes contribute to an indigenous understanding of what CS means, and how CS evolves in OMG.
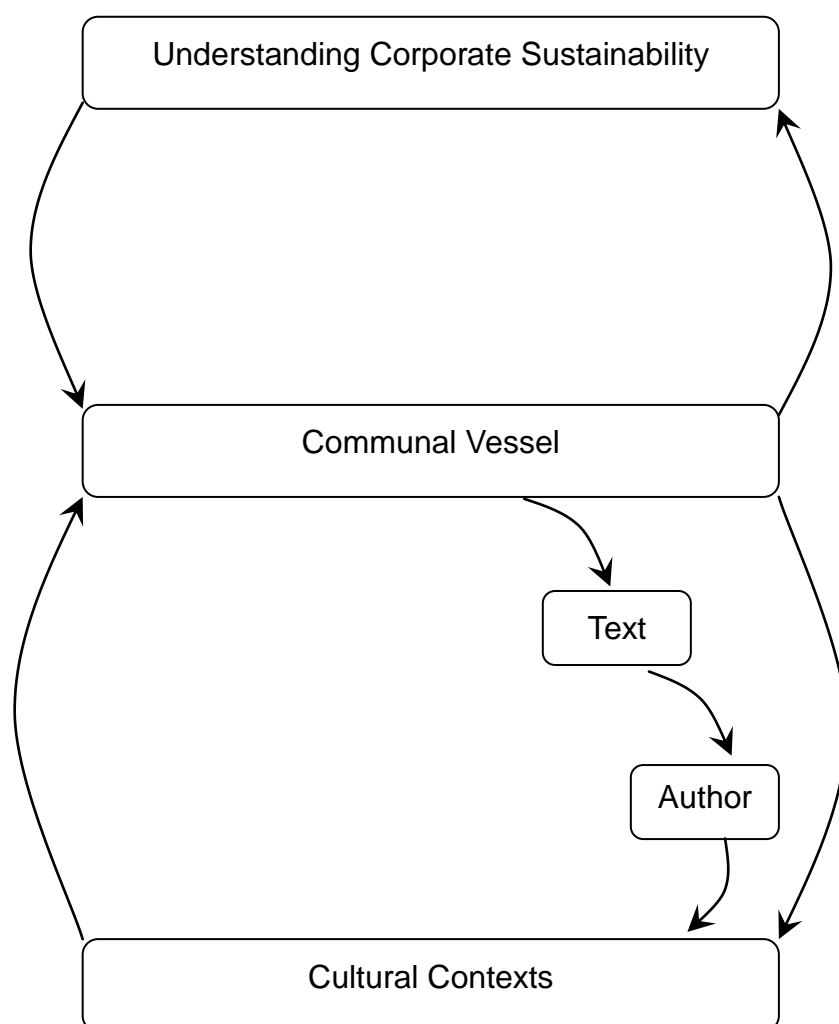
Figure 26: 'Translating Communal Vessel'

As shown in Figure 26, this research starts with the inquiry of understanding CS in the account of OMG, which are constructed via processes of translating 'Communal Vessel', as the essence of OMG's corporate philosophy. Through the ethnographic representation in OMG, a hermeneutic, temporary and continual translating process is adopted in this thesis to offer various cultural interpretations of CS. Thus, the understandings of Communal Vessel are associated with the referred textual background, authors, and their cultural contexts at that time. Via the continual hermeneutic understanding process shown as the inner circle in Figure 26, the understandings of Communal Vessel are gradually evolved. While implications of this term are drawn from various cultural contexts, it broadens and enriches our understandings of CS. Thus, Figure 26 summarises these processes of translating Communal Vessel. Also, through travelling from the detail and the whole, text and its context, classical philosophies and contemporary implications… various translations have been forming and reforming - but it rarely completes.

In summary, this Discussion Chapter presents how CS has been interpreted and translated in OMG, and emphasises the process of *translating*. By offering a translational perspective, this chapter enables a cultural inquiry into Communal Vessel, which has been evolved as a heuristic translational construct of CS in the account of OMG. It has influenced other actors through its intrinsic oxymoronic meanings, incorporating inclusiveness and emptiness simultaneously. In the next chapter, the main contributions and limitations of this study will be discussed.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Contributions & Limitations

In this chapter, I will reinforce the main arguments of the thesis and present the five main contributions. It will also include the discussion of the limitations of this study, and suggest some opportunities for future research. This chapter will conclude with a reflection on a Chinese idiom '*The Great Vessel Rarely Completes*', which brings many of the ideas together discussed thus far.

Main Contributions

The main contributions of the thesis can be summarised below:

1. Problematising the construction of CS, suggesting it should be considered as a non-fixed, contextual and culturally-sensitive notion;

2. Offering a non-western perspective of how CS evolves in a Japanese MNC in China;

3. Employing visual representations of Corporate Culture Promotion;

4. Bringing translational perspectives into the field of CS;

5. Proposing 'Communal Vessel' as - but more than - an OMG translational construct of CS, with potentially wider significance for studies of CS and CSR in China and beyond.

Problematising the Construction of CS: as the foundation of this thesis

Following the fast development of the global economy, many pressing issues such as climate change, environmental pollution, and labour crises, have attracted great concerns and debates on how to develop a sustainable global economy that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987, p. 41). As the economic engines of the world, MNCs sometimes are seen as the agency for progressing global sustainability initiatives, or being accused of not giving attention to their social and environmental responsibilities (Dunphy et al., 2003;

Hart, 1997; Kolk & Pinkse, 2008). CS-related concepts have developed as an important research area in current organisation and management studies, but their definitions and cross-context implementations remain problematic (Fleming & Jones, 2013; Montiel, 2008). CS could have positive, negative, and dynamic implications when corporations are involved with CS dialogues (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2008; Votaw, 1972).

Rather than considering CS as a taken-for-granted and fixed concept, this thesis challenges the existing assumptions of CS, and proposes to explore the ideas of CS through problematisation (Campbell et al., 1982; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Also, a constructionist view has been adopted in the study to explore how CS has been constructed and interpreted (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Weick, 1995). This study critically reviews the received definitions of CS, incorporates various long-standing arguments, and problematises the construction of CS and its underlying meanings.

This is further explained by two main arguments in the first two chapters of the thesis. One is discussed from an ANT perspective in Chapter 2, that CS should be considered as a non-fixed, questionable macro actor that has been evolving and mobilising many other actors and networks. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 also point out that even in English-speaking contexts, the perceptions of CS could differ due to diverse cultural and institutional influences (Hartman et al., 2007; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007). As found in this research, CS changes among different countries and contexts, from understandings to practices (Matten & Moon, 2008). Therefore, a standardised and fixed definition of CS that applies globally seems rather questionable. CS should be considered as a contextual and culturally-sensitive notion that has been and is forever evolving.

Through problematising the construction of CS, the research focus has been shifted from gap-identifying, to exploring the non-fixed, evolving meanings of CS that are constructed and interpreted in a specific context, which will be explained further in the following sections.

Offering a Non-Western Cultural Interpretation of CS

As discussed above, understandings of CS are contextual, and different in practices due to various cultural, economic, and institutional environments (Matten & Moon, 2008). A review of the existing literature in this field reveals CS-related theories and concepts are mainly conducted in western contexts; and research studies informed by non-western perspectives are rather limited (Bondy et al., 2004; Chapple & Moon, 2005). Although CS and related notions have been examined and compared among several global contexts, the under-representation of Asia, and especially China in current CS management and organisation studies has been identified (Kolk et al., 2010; Moon & Shen, 2010). It is noted that even those studies that take a comparative approach to examine CS across contexts (Chapple & Moon, 2005; Golob & Bartlett, 2007; Visser, 2006) tend to review CS on the 'explicit' level, such as CSR/CS reports and company websites. However, the 'implicit' dimensions, such as CS values, norms, or rules in specific organisations remain underexplored (Bondy, 2008; Matten & Moon, 2008).

This thesis contributes to understanding the 'implicit' aspects of CS by researching how it has been translated and interpreted, also how CS evolves in a Japanese MNC in China. Through observing the daily organisational activities, rules, and meanings that participants drew on to make sense of their worlds (Kunda & van Maanen, 1999), this study offers a rich cultural interpretation with an 'enhanced ethnographic account' with drawings, narratives, and stories encountered in the field (Ybema et al., 2009). Chapter 4 presents the representation and interpretation through writing the account in a detailed and reflexive way, offering a 'thick' and nuanced description of organisational life, and exploring the daily social interaction, routines and organisational rituals as organising processes (Fine et al., 2009; Geertz, 1973) in OMG.

Although the 'West' and the 'East' are described as two differentiated streams of views in this thesis, this is not based on a specific geographic divide. Instead, they are considered as perspectives informed by different but not categorised philosophical traditions (Chia & Holt, 2009; Dar, 2014). As a Japanese MNC's subsidiary in China, OMG adopted a series of international environment management systems. In this account, the participants' understandings and

managerial practices have been influenced by both western and eastern traditions. Through exploring the cultural representation of OMG, this research offers great opportunities to consider cultural interactions and effects in the network of CS. Also, this study enables an inquiry into Chinese classical philosophical influences on the understandings and organising processes of CS.

Additionally, as a growing field in China, CSR and CS have focused much interest and debate on environmental protection, labour crises, obligations and responsibilities of MNCs in China (Moon & Shen, 2010). As a result, CSR and CS have become rather complex and sensitive issues in China. Thus, it has been very difficult to get, and more importantly, to maintain an ethnographic research access with corporations, as discussed in the 'Research Process' section of the Methodology Chapter. In addition to interviewing and observations, negotiating a working role inside of the organisation took great efforts and care for both of the researcher and the organisation. In effect, the negotiation process lasted throughout the whole field work, which offered me the opportunity to understand the relationships among people, and how things work there. Also, my multiple identities in the field, as a corporate culture intern, a student from the UK, a Chinese female, a researcher, and so on, have reflexively influenced the construction of this ethnographic account. My ability to manage these widely-experienced difficulties to negotiate and successfully sustain close research access, and sensitivity of the ethical considerations, however, have made this thesis an unusual empirical contribution to the field of CS in China.

Employing Visual Representations of Corporate Culture Promotion

Following the discussions as above, this section explains another empirical contribution of this thesis, as a visual method is accompanied with other ethnographic methods, enriching the inquiry into what it was like to work in OMG, and specifically in the Corporate Culture Department. It also offers a methodological enhancement to more commonly used ethnographic methods.

The definite distinction between visual and verbal representations is criticised in the 'Research Methods' section. So-called 'word' or 'image' could be deceptive

labels (Mitchell, 1994), or they could be seen as complementary systems of meanings (Stiles, 2004). However, the Chinese pictogram is a good example of the combination of both. Therefore, as shown in the colourful drawings from the participants in Chapter 4, the characters and the images were all considered as the construction of a web of meanings. Through the representations and interpretations combining the drawings, interview transcripts, and field notes, it shows how the visual images, as a complementary part of meaning construction, can be facilitative in interviewing, and be employed as a research method to explore the rich description of participants' worlds in OMG, as well as illuminating discursive meanings of CS.

Specifically, the accounts of Mr. Dragon, Emi, Juri, and Mika revealed their diverse interpretations of the 'corporate culture' of OMG: as the solid, red sun shining all over the world; as the dynamic, but structured and even leader-centric circle; or as the mechanical and structured building, but with turbulent influences; or it could be a fleet of sailing boats going towards the same direction. These iconic elements, together with the narratives, offer rich descriptions of how these people felt working to promote 'the OMG culture'.

Through exemplifying the complementary effects of a participant produced drawing method in the study, this thesis offers a graphic representation of promoting corporate culture in OMG. In the next section, translation and translating will be addressed as one of the main contributions of the thesis.

Bringing Translational Perspectives into the field of CS

Translation and translating, which are introduced in Chapter 2, has developed through the research process and analysis, and underpinned some main arguments in the thesis.

Firstly, my doubts on CS started from questioning CS, as a term which arguably originated in western contexts: whether it is 'translatable' from English to Chinese without losing its meanings, and if the meanings are inevitably changed, how this is done and why. It has been noted that translation should be considered from critical and reflexive perspectives in cross-cultural research

(Xian, 2008). From the methodological perspective, the 'impossible but necessary' translation (Derrida, 1985) is encountered in this study through the translingual practices among English, Chinese and occasionally Japanese. Also, translation can be considered as more than a translingual practice (Eco, 2003; Liu, 1995). As the foundation of possible realities in everyday life, language is intrinsically constructed through transferring of meanings (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Berger & Luckmann, 1966), which is always cultural or political (Venuti, 2003).

Secondly, beyond the linguistic interpretation, translation is considered as an important device from ANT perspectives. Translation can capture the mobilising movement of linguistic and material objects, and empower the 'travelling of ideas' across time and space (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). When the ideas of CS from Anglo-American perspectives are transferred into OMG's organisational practices, they are continually translated, constructed, and interpreted. Following the discussion of problematising the construction of CS, the standardised approach of defining CS becomes questionable. If we consider CS from determinate approaches, examining what the preconditions are and what follow as the possible results, we are treating CS as a 'black box' of which we can only know its input and output (Latour, 1987). However, how CS has been constructed and modified in the process needs to be explored further. Specifically, the process between when an idea is constructed, and when it is taken for granted, is regarded as 'translation' (Mueller & Whittle, 2011).

By introducing ANT as a theoretical perspective, this thesis questions the meanings of CS that have been taken for granted, and examines the ordering processes in various actors and networks, such as *translating*. ANT also brings in a set of metaphors and notions to engage with more possibilities of interpretations, such as macro and micro actors, quasi-objects, obligatory passage point, heterogeneous networks (Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005; Latour, 1987; Law, 1992). These concepts have assisted in understanding the 'networked' nature of CS.

Thirdly, relating to other philosophical stances, translation is considered as a process of interpretation and negotiation to gain understandings (Eco, 2003; Gadamer, 1975). In this research, CS has been explored via multiple translating

processes through the cultural representation in OMG. Rather than 'translation', the gerund 'translating' is developed in my discussion to emphasise its temporary, continually evolving, and hermeneutic characteristics.

In summary, this thesis proposes a set of translational perspectives by incorporating linguistic, methodological, ANT, and philosophical insights for CS. This research argues that the translating process could offer a useful methodological perspective to explore the dynamics when ideas are travelling from one setting to another, from theories to practices, and from the classics to contemporary thinking. As an example, the translating process of Communal Vessel will be explained in the next section.

Proposing 'Communal Vessel' as a Translational Construct of CS

Through examining the translations and interpretations of CS in OMG, Communal Vessel, expressing essential ideas of OMG's corporate philosophy, has gradually evolved as an important translational construct of CS in this research. Interestingly, the investigation of what Communal Vessel means, and where it comes from, has exemplified how the translating process assisted in understanding CS. The investigation started from translating OMG's corporate culture from Japan, emphasised by the participants as the cultural representation of CS in OMG, which alerted me to Chinese classical philosophies addressing ethics and responsibilities, and related to contemporary organising processes. Thus, through travelling from one place to another destination, back and forth, and again, the dynamic meanings of Communal Vessel have evolved in the study.

Communal Vessel, as discussed in the previous chapters, has an oxymoronic quality containing both inclusiveness and emptiness: both the tendencies of ordering and refusing planned or forced action. It is a translational construct created by and for society. The inclusiveness of the vessel implies the meanings of functions and social orders, perhaps setting up an example for social life, whereas the emptiness symbolises the broad, non-fixed, and sometimes unnamed features of notions such as CS. The emptiness does not mean 'nothingness', as often 'invisible' things play a part but might have been

neglected or suppressed (Jullien, 2008), which can be witnessed in this account of OMG.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to a cultural understanding of CS, via the translating process of Communal Vessel based on the ethnographic inquiry in OMG. Communal Vessel represents OMG's interpretations of corporations and societies, brings out the cultural understandings of CS, and enables dialogue among various philosophical traditions, such as western hermeneutics, Confucian and Taoist ideas. Also, as a 'communal pot', an organisational motif, a corporate culture product, a translational construct, a quasi-object/subject, Communal Vessel offers the OMG way of understanding CS. Its intrinsically oxymoronic nature powerfully symbolises the inclusiveness and emptiness characteristics of CS, while the meanings are forever incorporating and evolving through the processes of translating.

Limitations and Future Research

Following the discussion in the Methodology Chapter, the considerations of contributions and limitations depend on the 'potential of the situation' as well as intrinsic potential in research focus or method. The contribution in one setting could be a limitation in another, and vice versa. Therefore the main contributions discussed above may be similarly affected.

This thesis is not offering any one-solution-fits-all strategy or conclusive implication for CS, but one way of understanding CS in the context of a China-based MNC called OMG. As discussed earlier, the context of this research is in a Japanese MNC in China. Thus, the implications of this research to wider contexts need to be considered cautiously. For example, Japanese MNCs in China may differ due to their locations, financial background, and other factors. As discussed in the ethnography section in Chapter 3, this study intends to provide a cultural representation with thick and interpretive meanings rather than generalising the findings to other organisations with similar culture.

Methodological choices and stances always have implications that limit research in particular ways. Additionally, my personal experiences and identity

have influenced the construction of this ethnographic account. Instead of claiming to be 'the best', or 'the only' representation of how CS evolves in OMG, other researchers with different backgrounds could construct a different representation. Also, I was working in the 'Corporate Culture Department'. This account is based on what I have experienced, and my reflexive analysis and interpretations.

This study also opens more opportunities for future research, instead of concluding the interpretations of CS and related notions. As the ideas of 'Communal Vessel' can also be traced in other philosophical traditions, future research in other organisational and cultural contexts might be able to build on and develop the understandings through exploring the idea of vessel; for example, in a context of non-MNCs in another country. Also, on the basis of recognising the important roles of translating processes in cross-cultural studies, further research can examine and develop the understandings of translation in organisation studies. Furthermore, the inclusive and discursive features of Communal Vessel could contribute to other studies researching the relationships between business and society, and associated with ordering and unorganised complexities in other contexts.

The Great Vessel Rarely Completes

> 'A large square seems cornerless,
> a great vessel is the last completed,
> a great sound is inaudible,
> a great image is formless,
> an invisible law is nameless.'
> (Chapter 41, The Book of Tao and Teh, Lao-Tzu, c. 500 BCE/2003)

The 'Great Vessel Rarely Completes' is a well-known Chinese idiom, which is originally from The Book of Tao and Teh. It starts from an ordinary observation that it may not be easy to find the corner right away from a large square; then it echoes the incompleteness of the Communal Vessel idea; it also follows with

208

the non-categorical and un-named nature of things, such as sound, image, and rules. When things are taken for granted, sometimes the seemingly ordinary meanings may not be what we assumed. The oxymoron implied by the 'unheard' sound, the 'unseen' image, or the 'unnamed law', can only be encountered in a subtle way. It may not be easy to realise the incompleteness of a great vessel, but one may notice the continual translating process towards the completing.
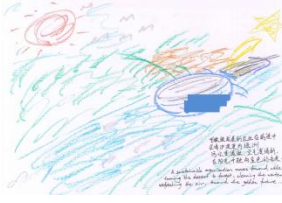
Thus, the idea of 'the Great Vessel rarely completes' is used here to emphasise the continuous translating and ordering processes, and therefore, the incompleteness of the understandings of CS. It criticises current determinant approaches that identify the influential actors of CS in organisations, and promise that the generalisability of their findings can be transferred to other contexts. Nevertheless, this research does not suggest Corporate Sustainability is nothing but another trendy word. We have witnessed countless ordering attempts enacted by CS-related actors. Thus, the understanding towards CS is still a key issue facing current global development, but the approach to it should be appreciated with more reflexive and critical thinking.

In conclusion, this research explores the meanings of CS through problematisation of its construction, based on an ethnographic inquiry in OMG. A translational perspective is proposed as a way of interpreting and understanding this. Communal Vessel appeared as the most plausible translational construct in the account of OMG, offering an indigenous understanding of CS. Through developing an analysis which draws on various philosophical implications from Confucian and Taoist traditions, the 'Great Vessel Rarely Completes' perspective is proposed, addressing the non-fixed ideas of CS and echoing the oxymoron of Communal Vessel.
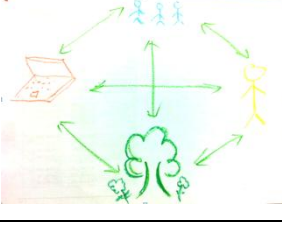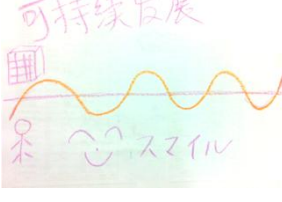
Appendices

Appendix A: List of Interviews and Drawings

OMG China Top Management

Title	Pseudonym	Length of the interview	Drawing
CEO of OMG China	Mr. Dragon	200 minutes (Interpreter: Emi)	
GM of Human Resource and Admin Department	Tarou	135 minutes (Interpreter: Mika)	

Shanghai Management & Corporate Cultural Department

Pseudonym	Length of the interview	Drawing
Emi (Manager)	70 minutes	
Rina	80 minutes	
Juri	75 minutes	
Mika	70 minutes	

OMG China Subsidiaries

Business	Pseudonyms/ Position	Length of the interview	Drawing
Environment Business Department	Kasumi (Manager)	90 minutes	
	Aiko	90 minutes	
Public Relations	Jane (Manager)	90 minutes	No drawing Refused to be recorded
Health	Manager	75 minutes	
Electronics	Manager	90 minutes	

An OMG Manufactory

Title	Pseudonyms/ Position	Length of the interview	Drawing
Head of Business	Manager	60 minutes	Cannot be enclosed as revealing details
Head of Production	Teiko	60 minutes	
HR	Manager	60 minutes	Cannot be enclosed as revealing details
Administration	Executive	45 minutes	Cannot be enclosed as revealing details
First line worker	Young (Headman)	50 minutes	
First line worker	Headman	40 minutes	Cannot be enclosed as revealing details

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

This research is about exploring how Corporate Sustainability is perceived by Multinational Corporations in China. My role is as a doctoral researcher at the University of Exeter, UK rather than working for any other organisations. I will use the information from interviews for my PhD thesis. Any information gathered will remain anonymous in terms of participants' names and the organisations they work in. I would like to record the interviews only for academic research purposes. All files will be stored securely and remain fully confidential. You can refuse to answer any question, stop the recorder or terminate the interview at any point. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Visualising

Please draw a picture that could represent the meanings of 'Corporate Sustainability' in your mind. Please feel free to draw whatever you like. It can be a chart, or a symbol. You can also take a photo from anywhere, or refer to existing pictures before the interview.

Q: Could you please describe this picture to me in as much detail as possible?

Questions

1. Could you give a brief overview about your background and the job role you would like to discuss please?

2. How would you describe the organisation you work/worked within?

3. Who are the stakeholders that can be affected by or can affect your organisation?

What impacts does each stakeholder have at the moment?

4. What activities and practices have your organisation adopted to benefit the environment and society?

Why do think your organisation is doing that? And what do you think about that?

5. Are these practices integrated into your organisation's strategy, policy, procedure etc? Can you give me some examples please?

Where did this initiative start from?

If not, where do they exist, and why?

6. What do you consider to be the main difficulties and challenges that you and your organisation are going through in terms of CSR or sustainability issues?

What would improve the situation?

7. Do you think corporations should have social and environmental impacts beyond legal compliance? If yes, what kind of impact? If not, why?

8. In your opinion, under the ongoing environmental and societal pressure globally, what are the responsibilities of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in China?

9. Do you think people expect too much from MNCs, sometimes it may exceed their ability or their scope of responsibility?

10. Let's look back at the picture. Have you drawn yourself in it?

Could you tell me where you are? What kind of roles or interactions you are having?

What do you see as your scope of responsibility?

Ending

Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to discuss in relation to Corporate Sustainability/CSR in China?

Thank you very much indeed!

Appendix C: Interview Schedule in Chinese

<div align="center">访谈提纲</div>

本研究主要是关于探讨跨国企业在中国的可持续发展。我是英国埃克赛特大学的博士研究生，我不为任何组织工作。访谈内容主要用于我的博士论文。凡是提及的人名以及组织名都会以匿名的方式出现。为了能够更好的记录访谈内容，我会将访谈录音，但只作为学术研究的目的。所有的文档都会加密并安全存放。在访谈的过程中，您可以拒绝回答任何问题，或者要求停止录音，您也可以终止整个访谈。

非常感谢您的配合！

<u>开场游戏</u>

请您画一幅最能体现"公司可持续发展"的图画。您可以任意画您想画的内容，可以是一幅示意图，也可以是一些象征性的符号。如果您不想画图，您也可以用手机拍一张照片，或是采用其它地方的图片。

在您画图的同时，请尽可能详细地描述您所画的内容，谢谢！

<u>访谈问题</u>

1、请您大概讲述一下您的经历，以及您现在的工作职责？

2、您会如何描述您所在的企业或组织？

3、谁是这个企业或组织的<u>利益相关者</u>？那些能够影响，或者被您的企业或组织影响的？在您看来，这些利益相关者都有些什么影响，他们当前是如何互相影响的？

4、据您的了解，您的企业或组织采纳了哪些对社会和环境有利的举措？

您觉得为什么您的企业或组织要采纳这些举措？对此您是如何看的？

5、在您的企业或组织的策略、政策、以及流程中，有体现出这些举措吗？请您举例说明。这些举措最初是来源于哪里，您有想过为什么吗？

6、您觉得在关于企业可持续发展或者企业社会责任的问题上，什么是您，和您所在的组织所要面临的主要难题和挑战？您觉得这样的情形有可能会改善么？

7、您觉得企业是否应该在法律法规要求之外，多做一些有利于社会和环境的事情？

8、在当前日益严峻的环境和社会压力下，您认为中国的跨国公司应该承担一些什么责任？

9、在您看来，人们会不会对跨国公司期望太高，有时可能会超出他们的责任或者能力范围？

10、让我们重新来看下您画的示意图。您把自己画进去了吗？可以告诉我在哪里吗？您觉得您自己在扮演什么样的角色，有些什么样的影响呢？

您把哪些视为您的责任范围呢？

结束语

在关于企业可持续发展和企业社会责任的问题上，有没有什么我没有提及但您想补充说明的吗？

非常感谢您的配合！祝您一切顺利！

Appendix D: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | BUSINESS SCHOOL

Corporate Sustainability Research Consent Form

ORGANISATION:

RESEARCHER: Wenjin Dai

Interview with: *(Full Name)*

                        (*Job Title*)

Date:

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed for the research.

I wish to confirm that:

Research is confidential and non-attributable. The identity of participants and their organisations will not be disclosed to anyone except me, and my supervisors: Professor Annie Pye (annie.pye@exeter.ac.uk) & Professor Jonathan Gosling (Jonathan.Gosling@exeter.ac.uk).

Where interviews are recorded and/or transcribed they will be coded in order to protect the identity of respondents. Any photo or picture generated will be screened by the participants before stored. All files will be stored securely in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act.

Any quotations and/or examples used in research outputs (such as thesis, reports, conference papers, presentations, etc.) will remain anonymous.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Participants are free to refuse to answer any question or terminate the interview at any point.

If you have concerns or queries about any aspect of this research project please contact Wenjin Dai (w.dai@exeter.ac.uk), thank you!

…………………..   ....   ………………

Participant Signature   Print Name   Date

…………………   ……………………….   ………………

Researcher Signature   Print Name   Date

Many thanks for your participation!

Appendix E: Consent Form in Chinese

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER | BUSINESS SCHOOL

埃克赛特大学商学院

企业可持续发展 研究同意书

组织名称:

访问者:　　戴文锦　Wenjin Dai

被访问者:　（全名）

　　　　　　（职位名称）

日期:　　2012 年　　月　　日

非常感谢您同意为本次研究接受访问！

我在此申明：

- 本次研究结果会进行保密，不会为其它任何组织所用。对于被访问者的身份以及他们所在的组织或企业名称，我不会透露给其它除了我本人、我的导师 Annie Pye (annie.pye@exeter.ac.uk) 教授和 Jonathan Gosling (Jonathan.Gosling@exeter.ac.uk) 教授之外的任何人。

- 为了对被访问者的身份进行保密，所有的访谈录音和内容都会被编码存放。所有的照片或图片都会先经过被访问者同意和筛选后进行储存。所有的文档都会依照英国数据保护法案安全存放。

- 任何在我博士论文、会议报告、发表文章、展示等等中提及的例子和引用都会进行匿名处理。

- 本次研究纯属自愿。被访问者可以拒绝回答任何一个问题，或者在任何时刻终止访谈。

如果您有任何关于本次研究的疑问，请联系戴文锦（w.dai@exeter.ac.uk），谢谢！

....

被访问者签名　　　　　　被访问者名字（印刷体）　　　　　　　日期

戴文锦　Wenjin Dai

....

访问者签名　　　　　　　访问者名字（印刷体）　　　　　　　　日期

衷心感谢您，祝您一切顺利！

Appendix F: Pseudonym of OMG Characters

Top management

Mr. Dragon, CEO of OMG China, male, 60s, Japanese, in OMG for 37 years, in China for 3 years.

Tarou, General Manager of HR & Administration Department, male, 50s, Japanese, in OMG for 28 years, in China for 2 years.

Michi, General Manager of CEO Office, male, 40s, Chinese.

Shanghai Management and Corporate Culture Department

(Our department)

Emi Yang, Department Manager, female, 40s, in OMG for 9 years, referred as 'my boss' later;

Kouta, Resource Specialist, male, 30s, Japanese, just came to China;

Rina, Administration Manager, female, 30s, in OMG for almost 3 years;

Juri, Corporate Culture Executive, female, 30s, in OMG for 5 years;

Jeni, Purchasing Assistant, female, 20s, in OMG for 3 years;

Mika, Corporate Culture Assistant, female, 20s, in OMG for less than 1 year;

Zhang (based in Zizhu factory), female, 30s, admin executive, in OMG for 5 years;

Li (based in Jinqiao factory), female, 20s, admin executive, in OMG for 2 years;

Shindi, Receptionist, female, early 20s, in OMG for 1 year;

Aunt Jane, Cleaner, female, 40s, in OMG for 3 years;

Me, intern, female, 20s, just stayed in OMG for 3 months.

Others

Kasumi, Environment Business Department Manager, female, 40s, in OMG for about 10 years;

Aiko, Environment Business Department Assistant, female, 20s, in OMG for about 1 year;

Teiko, Head of Production Department, OMG factory, male, 40s, in OMG for 20 years.

Young, a first line worker headman, OMG factory, male, 30s, in OMG for 14 years.

Head Quarter: OMG Head Quarter in Japan

Head Office: OMG China Head office, the company I was serving

Appendix G: Ethical Approval Form

University of Exeter Business School

Ethical Approval Form: Research Students

This form is to be completed by the research student. When completing the form be mindful that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the **ethical considerations** of the research being undertaken.

Once completed, please submit the form **electronically and a signed hard copy** to Helen Bell at H.E.Bell@exeter.ac.uk. A copy of your approved Research Ethics Application Form together with accompanying documentation **must be bound into your PhD thesis**

Part A: Background

Student name	**Wenjin Dai**		
Supervisors names	**Professor Annie Pye & Professor Jonathan Gosling**		
Title of thesis	**Multinational Corporations' Perception of Corporate Sustainability in China**		
Date of entry	**October 2010**	Status	**FT**
Start and estimated end date of the research	**October 2010 – October 2013**		
Aims and objectives of the research	**Aims:** Exploring CSR managers' perception of corporate sustainability in multinational corporations (MNCs) in China, and to investigate how corporate sustainability is described and enacted across an organisation.		

	Objectives: 1. To explore the meaning of corporate sustainability in the context of multinational corporations in China. 2. To identify the key stakeholders, their relationships to each other and how this impacts on their sense-making. 3. To articulate the main difficulties and challenges they perceive they are going through in terms of sustainability issues. 4. To examine the way they communicate corporate sustainability inside and outside of the organisation. 5. To investigate how corporate sustainability is enacted across an organisation.
Please indicate any sources of funding for the research	**Exeter Business School PhD Studentship**

Part B: Ethical Considerations

Describe the methodology that will be applied in the project (no more than 250 words)	In order to understand the current discourse of corporate sustainability, secondary data will be gathered through internet search or company archives (when available), such as company reports, website contents, internal documents, and news articles. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with CSR mangers or equivalent in a number of multinational corporations in China. These may be face-to-face or through telephone interviews. Before the interview, participants will be asked to draw a picture or a chart that could represent the meanings of 'Corporate Sustainability' in their mind. They will be asked to describe what they draw. Apart from drawing, they can also choose to take photos or

	refer to existing pictures before the interview.
	Besides interviewing, mixed ethnographic methods will be used in one organisation (3 months or longer), such as participant observation, shadowing and informal interviews. Also I will interview a number of people through this organisation during the time.
	Interviews will be conducted in English or Chinese (Mandarin), depending on the preference of the participants. Most of them work in multinational corporations so they understand both languages.
	If the data gathered is in Mandarin, it will be translated and coded in English. When the translation occurs, the relevant parts will be cross-checked with other people who are fluent in both languages and have an understanding of both cultures.
Describe the method by which you will recruit participants and gain their informed consent. If written consent will not be obtained, this must be justified. *[Note: Please attach a copy of any Information Statements and Consent Forms used, including translation if research is to be conducted with non-English speakers]*	Participants will be selected based on the relevance of their job roles and organisations. WWF International's 'One Planet Leaders' programme coordinator has provided a list of their alumni who work in multinational corporations in Asia. Recruitment for the interviewees will be through emails with a written summary about the purpose and methods of the project. If they are willing to participate, I will email them my interview schedule and a written consent form with their names, job titles and organisations. I will suggest having a discussion over the phone if they want more information. If they agree to be interviewed, they will have to sign the consent form and return it to me by email or by post before the interview. In the beginning of the interview, I will briefly explain the project again, including the independence of the research, how the interview will be conducted, any information gathered will

	remain anonymous, they can refuse to answer any question, stop the recorder or terminate the interview at any point.
	I will ask some participants (identified as relevant through the interview) if they might grant access for my ethnographical study. If they accept my request, the same written consent form will be obtained before I start, as part of the negotiations about timing and my role etc.
	The consent forms in both English and Chinese have been attached. The consent form in Chinese will be used for non-English speakers.
Will there be any possible harm that your project may cause to participants (e.g. psychological distress or repercussions of a legal, political or economic nature)? What precautions will be taken to minimise the risk of harm to participants?	The participants are all adults (18 and over), all managers in multinational corporations or international NGOs (e.g. WWF). Therefore I will not be seeking responses from minors.
	The possible harm that the project could cause is psychological discomfort in the participants when they are asked to draw a picture in the beginning of interviews. However, the participants will be informed about the methods of the project before they agree to participate. Also they can choose to take photos or refer to existing pictures as other options.
	No highly personal information is being sought. The interviews could potentially lead to people becoming emotional but nothing of a really sensitive nature will be discovered. Participants will be advised that they can withdraw from participation in the study at any point, without stating a reason. All the data collected will remain anonymous in terms of participants' names and the organisations they work in.
How will you ensure the security of the data	Secondary data that is available to the public will be kept in a password-protected laptop.

collected? What will happen to the data at the end of the project, (if retained, where and how long for)? *[Note: If the project involves obtaining or processing personal data relating to living individuals, (e.g. by recording interviews with subjects even if the findings will subsequently be made anonymous), you will need to ensure that the provisions of the Data Protection Act are complied with. In particular you will need to seek advice to ensure that the subjects provide sufficient consent and that the personal data will be properly stored, for an appropriate period of time.]*	All the recordings, interview transcriptions, internal documents and field notes will be stored on a hard drive in password-protected folders. The hard drive will be kept in a locker if it is not being used. Any hard copy of the interview transcriptions, field notes and all consent forms will be kept in the locker when not being used by the researcher. All transcription will be completed personally by the researcher. All the data will be kept for no more than it is of use to the researcher for the purpose of academic research. After that the hard drive will be formatted and the hard copies will be destroyed.

Part C: Ethical Assessment

Please complete the following questions in relation to your research project.

	yes	no	n/a
Will participants' rights, safety, dignity and well-being be actively respected?	x		
Will you describe the main details of the research process to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	x		
Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	x		
Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	x		
Will confidentiality be appropriately maintained at all stages of the project, including data collection, storage, analysis and reporting?	x		
Will any highly personal, private or confidential information be sought from participants?		x	
Will participants be involved whose ability to give informed consent may be limited (e.g. children)?		x	
Will the project raise any issues concerning researcher safety?		x	
Are there conflicts of interest caused by the source of funding?		x	

Please provide any additional information that may be used to assess your application in the space below.

Part D: Supervisor's Declaration

As the supervisor for this research I can confirm that I believe that all research ethics issues have been considered in accordance with the University Ethics Policy and relevant research ethics guidelines.

Name: ANNIE PYE (PROV)   (Primary Supervisor)

Signature:

Date: 5th Jan 2012

Part E: Ethical Approval

Comments of Research Ethics Officer and PGR Management Board. *[Note: Have potential risks been adequately considered and minimised in the research? Does the significance of the study warrant these risks being taken? Are there any other precautions you would recommend?]*	

This project has been reviewed according to School procedures and has now been approved.

Name: ADRIAN BAILEY   (Research Ethics Officer)

Signature:

Date: 14 / 02 / 2012

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