

IMAGINATIVE TRAVELLERS IN-SITU:
A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE STUDENTS
AT A UK TRANSNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTION

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Administration Building (Renamed as the Trent Building)
CFCRS	Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools
CPC	Communist Party of China
CRSU	Centre for Research on Sino–Foreign Cooperative Universities (at University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China)
ESEA	Eastern and South-Eastern Asia
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IBC	International Branch Campus
INE	International education
ISSOC	International Student Society (at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China)
MoE	Ministry of Education (of the People’s Republic of China)
OBHE	Observatory of Borderless Higher Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RMB	Renminbi (the official currency of the People's Republic of China)
SSB	Student Service Building (Renamed as the Portland Building)
TNE	Transnational education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
UNNC	University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China
UNUK	University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
WEG	Wanli Educational Group

Abstract

This thesis explores the implications of Chinese students' experiences of transnational education in China for their future socio-spatial mobilities. It will also shed light on the potential of transnational education for the alleviation of global socio-spatial inequalities.

The research is based on a qualitative case study of the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (UNNC). As the first Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University, UNNC offers a unique educational experience which is both locally embedded in China and transnationally connected to the cosmopolitan world. Incorporating ethnographic and interpretivist approaches, the research draws on UNNC Chinese students' own situated accounts of their experiences, contextualised within a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the university campus. Grounded in the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006), it illustrates the case study's educational space as mobile, where mobilities and materiality converge, and mediated by transnational imaginations; it presents the Chinese students as 'imaginative travellers', who have never physically been abroad but whose being and belonging have been constantly informed and negotiated by their everyday experiences in a cosmopolitan space. As a result, it argues that the UNNC experience has improved Chinese students' cosmopolitan competence and implies a cosmopolitan orientation to their future trajectories, but the extent to which individual students are influenced is limited by and contingent upon their durable, transposable habitus.

This research contributes to the growing but still small body of transnational education studies, and offers particular insights into the Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University as a newly recognised form of international branch campus. Perceiving cosmopolitanism as the new cultural marker of distinction, it highlights the value of *trans*-national education for enabling student experiences of being 'both here *and* there', instead of being 'either here (domestic education) *or* there (overseas education)', through their intermittent presence in and absence from various sociocultural settings in both physical and imaginative forms. Thus, transnational education shows great potential for mobilising educational resources globally to less developed areas and cultivating cosmopolitanism within a local setting, hence embracing less privileged students, and therefore carrying profound implications for alleviating global socio-spatial inequalities.

Declaration

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Chapter 1 Introduction

'Sometimes I feel like I live in foreign countries, sometimes I feel I am back in China again.'

'We're special, kind of stuck somewhere in-between. It's difficult for us to go to either side.'

'It's liberal on this side of the bridge. On the other side, it's a different story.'

1.1 The story behind the research

The comments above were made by three different students about their university experience during my fieldwork at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (UNNC). I had the conversations with them at the 'Portland Building', which was named by Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Greenaway in order to be consistent with the original 'Portland Building' at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom (UNUK). The original building in the UK was named in honour of William Arthur Henry Cavendish-Bentinck (7th Duke of Portland and 2nd Chancellor of UNUK), while its duplication in China was a 'continuation of the values and traditions of the University of Nottingham' in order to 'bring a certain level of symmetry to the student experience' between UNNC and UNUK (UNNC, 2016). 'It's great when students go to our other campuses', said Sir David, because they would know 'what to expect from a Portland Building'. Not only the name, but the function together with the architectural style of the Portland Building at UNNC was an imitation of the original one at UNUK. And this is only one example among many other imitations that exist on the home campus of UNNC. While I was talking with the students, there were British swans wandering across the lawn in front of the British clock tower, Chinese students talking in English to their seminar group members, and English-speaking academics delivering courses following a UK curriculum design. It felt like being in the UK.

But this is not the full picture. If we zoom out a bit and take an overview of the entire campus, UNNC is much more than a static copy-and-paste of the home campus from the UK to China. Rather, it cultivates an experience of being simultaneously in both the UK and China, and enables mobilities in-between in various forms within and beyond the immobile campus. Among the student

population, the proportion of non-Chinese students has been kept around 10%. Therefore, students are given the choice of staying close to their Chinese peers or making friends with foreign others. The campus is divided into roughly two halves by the Nottingham River: the north bank as the Academic Area controlled by the British side, and the south bank as the Living Area where the Chinese part is mainly in charge. The aforementioned imitations of UNUK mostly apply to the northern side of the university campus; across the Nottingham River on the southern side, it is a different story; here, Chinese food is served, the Chinese language is mostly heard, and Chinese culture and history are represented in writing and sculptures. Noticeably, there is no clear-cut boundary between these two sociocultural settings. Instead, UNNC students travel between them on a daily basis and embody both, as well as the mobilities between them.

If we zoom out farther to look at UNNC against the broader national and international context, many more unusual features can be found. UNNC is the first Chinese-Foreign Cooperative University. It not only signals a new stage in the development of transnational education (TNE) in China, as well as Chinese–British cooperation in education, but also represents a new type of international branch campus in the global development of TNE. Instead of the most commonly seen independent types of international campuses, all foreign higher education institutions delivering TNE in China have to take the cooperative form of ‘Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools’ in partnership with a Chinese higher education institution. These partnerships tend to be characterised by the contradictory purposes of profit-making on one side and nation-building on the other. Globally, Western universities have increasingly started to establish branch campuses overseas with profit-making purposes to offset the drawbacks of neoliberal educational reform, coping with the financial difficulties raised by reductions in both government subsidies and income from onshore international students (Waters, 2006b; Alam et al., 2013). Locally, however, informed by the Beijing Consensus rather than the Washington Consensus, the Chinese state plays a decisive role in the development of higher education to which TNE is integrated within the national reform and development plan. TNE has been implemented as a means to import high-quality educational resources and eventually to contribute to the enhancement of Chinese education and the Peaceful Rise of China. Therefore, ensuring the socialist

orientation of TNE is as important as promoting its development in China, if not more so, in order to ‘adhere to Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory as its guide and follow the basic principles laid down in the Constitution’ (Higher Education Law of the People’s Republic of China, 2009, n.p.).

Having briefly looked at UNNC on different scales, the students’ comments quoted at the very beginning start to make sense. On the one hand, these students’ experiences and expectations have been profoundly influenced by transnational mobilities, pulling them away from the domestic environment. Apparently, UNNC campus is immobile and the educational space is embedded in China; yet, it enables various forms of transnational imaginations and movements and arouses a feeling of being simultaneously in both the UK and China. The transnational campus converges materiality, mobilities and imaginations which are mutually constitutive of each other. Hence, in order to understand UNNC students, it is essential to unpack the transnational mobilities in relation to the emplaced spatiality of UNNC, and to explore the interplay among these three elements and its impact upon the UNNC student community as well as their future mobility. On the other hand, the unique cooperative form of UNNC contributes to an opposing force, anchoring UNNC students firmly to the domestic environment, keeping their status immobile or ensuring that they will want to return even if they leave China temporarily in the future. These two contradictory forces have maintained a dynamic power balance in the operation of UNNC, and have also been represented in the aforementioned south-north divide. They have a profound influence on UNNC students’ experiences, which makes them intermittently both present and absent from the domestic and foreign environment, but with difficulties in remaining on either side.

Then, how do we understand them? Not much insight can be gained from existing literature. Being neither the most privileged group in terms of socio-spatial mobilities studying overseas, nor the most disadvantaged, staying at local universities, TNE students are caught in the middle and marginalised in research examining global educational (im)mobilities. Among the very few studies of TNE students, the key focus is limited to their corporeal immobility. The ‘*lack of mobility*’ of TNE students is believed to have fundamentally compromised the value of TNE and ‘distinctly and actively *disadvantages* TNE students’ against overseas students

(Waters, 2018, pp. 676–678, emphasis in original). However, as demonstrated above, UNNC students have engaged with international social relations, have been constantly informed by transnational materials and reshaped by transcultural experiences. At UNNC, a transnational campus embedded in China, the students do remain physically immobile in China, but their imaginations travel freely across national borders, which has a considerable influence on their future life trajectories. During their intermittent presence and absence in both Chinese and foreign sociocultural settings, students' belongingness and imaginations have been constantly renegotiated and are in a state of flux that cannot be confined within the physical boundaries of the campus or national borders. As a result, UNNC students' TNE experiences are filled with ambiguities and inconsistencies, between physical distance from and imagined proximity to foreignness, between where they are and where they want to be, and between who they were and who they are becoming. This is why UNNC students cannot be understood only in terms of their physical immobility.

Therefore, it is essential to carry out an empirical case study of this special group of students in order to understand their experiences and expectations beyond immobility. Such a study will also have practical implications for the potential of TNE in promoting global educational socio-spatial equity and inclusivity. The institutional (re)production of socio-spatial disadvantages through global education has not yet received sufficient academic attention, despite the long-lasting interest of sociology in this issue in the context of domestic education (Waters, 2012a). In recent years, some scholars have started to notice a correlation between intensified global differentiation and international student mobility, whereby the global educational hierarchy has taken shape and been consolidated (e.g., Findlay et al., 2012; Lewis, 2011; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters, 2012). International student mobility tends to be a 'uni-directional flow' accompanied by 'asymmetrical cultural transformations' (Marginson, 2006, p.16), both driven by and intensifying social differences within the globalising higher education system (Brooks and Waters, 2018; Findlay et al., 2012, p. 199). Furthermore, there are more students who are left behind. Both the mobility itself and control over it presumes and reproduces power (Skeggs, 2004). Students who travel for overseas education are far more likely to be from socially privileged groups (Waters and Leung, 2013). Given this, it seems that

TNE may contribute to redressing socio-spatial inequalities in global education, as it shows great potential for connecting educational participants globally and (re-)distributing educational resources across space (Leung and Waters, 2013b). It does not require student mobility, hence it has the capacity to include more students from less privileged groups who were previously left behind, whilst TNE (especially in the form of international branch campuses) is also able to mobilise various educational resources counter to the uni-directional flow and hence contribute to the local environment of the recipient country.

1.2 The objective and approach of this research

In light of all these points, it becomes evident that a study focused on TNE students is not only necessary to help fill the existing research gap in the current literature, but would also be valuable in offering insights into the emerging discussion about global education and socio-spatial inequalities, to which ‘mobility’ in its plural form of ‘mobilities’ is the key. Arguably, only thus can the profound influence on UNNC students of their seemingly geographically fixed TNE experience be fully revealed, along with its implications for the socio-spatial (in)equalities of global education. Accordingly, my key research question is as follows:

To what extent and in what ways are Chinese students’ socio-spatial mobilities affected by their in-situ experience at UNNC?

In developing this research question, I was initially stimulated by the work of Urry (2007), which acknowledges various, interdependent forms that mobilities can take, not only physical/actual but also virtual/imaginative. His work offers great explanatory power, particularly in the case of TNE, as it also draws attention to the intermittency of movements that constantly shift between ‘being present’ and ‘being distant’, and the constitutive role of social actors and social relations. In the case of UNNC, students have been intermittently proximate to and distant from the UK and China in both imaginative and physical forms. The recognition of multiple forms of ‘mobilities’ and their ‘intermittent’ nature is crucial to this study. If I were merely focusing on the physical immobility of the students and the continuous fixity of their TNE experience, this study would hardly yield any valuable results in terms of a

situated understanding of the students with cross-contextual implications for the potential of TNE for redressing global socio-spatial inequalities.

The work of Urry (2007) is embedded within a wider literature on the recent ‘mobilities turn’. Calling for a new version of social science, the ‘mobilities turn’ brought the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ into existence. I will elaborate upon this paradigm in Chapter 3, but it is worth mentioning now that fundamentally it seeks to reconcile ‘sedentarism’, which posits social activities in fixed places and within particular boundaries (Malkki, 1992), and ‘nomadism’, which overly downplays the notion of place and exaggerates the condition of mobility (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002). This is crucial to TNE research, as it has been common for research on education to assume its ‘spatial embeddedness’ (Brooks and Waters, 2018, p. 51). Underpinned by the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006), this study acknowledges the importance of the unique spatiality of the UNNC campus, while perceiving its immobilities as *moorings of mobilities* in various forms. Thus, it explores the co-constitutive role between a TNE campus and its TNE participants and reveals the mobile potential of TNE students. Correspondingly, both a spatial perspective and a mobilities perspective are of significance to this study. Regarding the former, I have mainly been inspired by the work of Waters (2006, 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2017, 2018), Waters and Leung (2013, 2017), and Brooks and Waters (2018). Regarding the latter, I have drawn heavily on the work of Urry (2000a, 2002b, 2002, 2007, 2010), Sheller and Urry (2006, 2016) and Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006). These two perspectives have profoundly shaped my analytical framework.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

In this chapter, I have briefly stated the topic and focus of this research. The remaining chapters are organised as follows: Chapter 2 carries out a review of the literature and identifies the significance of this research; Chapters 3, 4 and 5 demonstrate three aspects that have profoundly influenced the research design: the theoretical approaches, the empirical contexts and the methodological considerations, respectively; Chapters 6, 7 and 8 provide an account of my empirical findings; and Chapter 9 concludes the thesis.

Chapter 2, *'From International to Transnational Education: Implications for Socio-spatial Inequalities'*, contextualises this study within the relevant fields of literature about global educational mobilities and suggests its original contribution. It starts with a systematic review of recent research on international student mobility, which mainly follows a Bourdieusian approach, and demonstrates how socio-spatial inequalities are (re)produced in this process, both globally and domestically. This is how this study arrives at TNE, with its accompanying new possibilities and challenges. After a clarification of terminology and a review of the relevant literature, it pinpoints gaps within TNE literatures, identifying the insufficiency of ethnographic research situating students' own voices and experience, contextualised within a thick description of the unique materiality and spatiality of the TNE campus. As a result, in the existing literature, TNE students are either under-represented, or partially represented as merely immobile and disadvantaged against INE students. Therefore, in opening up spaces for new discussions, this study highlights that the materiality of the educational space and personal attributes of the students are unique, and that the value of TNE is contingent upon sociocultural contexts, and varies according to the comparative symbolic value between TNE providers and recipients in the global educational hierarchy.

Chapter 3, *'From Mobility to Mobilities: Theoretical Approaches to Transnational Education'*, reviews key theoretical works that have framed this research. Based on the analysis in Chapter 2, I elaborate upon why TNE research, particularly on international branch campuses, necessitates a paradigmatic shift from mobility to mobilities. Thus, this study is grounded in the new mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry, 2006), whence it unpacks the research question as three lines of inquiry into the space, the community and the acquisition of cosmopolitanism. Accordingly, I adopt a subjective understanding of UNNC space as mobile that intersects with transnational imaginations; a relational approach to UNNC students' (imagined) community through multidimensional, dynamic belongingness; and a Bourdieusian perspective of cosmopolitan orientation and competencies as the new cultural marker of distinction. Combined together, in this chapter, I build up a theoretical toolbox for researching TNE student experience that bridges across to the implications for their future socio-spatial mobilities.

Chapter 4, '*A Unique Case: The First Chinese-Foreign Cooperative University*', provides a rich and contextualised description of the research setting. This chapter has two sections, devoted respectively to explorations of the Chinese social context in general and the UNNC case in particular. The first section explains the Chinese context of TNE in two respects: a review of its rapid development under strong governance; and a discussion about the imbalances and inequalities emerged as well as the countermeasures implemented by the state. In this context, the second section introduces the case of UNNC, discussing how it navigates its way through the ambiguities between policy and practice and strives for autonomy in the unique socio-political context in China. This is reflected on UNNC's first president's idea of 'Boya education', referring to a liberal arts education with Chinese characteristics.

Chapter 5, '*Researching Students at a Transnational Campus: Methodological Considerations*', offers a reflexive account of the research methodology and methods, which are tailored to the uniqueness of the case introduced in Chapter 4. I firstly explain the fundamental considerations of the research methodology as a qualitative ethnographic study based on a single case, in relation to my positionality as an insider-outsider researcher. I demonstrate why, in my study of UNNC, it is essential to combine an ethnographic approach to a thick description of the spatiality of the campus with an interpretivist approach to a detailed account of the students' own voices. On this basis, I move on to more practical considerations of the methods employed in generating data, which are mostly ethnographic observation and interviews, complemented by some documentary analysis. Then, I critically discuss how I processed the data generated from individual methods and how I strategically integrated them together, as informed by my ontological and epistemological stance. In closing this chapter, I particularly highlight three aspects of post-research reflexivity: positionality, ethics and leaving the field.

Chapter 6, '*Space in Imagining*', adopts a subjective understanding of space. It unpacks the various, interdependent forms of transnational mobilities moored at the immobile campus emplaced in China. It presents how transnational imaginations afforded by the space are mutually constitutive with the imaginative spaces conceived by the students, whereby students are transformed into 'imaginative travellers' via their in-situ educational experience. The chapter starts by focusing on

the space and the spatial imaginations it inspires. It provides an overview of the campus design, which is divided by a river into north and south banks, and then illustrates the spatial imagination with examples from the north bank (i.e., the Academic Area) and the south bank (i.e. the Living Area) respectively, in each case highlighting both the mobilities and the materiality of these spaces. The chapter then switches from a focus on place to a focus on the people within it, i.e. Chinese UNNC students, and explores the imaginative spaces in terms of their perceptions, experiences, and conceptions, which partially affirms or negates the material space, and according to which a sense of (non)belonging is generated.

Chapter 7, '*Community in Travelling*', applies a relational approach to the UNNC Chinese student community in their imaginative travelling. First, it starts with an exploration of their in-group similarities, by looking at the UNNC's selection criteria in recruiting students and its educational strategy, which informs the students' learning experiences. Second, it reveals how these in-group similarities made UNNC students feel a sense of *not* belonging among non-UNNC students, due to the aspects of 'lacking a common language' and 'differences in social rules'. UNNC students' proactive othering from non-UNNC students plays an important role in the shaping of their imagined community and their belongingness to it. They have shown an imaginative distance from the non-UNNC Chinese students in domestic education who are physically proximate, while feeling imaginatively close to those who participated in TNE, or even overseas education, who are physically distant. This inconsistency is then investigated in the third section, which examines the students' perceptions of the extent to which UNNC experience has shaped who they are, in which a mutually reproductive and transformative relation between UNNC and UNNC students is uncovered.

Chapter 8, '*Cosmopolitans in the Making*', carries out a Bourdieusian examination of the students' cosmopolitan outlook and competence, in which the implications for their future socio-spatial mobilities are highlighted. This chapter is organised into three sections. The first investigates their decision to go to UNNC, as an option situated between immobile domestic education and mobile overseas education, which is informed by both cosmopolitan pre-dispositions and capital-seeking strategies. The second section critically examines their cosmopolitan competence

through the lens of cosmopolitan cultural capital, including institutional capital consisting of credentials from both the UK and China, linguistic capital of English competence, and embodied cultural capital of cosmopolitan taste as well as the ability and willingness to interact with foreign others. On that basis, the third section explores their future plans in terms of global corporeal (im)mobility. A preference for a multicultural environment emerged in the students' responses, in which the decisive factor is imaginative proximity to a cosmopolitan culture, rather than physical distance from any fixed geographies.

Finally, Chapter 9, '*Conclusion*', closes this thesis by briefly recapping the main findings and highlighting the original contributions of this study. It demonstrates the research significance of this case study of UNNC as a newly recognised form of international branch campus, and as the first experiment in developing a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University. In addition to a new empirical case, this study also contributes to the under-researched field of TNE, and particularly of TNE students, by introducing a *mobilities* perspective. It unpacks the various, interdependent modes of mobilities moored at the emplaced and immobile TNE campus, and presents the consequent impact on TNE students' imaginative space, imagined community, and imaginative mobility, and eventually their future trajectories in the light of cosmopolitanism. Thus, it moves beyond the emplacement of education that is *either* here (domestic education) *or* there (international education), and depicts an educational space that is *both* here *and* there, i.e. trans-national, and is itself mobile. Correspondingly, it challenges the dominant discourse in researching East Asian students' educational mobility, which tends to equate 'cosmopolitan competence' with 'Western competence'. Instead, it calls for attention to be paid to the changing landscapes in the global field of higher education, where the ability to excel in both 'the East' and 'the West' and to be intermittently present in both contexts through various forms of mobilities has increasingly become the true cultural marker of distinction. Fundamentally, this is why we need to focus on TNE research, for its great potential to redress spatial inequality by renegotiating the global higher educational landscape, and to reduce social inequality by including more students from less privileged groups.

Bearing these ideas in mind, in the next chapter I will start with a thorough discussion about how socio-spatial inequalities have been intensified and even created by international higher education, based on the existing literature, and I will discuss on what grounds we should believe that TNE may bring implications for how things might be otherwise, and in what way.

Chapter 2 From International to Transnational Education: Implications for Socio-spatial Inequalities

In sociology, there has been a long-standing research interest in exploring the correlations between domestic education and the (re)production of social (dis)advantages. However, as Waters (2012a) points out, until recently very little parallel research has addressed the role of international education. Here, ‘international education’ is used as a broad term to refer to educational mobilities across national borders, in which I distinguish transnational education (TNE) from traditional forms of international education (INE). Although the term has been widely used interchangeably with INE, TNE is a fundamentally new and different form of educational mobility, which does *not* require student mobility. Traditionally, when participating in INE, students move to the country where the educational provider is based. For example, Chinese students who want to receive UK higher education have to travel to the UK in order to attend a university there. In contrast, TNE students stay in-situ; the aforementioned Chinese students are enabled to receive UK education while remaining in China. Instead of corporeal movement of the students, in TNE it is the educational provider that is on the move, incorporating various interdependent movements of educational resources, including teaching materials, knowledge and information, and even staff and institutions, transcending national borders to come to the country where the students are based (therefore *trans*-national). Thus, TNE shows great potential for the redistribution of educational resources and the inclusion of student groups who are left behind in INE. It therefore carries profound implications for spatial and social (in)equalities.

Despite its increasing importance and explosive growth over the last two decades, TNE remains under-researched (Leung & Waters, 2017). In this chapter, I will focus on reviewing the extant research on global educational mobilities, in which I reveal the reproduction of socio-spatial (in)equalities in INE, and also establish the necessity for academic attention to TNE in terms of its great potential for educational equity and inclusivity. In section 2.1, I review recent research on INE, following a Bourdieusian approach to identifying its role in the uneven global distribution of

resources (i.e. spatial inequalities) and differentiated access to these resources by different social groups (i.e. social inequalities). In the course of this analysis, I shall demonstrate how social disadvantages are intertwined with spatial inequalities, and why any potential attempt to promote global educational equity and inclusivity should take a spatial perspective into consideration. This is where the importance of TNE emerges, as it shows great potential for connecting educational participants and (re)distributing educational resources across the globe. In section 2.2, I move on to review research on TNE, starting with a clarification of the terminology and typology of TNE in general and of the International Branch Campus (IBC) in particular, followed by focused reviews of research on China and IBCs respectively. On that basis, I will outline the main critiques of the value of TNE, particularly in comparison to INE, in which (im)mobility will be identified as the key. I will close this chapter by suggesting alternative ways to research TNE in response to these critiques, and also identify the contribution of this study in addressing the current research gap.

2.1 Why transnational education? International education and the reproduction of socio-spatial (dis)advantages

Madge et al. (2009, p.35) remind us that the internationalisation of education should not be perceived as ‘a “neutral experience” within normalising conceptions of internationalisation’. In recent years, an increased awareness has started to emerge within academia of the influence of INE on intensifying differentiation in the field of education, consolidating the educational power of certain institutions within specific countries, and consequently entrenching and sometimes even creating socio-spatial inequalities (e.g., Findlay et al., 2012; Lewis, 2011; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Waters, 2012). In recent INE research, Bourdieu’s sociology of education continues to be a powerful, and arguably the most commonly used, tool. Therefore, this section starts with a brief introduction to the Bourdieusian approach, and then continues to critically examine existing INE research in order to reveal the reproduction of global and domestic inequalities in the context of East and South East Asian (ESEA) countries and China in particular.

2.1.1 A Bourdieusian approach

Bourdieuian research has been one of the most widely adopted approaches to studying education as a means of social reproduction. A Bourdieusian approach requires us to see social practices as ‘result[ing] from relations between one’s dispositions (habitus) and one’s position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)’ (Maton, 2008, p.51). Together, ‘habitus’ and ‘field’ are used to conceptualise, respectively, ‘the subjective element of practice’ and ‘the objective network or configuration of relations’ (Grenfell, 2008, p.47). ‘Habitus’ refers to ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Educational habitus, for example, informs and is informed by participants’ educational experiences. ‘Field’ is used to conceptualise the social space where social actors struggle over access to and possession of social resources in order to preserve or improve their relational positions (Bourdieu, 1986). The concept of ‘capital’ is used to encompass these diverse social resources in all economic, social and cultural forms (Bourdieu, 1986), because it is ‘in fact impossible’ to understand the structure and function of society if ‘capital’ is recognised only in its economic form (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). Respectively, these resources are understood as ‘economic capital’, ‘social capital’ and ‘cultural capital’, which are inter-related and inter-convertible to each other. Central to this study, ‘cultural capital’ focuses particularly on the role of culture as a potential capacity to define the relational position of social actors in the field (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243), and can exist in three states: the embodied state (‘long-lasting dispositions’); the institutionalised state (a specific form of objectification which is ‘presumed to guarantee’); and the objectified state (‘cultural goods’) (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243). These ideas underpin much existing research on the (re)production of social inequalities in the sphere of international education, some of which I now go on to review.

2.1.2 Global inequalities

As Findlay et al. (2012, p.199) have noticed, ‘international student mobility constitutes a critical means of intensifying social difference within the globalising higher education system’. In one respect, student mobility in education is ‘relational’ to *social* inequalities (Brooks and Waters, 2018, p.54). Both the mobility itself and the control over it presume and reinforce power, to which not everyone has equal

access (Skeggs, 2004, p.49). Students from socially privileged groups who are well-endowed with economic and cultural capital are far more likely to travel for overseas education compared to those from socially disadvantaged groups (Waters, 2006a; Waters and Leung, 2013a). The bodies that participate in physical travel are classed, aged, racialised and gendered and are therefore subject to existing power relations (Urry, 2007). There are empirical studies revealing how INE experience is differentiated by the race (e.g., Collins, 2006) and gender (e.g. Lee, Park and Kim, 2009) of the participants, and conditioned by post-colonialism (e.g., Madge et al., 2009), neo-liberalism (e.g., Waters, 2006b) and transnationalism (e.g., Ong, 1999) in the social contexts. In another respect, INE is also incorporated within *geographical* inequalities as the driving forces of student mobility (Brooks and Waters, 2018). According to UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) reports 2012–2017, ESEA countries were the largest source of internationally mobile tertiary-education students, while North America and Europe were the most popular destinations (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019). During the 2014/15 academic year, China was the largest country of origin, sending 89,540 students to tertiary-level education in the UK (University UK, 2016), who accounted for more than 20 percent of the total number of overseas students in the UK. Conversely, China only hosted 5,920 students from the UK during the same year, accounting for less than 2 percent of the total number of UK students overseas (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China [MoE], 2015)¹.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, international student mobility in ESEA countries is largely driven by the desire to accumulate capital (Brooks and Waters, 2009; Deakin, 2012; Findlay et al., 2010; Holloway et al., 2012; Murphy-Lejeune, 2001). Compared to ‘accidental achievers’ from the UK, who pursue overseas higher education mainly for ‘excitement’, ‘glamour’ and ‘fun’, and even to defer the start of job-seeking (Brooks and Waters, 2010, p.226), existing research suggests that ESEA students are largely driven by a strong desire for cultural and social capital accumulation in INE with the expectation of future conversion to economic capital

¹ 2014 is the latest accessible data published on the MoE website. There is more up-to-date data released by University UK, but I chose 2014 in order to remain comparable with the Chinese data.

in the job market. In what follows, I will focus on international student mobility in relation to global social inequalities and geographical inequalities, based on recent INE research. I will focus on three aspects organised around three Bourdieusian forms of capital: cultural, social and symbolic. I will mainly refer to INE research on ESEA students for the following reasons: as ESEA is the main source of origin of international students, a focus on ESEA gives us insights into the groups that are socially and spatially disadvantaged in the global educational hierarchy; as the case of this study is located in ESEA, a focus on ESEA can offer valuable contextual information at the micro level; and as ESEA also covers the main hosts of TNE (e.g., China, Malaysia and Singapore), a focused review of INE in ESEA will also shed light on the subsequent discussions about TNE.

Cultural capital is probably the most well-researched and commonly represented driving factor of global student mobility, particularly in the case of ESEA countries, which tend to be a disadvantaged group in the global educational hierarchy. Firstly, INE students are attracted by the institutional cultural capital provided by Western credentials. Jöns and Hoyler (2013) have addressed this issue by exploring the ascendancy of world university rankings and conclude that the privilege of certain countries that already possess a disproportionate share of institutionalised cultural capital is reflected in long-standing inequalities between regions and countries. Secondly, as the world language is ‘almost certainly English’ (Meyer, 2007, p.266), English teaching and learning has become part of the added value of INE. As a special form of cultural capital, linguistic cultural capital is another key factor driving students in non-English-speaking countries to participate in INE (e.g., for Chinese students taking Master’s programmes abroad, see Wu, 2014; for Japanese working women participating in Canadian English-language programmes for professional advancement, see Kobayashi, 2007). This also creates division among East Asian countries. Some English-speaking countries in ESEA have become popular destinations for ‘linguistic immigration’, resulting in internal INE within ESEA countries. For instance, Singapore has become a popular destination for Chinese (Chew, 2010) and Korean (Park and Bae, 2009) students. Thirdly, embodied cultural capital gained from experiencing foreign cultures is also appealing. For example, a study of Chinese students found that they ranked ‘international/inter-cultural experiences’ as one of the most important factors driving them towards

overseas education (Bodycott, 2009). When Taiwanese students are deciding about going to Australia or the US, expectations of ‘an enhanced understanding of western culture’ play a key role (Chen and Zimitat, 2006, p.98). Research on Malaysian students studying in Australia and the UK also indicates that the importance of exposure to foreign culture accounts for a major part of students’ decision-making about studying overseas (Sin, 2006; 2009). As a result, global INE is characterised by ‘uni-directional student flows’ and ‘asymmetrical cultural transformations’ (Marginson, 2006, p.16).

The pursuit of social capital is also addressed in some studies of international student mobility, emphasising the importance of building up overseas social networks in students’ decision to participate in international education (e.g., Waters, 2009; Waters and Leung, 2013a). Research by Waters (2009) attributes the importance of alumni networks built through INE experience to the valorisation of cultural capital. Although research in Australia demonstrates that the accumulation of social capital does not show a positive influence on students’ academic performance (Neri and Ville, 2008), attention to the social capital gained in INE helps us to understand how different institutional qualifications (i.e. cultural capital) convert at different rates to economic capital as ‘positional goods’ in the position-taking in the global labour market (Brown, 2003). Bourdieu (1984, p.286) reminds us of the implicit but crucial importance of social capital when he states that: ‘the economic and social return of academic capital depends in many cases on the social (or even economic) capital that allows it to acquire its full value’. Later in introducing the different forms of capital, Bourdieu (1986, p.143) further explained the importance of social capital in defining the value placed on the academic qualification. Within the promising global labour market, educational credentials still need to be evaluated against local and national contexts; therefore, their valorisation is subject to socio-spatial inequalities. In a case study focusing on Hong Kong’s financial services sector, Waters (2009) examines how the transnational social networks of University of British Columbia graduates, developed through their INE experience in Vancouver, has influenced the valorisation of credentials in local labour markets. Waters discovered the important role played by alumni in conferring ‘institutional recognition’, both formally and informally. For example, the majority of participants were members of the University of British Columbia–Hong Kong Alumni Association and benefited from

‘numerous social and business networking activities throughout the year’ (Waters, 2009, p.123). This study also reveals the place-based nature of social capital gained through INE, conceptualised as ‘institutional social capital’ (Waters, 2009; Waters and Leung, 2013b), which can hardly be substituted by the experience of TNE.

Essentially, this one-way pursuit of cultural capital by ESEA students is related to the uneven global distribution of symbolic value to different cultures, particularly the mythological ‘West’ and ‘the rest’ (Hall, 1992). For example, Kim (2011, p.213) argues that global cultural capital has ‘moral values’, and Korean students ‘hate’ the ‘immoral and undemocratic system’ in the educational environment of Korea, which is characterised by ‘rigid’, ‘authoritarian’ student-teacher relationships, in contrast to ‘the ideal place in the US’. Similar comments were made by UNNC students about Chinese education and these will be addressed in Chapter 7. Differently from Kim (2011), who attributed these problems to Confucian tradition, though, UNNC has tried to integrate Confucianism into its educational philosophy as an essential part of localisation. This will be addressed in Chapter 4. Other studies also suggest that ESEA students often value Western cultural capital much more highly than domestic cultural capital. Sin (2006, p.255), for example, has found that the Malaysian students involved in his research believed that living overseas during their education can help them to ‘refine’ their speech and manners, thus ‘granting them social prestige in Malaysia’. Mitchell (1997) also notes the importance of Western degrees for the ‘self-fashioning’ of Chinese elites.

It has become evident that, for ESEA students, culture and cultural capital from the mythological ‘West’ are often considered ‘legitimate’, having much higher symbolic value than those from ‘the rest’. Class conflicts are essentially classificatory conflicts, whilst ‘social space’ is understood as ‘symbolic space’ characterised by different lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1989, p.20). Fundamentally, ‘the various practices, and through them the different lifestyles, all stand in a hierarchical relation to the legitimate culture’ (Weininger, 2005, p.101). The power of ‘world-making’ confers the ability to legitimate and grants symbolic power to certain forms of cultural capital. Otherwise, as Bourdieu (1984, p.199) argues, the lifestyles of the bourgeoisie and the working class are nothing less than ‘two antagonistic world views’ that are both ‘representations of human excellence’. Although Bourdieu was talking here about

national class divisions, I believe that it also applies to lifestyles in the US and lifestyles in Korea (and other ESEA regions), as well as to English and other languages. Given that, it is the misrecognition of social space that characterises both the dominated and the dominant, enabling the latter to exercise symbolic power over the former, referred to as ‘symbolic violence’. This is a ‘dangerous’ form of violence due to the fact that it is not recognised as such; it is ‘exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity’ (Lawler, 2011a, p.1423; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.167), making it possible for people to acquiesce to social relations in which they are dominated (Lawler, 2011b). Furthermore, the symbolic power of Western culture is strengthened by the ‘colonization of consciousness’ (Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, 1997) in many ESEA countries, meaning that countries with colonial or semi-colonial histories with ‘the West’ tend to perceive Western culture as advanced, and China is no exception. This power hierarchy seems difficult to change in the case of TNE, and cultural imperialism needs to be taken into consideration.

2.1.3 Domestic inequalities

INE has also been intensifying social inequalities in domestic contexts. In ESEA, INE has been increasingly manifesting the internalisation of foreign education, i.e., its ‘domestication’, in contrast to its seemingly ‘global outlook’. As Waters and Leung (2017, p.233) have observed:

Through the process of domestication, we assert, international credentials are increasingly a central and normalised feature of local educational markets, with implications for how societies are governed and reproduced.

In a study of South Korea, for example, Kang and Abelmann (2011) noticed the unprecedented proliferation of Pre-College Study Abroad programmes across the class spectrum. Usually lasting for a short-term period of one to three years, Pre-College Study Abroad programmes have been normalised and integrated into the educational system in South Korea, in which the key to success is considered to be parental assets. In Hong Kong, INE has also been replacing other forms of ‘elite’ education and has become a mark of class privilege, playing an important role in the ‘hierarchisation’ and ‘stratification’ of young people (Waters and Leung, 2017). In research on INE involving students travelling from Hong Kong to Canada, Waters

(2006a, 2006b) provides empirical evidence of the profound impact of international education on the geographies of middle-class decision-making in both places. From the recipients' side, by participating in INE in Canada, middle-class Hong Kong families maintain their social position through the accumulation of a relatively more valuable form of cultural capital embedded in Western education. From the host side, it is also beneficial for universities because they perceive international students as 'cash-cows', and the income they provide allows universities to offset the drawbacks of neoliberal educational reform, such as public disinvestment in education and declining domestic enrolments. In this way, local education is closely connected to overseas economies and regulations, and social reproduction is facilitated through place-based transnational networks.

In this respect, mainland China differs from Hong Kong because INE was integral to the production rather than the *re*-production of social inequalities in China (Xiang and Shen, 2009). Following the revolutionary 'reform and opening-up' (*Gaige Kaifang*), the 1980s witnessed the emergence of a market-oriented economy in communist China; this gave rise to social stratification based on individual performance as a replacement for state-based redistributive inequalities (Bian, 2002). Since then, the boundary between previously 'state-controlled areas' (including education) and the market-based sphere has blurred, whereby all forms of capital are increasingly actively convertible into each other (Xiang and Shen, 2009). Participation in global education has increasingly become a personal choice (as opposed to the 1970s and 1980s, when students were mainly sent abroad by the state to learn about advanced technologies to serve the country). This has caused concerns about the Chinese–foreign spatial inequalities of brain-drain and brain-gain (e.g., Cao, 2008; Chen, 2008), and about the domestic social inequalities that are embedded in the international movements of Chinese students (Xu and Montgomery, 2018, p.9).

Nevertheless, in China, the state remains powerful. In the domain of global education, the Chinese state is not only the initiator, but also the facilitator of inter-convertibility among all forms of capital; it is also the major provider of symbolic capital. In order to encourage students to return after their studies, China has developed numerous national policies in which large amounts of symbolic and

political capital are granted (Xiang and Shen, 2009, p.514):

By appropriating particular discourses of human capital, meritocracy, globalisation and competitiveness, the state adds political value to internationally acquired degrees in the national context, encourages and assists foreign degree holders to ‘cash in’ their human capital, and at the same time projects itself to be progressive, pragmatic and capable, thus reinforcing its legitimacy in the era of global competition and mass communication.

During this process, the different forms of capital and their conversion and exchange have become increasingly ‘intensified and concentrated in a top stratum of the society’; by the early 2000s, the social reproduction of the elite class had taken shape and class closure was under way (Xiang and Shen, 2009, p.513). This is when TNE in China started to boom, and when the guiding regulations of TNE were issued, as well as when UNNC was established. How would TNE influence socio-spatial inequalities, both domestically and globally? I will explore this question in the next section.

2.2 Transnational education: a review

As TNE is still a rather new phenomenon, the terminologies and typologies in the field have not yet become aligned to a unified standard. Hence, to start this section, I will first clarify the definition and typology of TNE that I use in this thesis, with reference to historical usages by major international organisations. Then, I will move on to systematically review the current literature addressing TNE, with a focus on International Branch Campuses (IBCs) and China, whereby I identify the gaps in current TNE research. Then, I will discuss the main critiques of TNE in the extant literature and reveal how the concept of ‘mobility(ies)’ is the key.

2.2.1 Transnational education and international branch campuses

The term transnational education (TNE) was first used during the early 1990s in Australia, among a few other countries, to distinguish the international students receiving Australian education offshore (TNE) from those recruited to campuses in Australia (INE) (Knight, 2005). Responding to this newly emerging form of education, the Global Alliance for Transnational Education was founded in 1995. It

formally defined TNE as:

[...] any teaching or learning activity in which the students are in a *different* country (the host country) to that in which the institution providing the education is based (the home country). This situation requires that national boundaries be crossed by information about the education, and by staff and/or education materials. (Global Alliance for Transnational Education, 1997, n.p.)

As TNE developed, in 2002, UNESCO and the Council of Europe issued a *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*, in which they offered a definition of TNE as:

All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates or may operate independently of any national education system (n.p.).

It can be seen that, in both official definitions, the key to TNE is the relative position of the learners to the education providers, which is also what distinguishes it from INE. The two terms INE and TNE will be used in this thesis to refer to the opposing cases, respectively, in which students go to the country where the educational provider is based (INE) and in which they do not (TNE). There are some other terms that have also been widely used, sometimes interchangeably with TNE. These include: cross-border education (e.g., Marginson, 2014), offshore education (e.g., Chapman & Pyvis, 2006), and borderless education (e.g., Middlehurst, 2002). Officially, cross-border education, with the focus on ‘border’, is used as a more comprehensive concept in all situations in education in which students, teachers or educational activities cross national jurisdictional borders (UNESCO/OECD, 2005), and hence are basically a combination of TNE and INE. Offshore education places its focus on the location where the education is delivered (or where the students receive it, as Knight (2005) puts it), without emphasising national borders. Borderless education goes even further in downplaying national borders, instead emphasising ‘the blurring of conceptual, disciplinary and geographic borders traditionally inherent to higher education’ (Knight, 2003, p.2). I have chosen the term TNE over all of these mainly owing to the widely accepted official definition published by UNESCO/Council of Europe, but also to fit the nature of this study.

Firstly, as my research is concerned with the global reproduction of spatial inequalities, the importance of national borders remains, and hence the term ‘borderless’ is not suitable. Secondly, as my research focuses on student experiences, it is beneficial to adopt their perspective and to divide various educational services into two types: those which require them to go abroad, and those which do not. ‘Transnational education’ also carries the implication of transcending and transforming, which is what this thesis intends to address.

Bearing this definition in mind, I now outline the terminologies and typologies in extant studies of educational mobilities across national borders, in order to specify the scope and position of this research. In what follows, I clarify: 1) among all cross-border educational mobilities, which ones are categorised as TNE as defined by this thesis; and 2) how this case study is positioned in relation to all other types of TNE mobilities.

Probably the most widely used typology is generated on the basis of the 1995 General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (e.g., Altbach and Knight, 2007; Beerkens, 2002; Ennew and Yang, 2009; Healey, 2008; Knight, 2002, 2004; Hou, 2011; Hou et al., 2014), in which cross-border education is understood in terms of cross-border services (see Table 2.1). Focusing on the location of the education provider and the recipient, this typology divides cross-border education into four modes, in which only Mode 2 involves student mobility (INE) while Modes 1, 3 and 4 do not (TNE).

GATS Mode of Supply	Provider	Recipient	Definition in Trades	Example in Higher Education
Mode 1	Stays in Home country	Stays in Home country	Cross-border supply (service delivered remotely)	Distance and online learning; virtual universities
Mode 2	Stays in Home country	Moves to provider's country	Consumption abroad (service accessed overseas)	Students studying abroad
Mode 3	Establishes a permanent base in recipient's country in order to render service	Stays in home country	Commercial presence (service delivered locally)	Franchising arrangements (e.g., twinning partnerships; branch/satellite campus)
Mode 4	Moves to recipient's country	Stays in home country	Presence of natural persons (service delivered locally)	Academic staff working abroad

Table 2.1 GATS four modes of supply

(Source: The observatory on borderless higher education, Knight, 2002; Ennew and Yang, 2009)

Based on this GATS typology (Modes 1, 3 and 4), it is generally agreed that TNE can mainly be delivered in five modes: a) articulation, b) branch campus, c) dual and joint programmes/degrees, d) franchising and partnership, e) online learning and distance education programmes (e.g., Alam et al., 2013; Ennew and Yang, 2009; Huang, 2003; McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007; Hou et al., 2014)².

This study focuses on international branch campuses (IBCs), a form of TNE that is considered to be 'more effective than any other modes' (Alam et al., 2013, p.873). Generally speaking, it is commonly agreed that IBCs refer to a type of TNE in which an HEI establishes a campus in a different geopolitical region from the one in which the home campus operates (e.g., Borgos, 2016; Lane and Kinser, 2008; Lawton and

² In fact, Alam et al. (2013) have mentioned six types, the sixth one of which is 'study abroad' and hence irrelevant to the discussion here.

Katsomitros, 2012). That being said, there has not been any unified agreement about whether TNE institutions in China qualify as IBCs. For example, in dividing TNE activities into collaborative and independent provisions, Knight (2016, p.38) defines IBCs as being independent; hence, there should be no local HEI or provider involved in ‘the design or delivery of the academic program[mes]’. Accordingly, there are no IBCs in the Chinese context because all TNE institutions require cooperation with local HEIs following the regulations of the Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) framework laid out by MoE. As new and different arrangements of IBCs emerge, particularly in the case of China as the largest importer of IBCs, the definition has also been developing and becoming more inclusive. The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education (OBHE, 2016), for example, has stated that IBCs may take six forms: wholly owned, strategic alliance, government partners, educational partners, private partners, and joint venture. Thus, the OBHE (2016) developed a much broader definition of IBC as:

an entity that is owned, *at least in part*, by a foreign education provider; operated *in the name of* the foreign education provider; and provides *an entire academic program*, substantially on site, leading to a degree awarded by the foreign education provider. (Garrett et al., 2016, n.p.)

Thus, the operation of IBCs under the CFCRS model has also been acknowledged, under which the case study institution UNNC is categorised as a joint-venture IBC. Further explorations of the case will be provided in Chapter 4, whilst below I present a conceptual map (Figure 2.1) in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the differences between INE and TNE.

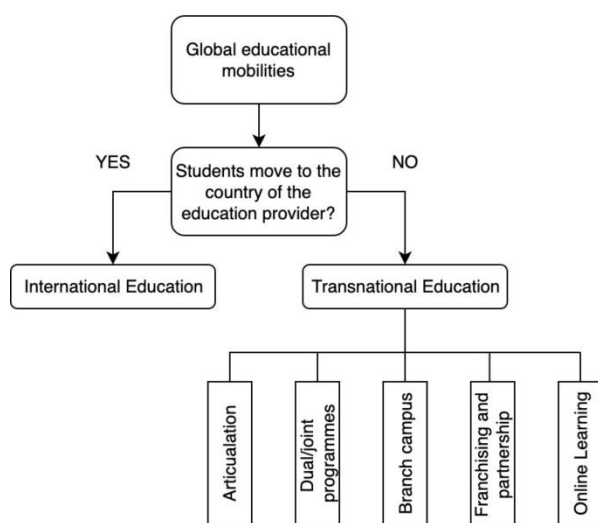


Figure 2.1 A typology of global educational mobilities

2.2.2 Extant research on transnational education

In this section, I review the extant TNE research with two specific focuses: TNE research in China and IBC research in general.

To begin with, research focusing on TNE in China is in its initial stages and in a chaotic state. Based on a quantitative bibliometric analysis of both the national and international literature, Qin and Te (2016, p.313) concluded that research on TNE in China is still ‘an emerging field in its infancy’. Above all, Qin and Te (2016) expressed concern about the quality and academic rigour of extant research in Chinese national journals. The average length of national publications is only 2.5 pages, and about a quarter of these publications have *no* references (119 out of 470 articles). The emerging field of research on TNE in China cries out for rigorous and high-quality research by national scholars. For these reasons, in this section I will mainly review research on TNE in China that has been published in high-quality, peer-reviewed international journals. The only exceptions are publications by the Centre of Research on Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, Xiamen University, mostly by its director Jinhui Lin, as it was established at the request of MoE and operates under its direct instruction. This research centre assumes responsibility for offering official reports and official interpretations and for guiding public opinion about CFCRS in China.

I divide the extant research on TNE in China into three levels: the national and international level; the institutional level; and the individual/personal level. First, at the national and international level, much existing research on TNE is analysed against the national context of China (both social and political) and in the global context of Chinese-Foreign relations. Based on my own observations and the data collected by Qin and Te (2016), this remains the most popular focus, accounting for about half of the literature. Major sub-themes include: historical overviews and the trends in development (e.g., Huang, 2007; Yang, 2008; Qin, 2007), with some paying more attention to the political context (e.g., Yang, 2014; Gu, 2009; Hayhoe et al., 2013) and others to patterns of development in relation to particular regions (e.g., for the UK see Li et al., 2014; for Canada see Hayhoe et al., 2013). TNE in China has also generated interest amongst scholars of politics and international relations, who have focused more on the regulations and governance of TNE (e.g., Mok, 2009; Yang, 2011b; He, 2016); the implications of TNE on China's soft power (Yang, 2012; Postiglione, 2015) and international relations (e.g., Pinna 2009); particularly after China became a member of the World Trade Organisation (e.g., Yang, 2011a, 2011b; Xu and Kan, 2013; Zhou, 2009).

Secondly, at the institutional level, some studies have addressed practical issues that have emerged in the delivery of TNE and consequent reflections on issues of quality assurance and sustainability. Scholars are mainly concerned about potential problems of foreign TNE in China (e.g., for English teaching see Debowski, 2005; Wilkins et al., 2014; for cultural differences see Heffernan et al., 2010; Wulf and Takhar, 2009; Li and Jiang, 2009; for legitimacy see Zhang and Kinser, 2016); about issues of operation, collaboration and management (e.g., Willis, 2004; Healey, 2016; Wei and Liu, 2015) and quality assurance (Zhou, 2009; Lin and Liu, 2009; Lin, 2016a; for quality assurance in relation to the scale and benefits of TNE, see Lin, 2016b); and comparative analyses of the organisational development of TNE within China and other countries (Borgos, 2016).

Thirdly, at the personal level, research giving voice to the participants in TNE, particularly students, is relatively limited. Xu and Montgomery (2018, p.17) have also noticed this research gap based on their comprehensive review of TNE in China, and call for academic attention to 'the target "consumer" of TNE'. In recent years,

several studies have nonetheless emerged to address this gap, with two main points of focus: (i) educational decision-making and (ii) student perceptions of TNE. With regard to the first of these, Fang and Wang (2014) designed a case study to explore Chinese students' decision-making in relation to participation in TNE, the findings of which indicate that TNE is a second choice to both INE and domestic education in China and is used particularly by students as a tool to regain access to high-quality domestic higher education institutions. Also focusing on decision-making, Tsang (2013) focused on students' parents and adopted a Bourdieusian approach. This research revealed that TNE has been used as a tool by new middle-class parents to achieve intergenerational upward social mobility in coping with credential inflation in China. As Tsang (2013, p.665) explains, these parents firstly 'nurture their children to study at transnational universities', and then 'use the qualifications as a stepping stone for studying abroad even if they fail to secure a place in one of the tier-one universities'. These two studies suggest that, similarly to INE, TNE has also been integrated into domestic education systems and contributes to domestic social stratification.

With regard to the second theme, student perceptions of TNE, Hou and McDowell (2014) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic study of students' experiences on a China–UK articulation programme in engineering. This research revealed a problem with cultural integration, as the Chinese students categorised themselves as 'us' and British students as 'them'. Moufahim and Lim's (2015) small-scale empirical study of students in UK TNE in China exposed the interviewees' overwhelmingly positive view of UK education in contrast to critiques of Chinese education, and strongly negative opinions of Chinese lectures. Both studies coincide with the findings of previous research on INE, in which Western education, and even a Western lifestyle, is perceived as having much higher symbolic value, and where Chinese students face inherent problems owing to symbolic violence (e.g., double language barriers in Hou and McDowell, 2014) in much the same way as they would experience in INE.

The field of research focusing on IBCs worldwide is also underdeveloped. Over the last decade, the small number of empirical studies addressing IBCs has slowly been growing, in which I identify three key focal points. The first and most thoroughly discussed, focal point relates to modes of management and operational challenges

and strategies. Key themes include: the strategic vision, academic priorities and business considerations (e.g., McBurnie and Pollock, 2010); the sustainability of TNE (e.g., Cao, 2011); adaptation to the local environment and the management of multiple IBCs (e.g., Harding and Lammey, 2011); systematic reviews of issues of management and leadership (Lane, 2011a); a comparative policy analysis between IBCs in different countries (Lane, 2001b); analytical frameworks on strategic management (e.g., Shams and Huisman, 2012); market trends (e.g., Becker, 2015), funding sources (Verbik, 2015), and motivations and rationales (Girdzijauskaite and Radzeviciene, 2014).

Participants in IBCs form a second, less popular focal point. This group of studies includes research on educational practitioners in IBCs, exploring issues that have emerged in management and teaching (e.g. Healy, 2016; Leung and Waters, 2017). Students in IBCs have also attracted attention, mainly in relation to their decision-making and corresponding rationales. Wilkins and Huisman (2011a, 2011b), for example, have conducted large-scale quantitative research on international students who have already enrolled in UK higher education about their consideration of IBCs if they were to undertake further study in the future. On that basis, Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman (2012a) have investigated the push and pull factors influencing students' decision-making concerning participating on the home campus of a Western university (INE) or at its branch campus (IBC), based on survey research on 320 undergraduate and postgraduate students studying at branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates. Students' perceptions of and satisfaction with IBCs in the United Arab Emirates (Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman, 2012b) and their impressions of IBCs and the subsequent influence on their attachment to IBCs in the United Arab Emirates (Wilkins and Huisman, 2013) have also been addressed through large-scale quantitative survey research.

The most sparsely researched subject concerns the spatiality of IBCs. In this area, a recent study of Monash University Malaysia (a joint venture of Monash University Australia and Sunway Conglomerate Malaysia) offers an informative spatial analysis of IBCs. Drawing upon Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualisation of social space, Sidhu and Christie (2014) have analysed the perceived, conceived and lived spaces as constitutive of Monash University Malaysia, in relation to its urban setting, the post-

colonial national context, and geopolitical changes in the global arena. Sidhu and Christie (2014, p.183) consider the campus and the joint venture to be ‘a matrix of different spatial practices’, including the Malaysian government’s scheme for higher educational expansion; Sunway Conglomerate’s entrepreneurial strategy to tie property development to higher education provision; the imperatives of the Australian government to internationalise education; and the plans, willingness and capacities of the Malaysian students that lead to prosperity in the local market. All of these spatial practices intersect and, combined with various representations and experiences of the space at Monash University Malaysia, as Sidhu and Christie (2014, p.183) have argued, enable ‘a fine-grained analysis of place-based practices and the transformation of the urban landscape of peninsular Malaysia, alongside an analysis of the globalised and interconnected space of higher education’.

Overall, in the narrow research field of IBCs, it is apparent that there is still insufficient qualitative ethnographic research illuminating students’ own voices and experience in relation to a thick description of the emplaced spatiality of the unique foreign campus conditioned by a macro domestic environment. This review of research, and the gap it has revealed, has informed the methodological considerations of this research, as will be explained further in Chapter 5.

2.2.3 Departing from extant research: The potential of transnational education

This chapter started by suggesting that TNE, especially in the form of IBCs, has shown the potential to promote educational geographical reconfiguration, through the important role it plays in connecting educational institutions and participants across different places and influencing the (re)distribution of educational resources and power across global space (Leung and Waters, 2013b, p.495). Nevertheless, extant empirical studies indicate otherwise in practice. In recent research on educational practitioners in TNE, Leung and Waters (2017, p.1278) noted that the barriers of language and cultural difference persist and concluded that ‘our analysis challenges the propagated notion that TNE can defeat the power of place and space and simply “flow” across space in the neo-liberal, globalised (knowledge) economic systems’. The few studies that have discussed the role of IBCs in facilitating

participants' capital accumulation tend to conclude that its value has been fundamentally compromised owing to the lack of student mobility across national borders. Although the cases and subjects of discussion vary, there are mainly three aspects to consider: the emplacement of capital, the embodiment of mobility and the implications of future mobility, each of which I now briefly consider.

Firstly, as I have described in the previous section on INE, in the field of global higher education, capital is emplaced, and social inequalities are entangled with geographical inequalities. The distribution of the values of cultural capital, be it in its embodied or institutionalised form, is geographically uneven and hierarchical. This has led to an asymmetrical, one-way flow of global student mobility in order to pursue cultural capital with higher value. Moreover, the value of cultural capital itself varies in different social contexts and is influenced by different contextual social factors (Forsberg, 2017a, 2017b). IBCs are able to issue the same degree certificate as the home campus; therefore, the value of institutional cultural capital can be maintained. However, as mentioned in section 2.1, the acquisition of seemingly identical cultural capital does not necessarily mean equal valorisation can be achieved in local and global markets, which are also subject to other social factors and also the aspects of social capital accumulated together. Waters (2018) conducted a qualitative comparative study of TNE and INE in Hong Kong, and found that, compared to their peers who went overseas for INE, those who participated in TNE 'at home' in Hong Kong are less valued in the domestic job market. She concluded that: 'mobility is not just of benefit to overseas students, but a *lack of mobility* distinctly and actively *disadvantages* TNE students' (ibid., p.676). Instead of the advantages gained from participating in TNE, Waters (ibid.) argues that graduates were confronted with a 'double burden': in one respect, they 'lack the advantages gained through overseas travel for study' other than the qualifications; in another respect, the qualifications they gained without overseas experience attract 'suspicion' and 'doubt'. As this suggests, cultural capital accumulation in INE revolves around more complicated and wide-ranging dimensions than simply the qualification; these dimensions include culture, gender, and race, and are unique to the social context of the destination (e.g., the culinary consumption of coffee or kimchi (Collins, 2008), or the gendered and raced experiences of female Asian students in Canada (Park, 2010), among many others).

This leads to the second challenging aspect, the embodiment of mobility. In addition to the aforementioned embodiment of capital, which is emplaced in the foreign, usually Western, environment, the value of *being mobile* per se should not be neglected. That is to say, the value of INE lies not only in students' accumulation of various forms of capital in a foreign environment, but also in the process and result of moving out of their original environment; not only about what they are going to gain but also about what they would have to lose and the capabilities developed to cope with this. This is probably why Murphy-Lejeune (2003) coined the term 'mobility capital', emphasising the 'taste for living abroad' as a 'luxury' benefit of INE for participants, which enables them to always be open to changes in the environment and be ready to move. Murphy-Lejeune (2003, p.51) argues that:

The main difference between student travellers and their peers rests in the acquisition of what we shall refer to as 'mobility capital' [...] a sub-component of human capital, enabling individuals to enhance their skills because of the richness of the international experience gained by living abroad.

Waters (2018) agrees, maintaining that the key difference between INE and TNE is *mobility*. Acknowledging that the definition of 'mobility capital' is vague and has many overlaps with social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital, Waters calls for attention to be given to the inherent value of 'being mobile' or 'being out of place' (2018, p.675), which is the '*additional value*' only gained by participants in INE as compared to their peers in TNE (2017, p.285). Therefore, the value of TNE in facilitating participants' capital accumulation for global position-taking has been fundamentally compromised by its lack of 'mobility' (ibid).

Thirdly, capital acquired from INE also indicates one's capacity for *future* mobility. As Findlay et al. (2012) remind us, in addition to a geographical perspective, we also need to pay attention to the reproduction of social class throughout mobility trajectories across time, both before and after participation in international educational mobilities. Supporting Brooks and Everett's (2008) research findings about 'life planning', they also find that the decision to participate in INE is often 'embedded in an individual's life-course aspirations and plans' in the long term (Findlay et al., 2012, p.127). Based on in-depth interviews and a large-scale questionnaire survey, Findlay et al. (2012, p.128) concluded that, in many cases,

“‘world-class’ education’ is intrinsically connected to ‘a mobility culture’, which attaches symbolic value to ‘the very performance of international living’ and ‘aspires to engage in international career trajectories’.

Therefore, in summary, critiques of TNE for its compromised value compared to that of INE are mainly based on the following arguments. Firstly, different forms of capital are emplaced. Although institutional cultural capital in the form of a foreign degree may be awarded remotely, embodied cultural capital, together with the social capital needed for its valorisation, can only be effectively acquired in a foreign environment. Secondly, in addition to exposure to a foreign environment, ‘being out of place’ and ‘being mobile’ per se has an ‘*additional value*’ (Waters, 2018, p.675) that is not available in TNE. Thirdly, mobility is ‘integral’ to the future accumulation of capitals and has a profound influence on ‘international career trajectories’ in the future (Findlay et al., 2012, p.128).

Given these arguments, the question arises as to why I think my case is still worth researching and on what grounds should we believe that my case study will yield useful findings that advance our understanding of TNE? Furthermore, how might the answers to these questions shed light on future research in making use of extant findings on TNE? In the simplest sense, the answer to these questions is that my case study differs in four important respects from the case studies so far considered in extant research: 1) the value of symbolic capital is relative; 2) the value of linguistic capital is contextual; 3) the spatiality and materiality of IBCs is constitutive of student experiences and mobilities; and 4) the unique voices of the diverse student body have not yet been sufficiently addressed.

Firstly, UK TNE is more highly valued in mainland China than in Hong Kong. UK TNE in Hong Kong is considered to be the ‘only option’ for the ‘less successful (also known as “failing”) young people’ who fail to transit to domestic universities (Waters, 2018, p.678). In contrast, UNNC has the same high standard as the prestigious public universities in China, only recruiting the first batch in the first class (*yiben*) in *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination), with the additional requirement of a score of at least 77% in English. In a comparative study of UK TNE in Malaysia and Hong Kong, Sin et al. (2017) gathered similar findings,

pointing out that local public universities in Hong Kong are valued more highly than UK TNE because of the former's 'strong institutional performance' in world university rankings, 'tougher entry standards' and 'better recognition locally' (Sin et al., 2017, p.9); in contrast, in Malaysia, UK TNE offers 'the exact same benefit', while 'the local public universities could not'. It can be inferred from the different values attached to UK TNE in Hong Kong, Malaysia and mainland China that the symbolic value of institutionalised cultural capital is subject to its relative position in the global educational hierarchy, i.e., its proximity to or distance from the dominant culture. As Sin et al. (2017) have noted, because Hong Kong has rich educational resources, with many prestigious world-leading universities, degrees from local public universities carry just as much symbolic value as those from many universities in the UK. In contrast, Malaysia and China are located much lower in the global educational hierarchy than the UK (which is also manifested in the flow of international students from these two countries to the UK); accordingly, degrees from universities in these two countries carry less institutionalised cultural capital. Thus, I argue that, in researching the value of TNE in different social contexts, we need to adopt a relational approach and take the relative position of the recipient and provider countries into consideration. Eventually, what needs to be taken into account in estimating the value of TNE is the *relative*, rather than absolute, symbolic value of the institutionalised cultural capital. Given the more significant comparative value of UK educational credentials in China (and therefore the greater difficulties in acquiring them) compared to those in Hong Kong, it can be suggested that my case study is likely to generate different findings.

Secondly, it is also worth noticing that Hong Kong and Malaysia, as former British colonies, have been influenced by British culture and still use English as one of their official languages. In China, by contrast, Chinese is the only official language in daily life and the only basic teaching language in educational institutions. Therefore, English-speaking environments are much scarcer in China than in Hong Kong or Malaysia. English, as linguistic cultural capital, is the dominant language not only in the global educational field but also in the global job market. Or, as Meyers (2007, p.55) puts it, 'English has become a *de facto* world language' (emphasis in original). This argument is also supported by the aforementioned motivations for INE mobilities, especially linguistic migrations. As a result, English as added capital,

which is otherwise unavailable in public universities in China, has made UNNC an even more desirable choice for Chinese students compared to previous case studies.

The third difference between my case and existing case studies lies in the places and spaces of IBCs, which I have also emphasised in identifying the research gap in this field and why I argued for a spatial perspective. As Cook and Hemming (2011) point out, the role of space has been downplayed in accounts of educational settings, and they call for attention to ‘institutional geographies and the socio-spatial processes that take shape within them and ripple out from them’ (p.1). This is, I argue, the key whereby IBCs offer much greater potential for promoting education equity and inclusivity than other forms of TNE, a point which has not been stressed enough in previous studies. In this case study of UNNC, I will not only pay attention to the physical, cultural and social dimensions of the campus, but also to the student bodies as ‘the geography closest in’ (Rich, 1986, p.212) as both ‘an entity within space’ and ‘a social space in itself’ (Cook and Hemming, 2011, p.3). Furthermore, I will also consider the connections to the outer global geography, by investigating how students’ experiences on the UNNC campus influence their mobilities into wider, multiple spaces in various forms. In doing so, I contribute an empirical case to show that the materiality of IBCs can have a profound influence on TNE students that necessitates academic concern.

Fourthly, TNE students are crying out for more interpretivist empirical studies to address their diverse voices in relation to their various personal attributes, which are contingent upon different cases. TNE students should not be merely reduced to a standardised image or understood within the identity category of ‘students’. They are a group of young people with multiple identities, of which ‘student’ is only one. In my case study, in addition to being participants in TNE with the hope of pursuing further education and improving their future career prospects, most UNNC students are also a special generation of single children in their families, curious young people seeking difference and independence. They are akin to ‘the missing middles’ (Roberts, 2015) in youth research, people who are caught in between as they are neither the most privileged group in terms of socio-spatial mobilities nor the most disadvantaged. All of these aspects of personal attributes have shaped their unique way of being TNE students, not only in informing students’ relational selves that are

dynamically intertwined with the material space, social relations and cultural belongings, but also in influencing the way in which they negotiate and remake pre-existing categories.

2.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how socio-spatial inequalities have been reproduced in INE, and the potential of TNE to redistribute educational resources and connect educational participants globally, as well as the accompanying challenges, to which ‘mobility(ies)’ is the key. Having reviewed the extant literature, I have proposed a relational approach to individual TNE case studies, suggesting that the evaluations of TNE vary to a certain extent according to the comparative symbolic value of the TNE providers and recipients, in which the socio-cultural specifics of both societies should be taken into consideration, and both the materiality of the educational space and the personal attributes and experiences of the students are of significance. Accordingly, I will pay attention to all these aspects in my exploration of UNNC students, adopting a subjective reading of the production of the unique enplaced and transnational space on the UNNC campus, whereby the UNNC student community can be studied through a relational approach of belonging, and the influence of this TNE experience on the students’ future socio-spatial mobility can be suggested through the lens of cosmopolitan cultural capital. These are concepts I explore in the following chapter, in which I outline my theoretical approach.

Chapter 3 From Mobility to Mobilities: Theoretical Approaches to Transnational Education

This chapter introduces the theoretical approaches I have adopted in this thesis. Grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, this study perceives ‘mobility’ in its plural form of ‘mobilities’, and in a co-constitutive relation with immobility. In section 3.1, I will start with a brief introduction to the new mobilities paradigm, which threads a path between ‘sedentarist’ and ‘nomadic’ metaphysics, and I will demonstrate how it may facilitate a perspective on the convergence of materiality and various interdependent modes of transnational mobilities at IBCs. Thus, it enables a new perspective on UNNC students’ educational experiences in-situ, with a focus on how their corporeal immobility has been constantly negotiated via other forms of mobilities, during their intermittent presence and absence from diverse material spaces, social relations, and cultural forms, with profound implications for their future socio-cultural mobilities. Accordingly, in section 3.2, I unpack the main research question as three lines of inquiry into the space, the community, and the cosmopolitan competence. Following each line, in sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3 respectively, I then suggest a subjective understanding of UNNC educational space as mobile through imagination, a relational approach to UNNC Chinese students’ (imagined) community through belongingness, and a Bourdieusian perspective on cosmopolitanism as a new cultural marker of distinction.

3.1 The theoretical underpinning: The new mobilities paradigm

In the context of the recent ‘mobilities turn’ in social science, current research on educational space has been criticised for its neglect of ‘mobilities’. For example, Brooks and Waters point out (2018, p.51, emphasis in original):

Work on education has been (and continues to be) grounded in various assumptions about its *spatial embeddedness*. [...] However, in this work, due attention to ‘mobilities’ – encompassing both the movement of people and ideas connecting the institutional space to the wider world – is rarely given.

Applying the new mobilities paradigm to education, Brooks and Waters acknowledge the potential importance of the materiality of TNE, which has been

neglected in current work, and suggest the productive possibilities of an exploration of the convergence of materiality and educational mobilities. As Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) suggest, places can be understood as ‘ships’, meaning that, instead of being static and emplaced, they should be considered as becoming and travelling. Accordingly, educational space should also not merely be understood as a container of educational activities (Brooks et al., 2012), and the emplacement of education should better be considered in relation to mobilities. As Waters (2017, pp.283–284, emphasis in original) reminds us, educational spaces ‘may themselves be *mobile*, and not simply impacted by mobility’. In harmony with these researchers, I ground my study in the new mobilities paradigm and make an exploration of the co-constitutive relation between immobility and mobilities as the starting point for my study of UNNC. In what follows, I shall briefly introduce the key ideas of the new mobilities paradigm that are essential to this study.

Starting with the point that the concept of ‘mobilities’ transforms social science, Urry (2007, p. 44) put forward a new mobilities paradigm ‘to reflect, capture, simulate and interrogate movements across variable distances that are how social relations are performed, organised and mobilised’ (for the first systematic conceptualisation see Sheller and Urry, 2006). Fundamentally, ‘the new mobilities paradigm’ calls for a ‘mobilities turn’ in social sciences that addresses, while also transcending, the previous ‘spatial turn’ (ibid.). Starting with Lefebvre’s seminal work *The Production of Space* (1991), the ‘spatial turn’ expressed itself in sociology as the emergence of ‘mobile sociology’ (Urry, 2000a), with the assistance of two influential publications: *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman, 2000) and *Sociology beyond Societies* (Urry, 2000b). The ‘mobilities turn’ focuses on the unprecedented diverse modes of mobilities, the dynamic interrelations among them, and their profound social consequences, calling for a new vision of social science. As Sheller (2017, p.627) has emphasised, the ‘mobilities turn’ has many aspects in common with the ‘spatial turn’, including thinking across spatial scales and disciplinary boundaries, and focusing on materialities and temporalities beyond ‘sedentary’ frameworks. However:

What truly set it apart [...] was the questions of whether ‘mobilities’ could provide a vision for a different kind of social science: more open to multiple disciplinary perspectives and

methodologies, more wide-ranging in its objects of study, more attuned to diverse spatial relations, more speculative and future-oriented.

Having acknowledged the contribution of spatial analysis, Sheller and Urry (2006) argue that social science has still failed to address the significance of the systematic movements of people both actually and *imaginatively* as the prerequisite of the spatialities of social life. In his later seminal book, *Mobilities*, Urry (2007, p.19, emphasis in original) elaborates upon the argument that much work in the social sciences has been ‘a-mobile’ in three ways: first, the ‘neglect of movement and communications’ and the diverse forms in which they are organised; second, the consequent ‘*minimisation*’ of the importance of these social, political, and economic forms of movement for ‘the very nature’ of various social activities and social institutions; third, the neglect of ‘the underlying physical or material infrastructures’ of patterns of social activity. These critiques have set the agenda for the new mobilities paradigm.

In response to the call for a mobile sociology (Urry, 2010), the new mobilities paradigm draws upon but also distinguishes itself from both sedentarist and nomadic social sciences. Sedentarist approaches tend to position people, experiences, and identities in particular places and within particular boundaries; and these bounded, authentic places are considered to be the fundamental basis of social activities (Malkki, 1992). This then inevitably leads to ways of thinking that are also rigidly rooted and bounded; for example, ‘place as a location of identity’ (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002, p.15), or – and of particular relevance to the study of TNE – methodological nationalism (Levitt and Glick-Schiller, 2004). Accepting the nation-state and its boundaries as given, methodological nationalism has three variations, each of which are closely connected to and reinforce each other: it starts with an ignorance of the significance of nationalism for modern societies; which then leads to the naturalisation of the unit of social analysis being delimited and defined by the borders of nation-states; as a result, all social analyses are confined within the political and geographic borders of nation-states by their corresponding territorial limitations (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2003).

Despite the undeniable importance of nation states, ‘social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries’ because there is increasingly strong evidence indicating that

various forms of movement, networks, and flows of capital operate across national borders through the process of globalisation (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004, p.107). For example, there are transnational religious movements, transnational criminal networks, transnational governance regimes, and, in our case, transnational education. TNE does not operate within national borders. Rather, it mobilises people, objects, information, and imaginations to cross sedentary national borders and actively connects global educational resources and participants, constituting its own transnational field that contributes to a new topology of global higher education, which is always in the making and ongoing. Along with Urry (2000), Faist (2000), and Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004) seek to move beyond sedentarist social theories and to address the increasingly mobilised world. Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004, p.1009) then propose a reconceptualisation of the notion of society as ‘a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationship through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed’.

In a similar vein, the new mobilities paradigm challenges ‘the imagery of “terrains” as spatially fixed geographical containers’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p.209). It stresses that ‘all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections that stretch beyond each such place’, and as a result ‘nowhere can be an “island”’ (ibid.). Hence, the new mobilities paradigm has been looking for inspiration from metaphors and concepts of fluidity and nomadism (Urry 2007). For example, theories of ‘liquid modernity’ (Bauman, 2000), as one of the essential sources of this paradigm, have helpfully redirected social research to look at systematic movements of people, information, and machines as paramount and as constituents of social entities, thereby transforming the understanding of modernity as something heavy and solid to one that is light and liquid. Departing from that, however, the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ is vigilant to avoid falling into the other extreme of ‘nomadic metaphysics’. Opposed to sedentarism, nomadic metaphysics overly marginalises the idea of place and excessively generalises the condition of mobility (Verstraete and Cresswell, 2002). Ang (1993, p.4) has reminded us of the risk of fascination with mobility to ‘decontextualize and flatten out difference, as if “we” were all in fundamentally similar ways always-already travellers in the same postmodern universe, the only difference residing in the different itineraries we undertake.’

Many scholars have echoed the critique of nomadic theory for its ‘romantic reading’ of mobility (Kaplan, 2006). In contrast, mobilities are closely connected to power inequalities. As Skeggs (2004, p.49) points out, both mobility itself and the control over it presume and reinforce power, to which not everyone has equal access. Firstly, the bodies that participate in physical travel are aged, racialised, gendered, and classed (Urry, 2007). Therefore, differential mobility empowerment reflects and reinforces existing power hierarchies (Teschfahuney, 1998, p.501). For example, Skeggs (2004, p.48) maintains that previous approaches to mobility often reflect a ‘bourgeois masculine subjectivity’ that claims to be ‘cosmopolitan’. Secondly, the right to travel is also highly uneven and skewed between nations (Timothy, 2002). Thirdly, it is true that new places and technologies have greatly enhanced connectivity and mobility for some people, but this has been accompanied by, and resulted in, the exclusion and immobility of others (Timothy, 2002; Ahmed, 2004, Wood & Graham, 2006).

Thus, mobilities create movement for some people while also causing stasis for others. As Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006, p.12) remind us, ‘indeed the greater the proliferation of such “tools” and hence the greater the networking possible, so the more that access to such tools is obligatory in order to participate fully in a “networked society”’. In the discussion of INE and socio-spatial inequalities in Chapter 2, for example, it became evident that participation in the global job market presumes Western university degrees, English competency, and know-how in participation compared to domestic mobilities, none of which is easily accessible to ESEA students. Hence, mobility is a resource that has been unequally distributed, subject to existing power hierarchies (Skeggs, 2004, p.49; see also Morley, 2002; Sheller & Urry, 2006b). In addition to liquidity and mobility, the new paradigm also pays attention to the concomitant patterns of concentration and stasis, which create both connectivity and disconnection, centrality and exclusion, empowerment and restrictions (Graham and Marvin, 2001). Correspondingly, it is also important to understand the multi-layered social fields that overlay the researched social space, in order to track the power circulations of discourses and social practices that create both mobilities and immobilities.

Moreover, nomadic theories characterise societies in terms of detachment and de-territorialisation, while neglecting the importance of nodes, places, and spaces in mobilities. By contrast, the new mobilities paradigm suggests that mobility experiences are structured by ‘interdependent systems of “immobile” material worlds’ and often acquire their complexity from ‘the multiple fixities or moorings on a substantial physical scale’ (Urry, 2007, p.54). In the field of education, for instance, overseas education does not only refer to the moment of ‘moving abroad’. Rather, it involves the embodied experiences of ‘being mobile’ on the airplane, ‘feeling out of place’ when settling down on a new university campus in a foreign environment, keeping in touch with family and friends who are left behind in the home country with mobile phones, and making oneself feel at home by bringing familiar objects as tokens or memories and rearranging them in the new student accommodation. Even for the so-called ‘mobile machines’, such as aeroplanes and the internet, time-space immobilities are prerequisites (Adey, 2006). Therefore, mobilities are inseparable from locations and materials; and the processes of detachment and de-territorialisation always go hand in hand with attachment and re-territorialisation (Sheller, 2004). In understanding TNE, I suggest that we can use an analogy between IBCs and airports, both immobile but converging and enabling various modes of mobilities across time and space. There is no linear enhancement in fluidity without immense systems of immobility (Sassen, 2002). The ‘spatial fix’ (Harvey, 1989) remains essential in researching mobilities, for it is the ‘necessary spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities’ (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 2006, p.3). Therefore, the new mobilities paradigm attaches great importance to immobilities as moorings by mobilising the spatial turn (Sheller and Urry, 2006). Instead of perceiving mobilities and immobilities as binary opposites, we need to adopt relational approaches to look for the partial connections between them (Strathern, 2005).

In reconciling both sedentary and nomadic theories, this paradigm draws attention to the intermittency of movements which shift between ‘being present’ and ‘being distant’, and acknowledges the various forms that mobilities may take – not only physical/actual but also virtual/imaginative (Urry, 2002, 2007). In addition to the corporeal travel of people, which is the most well-researched aspect of global educational mobilities, Urry (2002, 2007) draws attention to various other,

interdependent modes of mobilities that also have a profound influence on social relations. Urry (2007, p.47) puts forward five interdependent mobilities (developed from the four modes in Urry, 2000), which are:

- The corporeal travel of people, as being ‘on the move’ has become a ‘way of life’ for many;
- The physical movement of objects to producers, consumers, and retailers; as well as the sending and receiving of presents and souvenirs;
- Imaginative travel, ‘to be transported elsewhere through the images of places and peoples encountered on radio and especially the ubiquitous TV’ (Urry 2002, p.256);
- Virtual travel, often in real time thus transcending geographical and social distance;
- The communicative travel, through person-to-person messages via messages, texts, letters, telegraph, telephone, fax and mobile.

With regard to educational mobilities, many examples can be generated: for example, the international flow of academic staff and students are examples of corporeal travel; and distance learning and online education mainly involve communicative and virtual travel. Nevertheless, it is essential to note here that ‘mobilities need to be examined in their fluid interdependence and not in their separate spheres’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p.212). For instance, the first example is often accompanied by the international exchange of person-to-person messages; the second example probably involves the multimedia usage of foreign images and videos. This interdependency is particularly important in this study, because IBCs encompass a set of complex mobilities and immobilities locally, yet with extensive connections and communications transnationally in various forms. All of these multiple mobilities entangle together and contribute to the unique spatiality of the branch campus, including its social relations, language environment, and materials, among many others.

Materiality is particularly worthy of attention, because it is exclusive to IBC and cannot be offered by other forms of transnational education (such as online learning, which mainly relies on virtual co-presence), and it is significant for people’s feeling of proximity and consequently important to embodiment, emotions, being, and belonging. In *Mobility and Proximity*, Urry (2002) explored the reasons why people travel. He discovered that what matters is the ‘intermittent moments of *physical* proximity’ that result from travelling, which have been widely accepted as ‘obligatory’, ‘appropriate’, and ‘desirable’. Therefore, Urry (2002, pp.261-262)

concluded that virtual travel can only partially substitute for physical travel because ‘to be there for oneself’ remains crucial in fulfilling all of its social, time, place, live, and object obligations. As Urry has reflected in his conclusion, quoting Adler (1989, cited in Urry 2002, p.271): ‘travel is a “performed art” involving anticipation and day-dreaming about the journey, the destination and who/what might be encountered on the way’. Therefore, he encourages further research on the huge variations and combinations of modes of travel, which may yield other findings.

This is what I seek to do in my own research on the UNNC branch campus. I view Chinese UNNC students as ‘imaginative travellers’, manifesting imaginative travelling and imaginative belongings to foreign social experiences, life, and people without corporeal travel. Developed on the basis of, but different from, Urry’s conceptualisations of ‘imaginative travel’, their imaginations are inspired by the interdependent multiple mobilities of their lives on campus, including physical encounters and media communication between local students and foreign others, virtual travel to foreign websites via Edu-roam (which is otherwise difficult to access in mainland China), and object travel, including textbooks imported from, and exam papers sent back to, the home campus. Thus, I start to explore TNE experience in-situ from the perspective of mobilities, and raise the following research question:

To what extent and in what ways are Chinese students’ socio-spatial mobilities affected by their in-situ experience at UNNC?

3.2 Three lines of inquiry: Space, community, and cosmopolitan competence

In unpacking this research question, I propose three lines of inquiry into: the space, the community, and the students’ cosmopolitan competence. In what follows, I illustrate the importance of these three aspects with examples from the case study, whereby I also develop the corresponding approaches that are essential for investigating each aspect.

3.2.1 A subjective understanding of space through imagination

Firstly, it is essential to develop a subjective understanding of the TNE space through imagination. As one of the theoretical sources of the new mobilities paradigm, the 'spatial turn' sees space as a power geometry rather than a neutral or passive one (Massey, 2012), which plays an important role in structuring social actors and social relations. With increasingly rapid mobilities, spaces, places, and their various material constituents are also in a state of flux, intermittently in motion and open to rearticulation (Urry, 2007). For example, how do we understand the spatiality of the case-study transnational campus? Is it foreign or local? Is it mobile or immobile? In a sense, it is both foreign and mobile as it delivers education across national borders, in the form of a whole package of foreign people, languages, curricula and pedagogies, social relations, material objects, etc., which are all in constant communication and exchange with the provider's country. In another sense, it is also local and immobile, because it establishes a permanent base in the recipients' country not only as a teaching site but also as a small residential area, obeying local laws and regulations, merging into the local cultural atmosphere, informed by local social rules, recruiting local people to work, study, and live, and where foreign staff may start a family and 'settle down'. Therefore, it is intermittently both local and foreign, mobile and immobile. Given this, it is important to see place itself as also *becoming* and *travelling* (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 2006), in order to understand the people within it in terms of both fixity and fluidity. This brings me to the first sub-question:

How are transnational mobilities enabled at the immobile UNNC campus?

In looking for answers to this question, a subjective understanding of 'space' is important. Recently, much academic attention has been drawn to how space is produced through social processes and how space shapes these social processes in return (e.g., Massey, 2012; Soja, 1989; Brooks, Fuller, and Waters, 2012). Such a subjective view provides us with new perspectives on space as something that is not neutral or passive, but in a constant state of flux that is negotiated and given meaning by human endeavour, produced by and reproducing socio-spatial relations. To quote from Singh et al. (2007, p.197), space can be understood as a 'product of cultural, social, political and economic interactions, imaginings, desires, and relations'.

To further understand the processes by which space is produced, it is helpful to look at the perceived–conceived–lived conceptual triad of Henri Lefebvre (1991). Respectively, this triad incorporates three interrelated moments of spatialisation: spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space). The first element, spatial practice, encompasses ‘production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation’ (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 26). Spatial practice is important for the production and reproduction of space, because it ‘propounds and presupposes it in a dialectical interaction’ (ibid.). The second element, ‘representations of space’, refers to a conceptualised space where ‘what is lived’ and ‘what is perceived’ are identified with ‘what is conceived’ (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39). The space is conceptualised through symbols, codifications and various other cultural forms, whereby it is represented and made sense of through human endeavours. The third element, ‘representational space’ involves complex symbolisms; it is the ‘passively experienced’ space that ‘the imagination seeks to change and appropriate’ (p.39).

Informed by this conceptual triad, the (re-)production of TNE spaces can also be broken down into three interrelated moments. Firstly, through spatial practice, Chinese students at UNNC master and appropriate space in a way that is unique to transcultural spatiality, whereby they also acquire and are required to have a certain level of ‘competence’ and ‘performance’, such as where to sit and how to behave in a Western-style seminar classroom, what language to use when encountering foreign others on campus, which area to go to for Chinese food or Western food, etc. Consequently, both the continuity and cohesion of the space are ensured through their everyday spatial practices, whereby the spatiality is produced and reproduced. Secondly, the TNE campus was designed by the education provider(s) to be perceived in a certain way, although, having perceived it, the participants – particularly the students – may, thirdly, conceive and represent it in a different way. On my case-study campus, there are many student-designed cultural products, media texts, graffiti, and even a movie, entitled ‘The Notting-Man’, which was made entirely by the students themselves including acting, directing, editing, and music composition. The messages delivered sometimes agree with and sometimes contradict those intended in the official assumptions and publicity.

In everyday campus life, students perceive, conceive, and live within the space, by which processes both the spatiality and themselves are mutually (re)produced. When students step in, the pre-existing space has started to condition their presence, discourse and actions: certain areas may be English-speaking only, and certain areas may only be accessible to certain types of bodies (e.g. as I will introduce in Chapter 6, student accommodation at UNNC is separated according to students' gender and ethnicity). Conversely, in perceiving, conceiving and living, students presuppose or negate the space to a certain extent. For example, at UNNC, only the English language is allowed in academic settings. In most cases, the students may comply, while sometimes they may not. A common problem in many Chinese-Foreign Cooperation Universities is that Chinese students are the vast majority according to the law; hence, they may want to discuss unfamiliar academic topics among themselves in their mother tongue. Through this process, old spatiality may partially dissolve as the new may be gradually generated.

A subjective understanding of space helps us to understand space in relation to imaginations. Harvey (1973, p.13) states:

Space is neither absolute, relative nor relational *in itself*, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualisation of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. [...] The question 'what is space' is therefore replaced by the question 'how is it that different *human practices* create and make use of distinctive conceptualisations of space?'

For example, the boundaries of spaces are not always defined in purely materialist terms; rather, in many instances they are dependent on the lifestyles, memories, loyalties, and belongings of the social actors within them (Harvey, 2006). This brings out the importance of 'geographical imagination', whereby individuals are enabled to relate to the places and spaces around them, to recognise their relations to them, and to understand how their lives are affected by them. This 'geographical imagination' allows individuals to make judgements about whether the social events and social relations which occur in certain places are relevant to them and, if so, in what ways (Harvey, 1973, p.24). For example, the British royal wedding was broadcast at UNNC, and many of the UNNC students relate to the news happening

in the UK regardless of their actual location in China or their national identity as Chinese.

Consequently, when attention is paid to geographical imagination, imaginative geographies should be taken into consideration; only thus can the mutual production of imagination and space be revealed. In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) explores Western representations of the 'Orient', and reveals the way in which an imaginative geographical 'Orient' has been constructed in a wide range of academic and artistic works that are all immersed within colonial ideologies. The ideas, myths, and histories we have about certain places and spaces are addressed as 'imaginative geography', and these have a profound influence on the shaping of spatial experiences in the present and, consequently, on our spatial imaginations for the future. This concept is useful for TNE research aiming to understand the shared imaginations that encompass multiple interlocking transnational social spaces. For example, in the case of UNNC, the home institution, UNUK, has always emphasised 'three campuses, one university' (the other one is in Malaysia) and has taken actions to foster collective belonging (e.g., Tri-campus Games taking place at a different one of the three campuses each year), creating shared imaginative geographies for all participants.

3.2.2 A relational approach to community through belonging

In a similar vein, social communities can be seen as built through imaginative connections, i.e., 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983), which do not presuppose geographical propinquity or shared spatial experience. As cosmopolitanism grows, spaces and places are no longer fixed, then people start to dwell in motion (Urry, 2002, p.157). Therefore, there has been a growing set of voices, particularly from the cosmopolitan variants of liberalism, challenging the applicability of social solidarity, together with its individual manifestation of belongingness (Calhoun, 2003b). Such perspectives, I argue, are trapped in the nomadic extreme that is abandoned under the new mobilities paradigm. Indeed, even in this cosmopolitan world, no one can escape from particularistic solidarities, with an emphasis on the plural form as there is no one universal identity that is shared by all members of a group (ibid.). Without gravitating to the other, sedentarist extreme,

we need to employ a relational approach to (imagined) communities through ‘flexible ties’ of belongingness instead of ‘fixed boxes’ of identity, because the concept of belonging is inherently relational (Game, 2001), connecting places, people, and cultures, and may stretch across national borders. Therefore, it is still important to look at the UNNC community in the context of cosmopolitanism, and ask the second sub-question, as below:

How do Chinese students negotiate their (imagined) community at UNNC?

Belonging is something that is ontologically important to the self; it is a condition of self that carries a sense of ease or accord with both ‘who we are in-ourselves’ and ‘who we are in-the-world’ (Miller, 2003, p.220). Moreover, belonging is not just any relation, but a particular kind of relation (May, 2013, p.79). It is ‘an inherent capacity’ of people with a sense of self, which is based on both ‘who we feel similar to’ and ‘who we are not’ (ibid.). Hence, belonging entails a relational view of the self, which is not given when we are born but emerges in relationships to the material world through sensory experiences, relationships with other people in social encounters, and a shared culture (May, 2013) as ways of being and doing in the world which engender ‘a shared sense of “us”’ (Calhoun, 2003a, p.559). Thus, May (2013) proposes three dimensions of belongingness: sensory belonging, social belonging, and cultural belonging.

This form of division is beneficial for understanding the multidimensional nature of belongingness; however, it is worth noticing that in practice these three aspects intersect and overlap, rather than functioning separately in their individual spheres. In this case study, it is UNNC students’ shared sensory experience of materiality on campus that creates a relatively closed social space within which they develop relationships with classmates in the same classroom, roommates in the same accommodation, and even strangers whom they meet every day at the university canteens or in the library, while becoming relatively isolated from other social groups such as non-UNNC Chinese students. Then, it is their relational (non)belonging to the community, which is generated from their social interactions with other people, including both Chinese peers and foreign others, that inspired them to think about the similarities/differences between the underlying cultures and

provoked their sense of (non) belonging to certain social rules and cultural norms, which affected their cosmopolitan orientation and future trajectories. Therefore, this second sub-question focusing on the social dimension serves as a connecting link, developing on the basis of the answers to the first sub-question, and preparing for a further and more in-depth exploration of the final sub-question.

For this second sub-question about the UNNC community in particular, social solidarities can be generated from many sources, which are ‘socially produced, shaped by material factors, culturally organised and yet also open to human action’ (Calhoun, 2003b, p.549). For example, UNNC applies certain criteria in recruiting students from similar backgrounds, hence the students tend to fall into similar ‘social categories’ such as class and nationality; the Chinese students are all bilingual and share a Chinese-British mixed education on campus that contributes to their unique ‘common culture’. Also, they are required to live on campus during term time (similar to a British boarding school) and may develop belongingness to those with whom they are allocated to share a room, which is evoked from ‘material power’; they are also connected to UNUK students and their overseas alumni, directly or indirectly, through transnational ‘networks’ that are essential to their belongingness to the imagined community, and so forth (Calhoun, 2003b, pp.547–548). All of these converge and contribute to UNNC students’ collective sense of belonging that is constitutive of their (imagined) community. Therefore, in pursuing this second line of inquiry, I will look at the social, material, and cultural factors that are constitutive of their perceptions of in-group similarities and out-groups differences, as well as how they exercise their agency in selectively drawing upon and proactively negotiating these categories according to their sense of (non)belonging.

Furthermore, adopting a relational approach to community through belongingness also implies social change (May, 2011). On the one hand, a sense of belonging can be depicted as a trajectory of our being and doing in the world through time and space (De Certeau, 1984), which changes over time in partial correspondence with the changes in our sense of self (May, 2011). On the other hand, our relational, cultural, and material surroundings are also likely to go through changes, which inform and reform our sense of belonging (ibid.). As a result, belonging is always a process rather than a product, something we have to keep accomplishing, negotiating,

and/or reaffirming. What is worth noticing here, though, is that, because belonging is person-centred, it is limited by the subject of observation and experience. In practice, ‘an overarching logic’ is not available for any individuals, and a ‘grand narrative’ of social change can only be identified with hindsight (May, 2011, p.374). Thus, social changes are always experienced in ‘a fragmented fashion’, to which the reactions of social actors can only be observed through gradual and partial changes in their ways of doing and thinking (ibid.). Nevertheless, this agrees with the research objective to elicit students’ own voices through a close-up exploration of their personal experiences and feelings. Overall, a relational approach enables this study not only to understand UNNC’s Chinese student community in a multidimensional and dynamic way, but also to bring students’ agency to the fore in constructing their (imagined) community within a transnational space that is immersed in their subjective imaginations and depicting a cosmopolitan future with implications for socio-spatial mobilities.

3.2.3 A Bourdieusian perspective on cosmopolitanism as distinction

The third and final inquiry is into cosmopolitan cultural competence. Instead of celebrating unprecedented mobility and endless connectivity, it is important to note that power hierarchies remain, and there is a persistent power imbalance between people who do and do not have the right to move, such as INE students and those who are left behind. This leads to the fundamental enquiry of this study: can TNE branch campuses contribute to promoting global educational equality and inclusivity? To answer this question, this study will employ the concept of ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital’ (Friedman et al., 2015; Prieur and Savage, 2013). This concept facilitates our understanding of UNNC students in terms of their cosmopolitan orientation and competence, which also to a certain extent sheds light on the implications of TNE experience for their future life trajectories. Are the TNE students in my case study also ‘disadvantaged’, as shown in previous studies? To what extent does the TNE experience make them more advantaged in terms of socio-cultural mobilities? Are they motivated and enabled to participate in future global corporeal mobility? All of these questions require an analysis within a social arena in which they, together with other social actors, occupy their relative positions with the

benefit of certain assets functioning as positional goods. Therefore, I adopt a Bourdieusian approach to the cosmopolitan world, in which cosmopolitan cultural capital is at stake, and ask the third sub-question of this research:

How and to what extent does Chinese students' experience at UNNC affect their cosmopolitan outlook and competence?

The final perspective that is essential to this research is to understand cosmopolitan competence as a new cultural marker of distinction, through the concept of 'cosmopolitan cultural capital'. This is an application of the classical Bourdieusian concept of 'cultural capital' to cosmopolitan contexts. In recent decades, there has been a growing social science literature exploring 'cosmopolitanism' in its various guises (e.g., Benhabib, 2008; Calhoun, 2002; Derrida, 2003; Kelly and Kenway, 2001; Vertovec and Cohen, 2003; Waters and Brooks, 2010). Vertovec and Cohen (2002) identify six main ways of conceptualising cosmopolitanism: as 1) a sociocultural condition; 2) a worldview; 3) a political project promoting transnational institutions and 4) multiple identities; 5) a dispositional orientation; and 6) a competency (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). Most of these concepts have been addressed in educational research, such as the cultivation of cosmopolitan identities in international education (Rizvi, 2005); the cosmopolitan citizenship of private degree students in Singapore (Cheng, 2018); the disembodiment and embodiment of cosmopolitan sensibilities in international education (Sidhu and Dall'Alba, 2012); and the role played by informal and formal educational spaces in fostering global citizenship (Boni and Calabuig, 2017).

With reference to other conceptualisations, in this study I will mainly focus on cosmopolitanism as competence through the lens of cosmopolitan cultural capital, one of the new forms of cultural distinction in this cosmopolitan world. The reason to do so is aligned with the research purpose. This research, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, is mainly concerned with the reproduction of socio-spatial (in)equalities in relation to educational (im)mobilities. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the potential of TNE for bringing about social change, raising the 'so what?' question to the previous explorations on space and students. I argue that only in this way can this research, which started by inquiring into the (im)mobilities of TNE,

offer practical implications for the value of TNE in promoting global educational equality and inclusivity, which is inherently linked back to (im)mobilities.

It is essential to understand cosmopolitanism firstly as a sociocultural condition in order to understand what kind of competencies may be essential in coping with it. Generally speaking, it refers to the process and consequences of ‘the possible death of the nation-state’ (Brennan, T., and Brennan, T. J., 1997, p.2) in the form of an external erosion of distinctive boundaries and internal globalisation and dissolution (Beck, 2007). Consequently, modern societies are increasingly confronted with the rise of a ‘cosmopolitan imperative’, leading to the blurring of boundaries between ‘the native’ and ‘the foreign’ and cultivating ‘an everyday global awareness’ (Beck, 2011, p.1352). In coping with these newly emerging socio-cultural conditions, cosmopolitan competencies have increasingly become essential assets for social actors. It is therefore important to have ‘flexibility’ and ‘adaptability’ across diverse cultural settings (Burbules and Torres, 2000, p.22), as well as openness to foreign others, the disposition to coexist with them, and competencies to tackle global issues (Prieur and Savage, 2013).

Such competencies have been detected in many European countries, and are conceptualised as an emerging way for a new elite class to draw cultural distinctions, i.e. ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital’ (Prieur and Savage, 2013). Departing from national and Eurocentric tastes, ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital’ is defined as a particular form of cultural capital that is inherently connected with a ‘cosmopolitan orientation’ (Prieur and Savage, 2013, p.259), functioning as a ‘cultural marker’ of one’s capacity to transcend one’s own national frame and excel in the cosmopolitan world (Friedman et al., 2015). Despite their shared focus on the ability to appreciate diverse cultures, it is important to note that ‘cosmopolitan cultural capital’ is essentially different from ‘cultural omnivorousness’. Coined by Peterson and Kern (1996), the concept of ‘cultural omnivorousness’ has been used to address the decline of ‘snobbism’ and a simultaneous rise in omnivorous cultural taste, meaning the capacity to appreciate both ‘highbrow’ culture (e.g., opera, classical music) and ‘lowbrow’ culture (e.g., rock, blues) at the same time. However, the state of ‘snobbish high culture’ needs to be defined à priori and linked to certain genres, such as opera and classical music. Meanwhile, the cultural choices of the underprivileged

class have to be made to conform to the ‘à priori model’, and are therefore ‘lumped together in a few categories’ whilst privileged cultural choices are much more refined (Priour and Savage, 2013, p.255). In contrast, as Holt (1997, p.103) points out, ‘the crux of the postmodern condition is the breakdown of the hierarchy distinguishing legitimate “high” culture from mass “low” culture’, and the dissemination of a direct relationship between such classifications and class. In relation to cosmopolitan orientations, Holt (1997) discovered from his research participants that those who possessed a high level of cultural capital tended to believe their world to be more expansive than did others with a lower level. They exhibited a higher level of mobilities, such as experiences of living in foreign countries and travelling regularly as a lifestyle. ‘The most powerful expression of cosmopolitan versus local tastes is through perceptions of and desires for the exotic’, Holt concluded (1997, p.112).

Whilst cosmopolitanism does not assume ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ cultures, its acquisition does, however, presume distinction (Priour and Savage, 2013, p. 257), and it is evident in many empirical studies that cosmopolitan openness is more likely to be found amongst advantaged social groups (e.g. Bryson, 1996; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Cheyne and Binder, 2010). Cosmopolitanism as competence is considered to be ‘the class consciousness of frequent travellers’ (Calhoun, 2002, p.869), the acquisition of which is ‘often made possible by capital – social and cultural as well as economic’ (Calhoun, 2008, p. 217). Cosmopolitan competencies are also convertible into other forms of capital and reproduce social privilege. For example, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have both promoted cosmopolitan attributes such as flexibility and adaptability across cultures as preferred competencies in recent reports and recommendations (Spring, 2014), indicating their importance as valuable assets for individuals who wish to compete in the global economy. In recruitment, one of the most convenient ways to decide candidates’ cosmopolitan attributions is to look at their educational credentials. Educational systems then institutionalise academic credentials as objective proxies for the qualities of their holders, and legitimate these credentials as essentials to global position taking (Breen and Jonsson, 2005, Igarashi and Saito, 2014). Thus, it can be argued that cosmopolitanism operates as ‘capital’ in a Bourdieusian sense in the global field of

higher education: it is legitimised as a desirable disposition and institutionalised by the global educational system (Igarashi and Saito, 2014); it reflects and reinforces existing power relations because its acquisition presupposes distinction and its convertibility to other forms of capital reproduces distinction.

From this perspective, pervasive participation in international higher education can be partially explained by class struggles over cosmopolitan cultural capital. As cultural capital, it can be found in various states. Firstly, in the institutionalised state, the convertibility of academic credentials to economic capital is subject to an educational institution's relative position in the global hierarchy of higher education. Degree certificates from non-Western, particularly non-English-speaking, countries are less valuable as institutionalised cultural capital. Aggravated by degree inflation in domestic markets, non-Western degree holders are less competitive in the global job market (Brooks and Waters, 2011). Accordingly, overseas degrees, especially those from UK or US educational institutions, function as a proxy for the candidates' cosmopolitan competencies, and as the 'ultimate symbolic capital necessary for global mobility' (Ong, 1999, p.90).

Secondly, embodied cultural capital seems to be an exclusive benefit of overseas study. Besides course content, overseas education itself can provide students with real-life experiences through which they can familiarise themselves with foreign environments and interact with foreign others, offering resources and opportunities for the embodiment of cosmopolitan attributes. In a sense, this encompasses not only the 'taste for living abroad'. i.e. what Murphy-Lejeune (2003, p.51) referred to as mobility capital, but also the inherent value of 'being out of place' (Waters, 2017, p.285) and the competence acquired in constantly coping with it.

Thirdly, as a special form of embodied cultural capital, linguistic capital in the global field of higher education is closely connected to English-language competence. In order to be a 'global citizen' at liberty to communicate with global others, individuals need to have language(s) in common, which is 'almost certainly English' (Meyer, 2007, p.266). For those who do not speak English as a native language, INE is arguably the most popular and effective option. It is feasible for less privileged students to pursue 'a national track' education by enrolling in

domestic universities that offer international curricula, which may even be delivered in English, which requires less economic capital compared to ‘an international track’ (i.e., overseas) education (Igarashi and Saito, 2014, p.228). However, the latter offers greater and more diverse cosmopolitan encounters because students on the ‘national track’ are only exposed to foreign knowledge through courses with their co-nationals and not through any real-life foreign encounters (ibid.), leaving them disadvantaged in the acquisition of embodied cultural capital. Given this, a Western branch campus seems to offer a third way, which delivers the whole package of Western degrees, an English-language environment, and foreign encounters in the recipients’ domestic context.

Nevertheless, it is worth noticing here that, as a concept developed in the Western context, the extent to which it can be adapted to the Chinese context still requires cautious discussion. Prieur and Savage (2013) have observed a decline in traditional highbrow culture in some developed countries in the West, which is supported by findings in the US (Lamont, 1992), in Denmark (Prieur, Rosenlund and Skjott-Larsen, 2008), and the UK (Bennett et al., 2009), among many others. However, owing to globalisation and the dominant position of the West, Western culture has been rising in China and is perceived as a cultural marker. Not only the traditional high culture of the West, but also everyday popular Western culture could be considered ‘high culture’. For example, there has been a rise in coffee culture (Henningsen, 2011), and particularly the consumption of Starbucks (Maguire and Hu, 2013), in China. In discussing the emerging cultural capital, Prieur and Savage (2013) stressed the importance of the modes of appropriation of culture. In a related case study in China, Peng (2017) has revealed that urban Chinese young people enjoy sharing photos of having coffee at Starbucks on WeChat (which can be understood as the Chinese equivalent of Facebook together with Messenger), with the locating feature on, indicating their petit-bourgeoise (*xiaozi*) lifestyle. Their modes of appreciation do not reflect a cosmopolitan taste, but lean more towards a globalised consumerism and cultural imperialism. Essentially, it is important to distinguish ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Billig, 1995) from ‘cosmopolitanism’, which may reflect the modes of appreciation as much as the content of consumption.

In researching social space from a Bourdieusian perspective, I do not mean that a focus on material space should be abandoned, nor that the exploration in 3.2.3 should be completely detached from the previous discussions of the material space in section 3.2.1. Instead, they work together in an interrelated way. I argue that social space cannot be de-contextualised from material spaces, and that social fields vary across different material places. The unique materiality of TNE campuses influences students' access to international cultural goods, exposure to different cultural settings, and proximities to different social groups, among many others. Therefore, the material and social spaces need to be understood in a relational way.

3.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented my theoretical framework, which is underpinned by the new mobilities paradigm and investigates three dimensions that are essential to TNE student experience: space, community, and cosmopolitan competence. I have firstly laid the foundations by introducing the new mobilities paradigm, which enables us to look at immobile educational space with a focus on its convergence with various interdependent modes of mobilities, with productive possibilities for creating proximity to cosmopolitanism through imaginative travelling. On this basis, I then developed three lines of inquiry into the main research question: a subjective understanding of space through imagination, a relational approach to community through belongingness, and a Bourdieusian perspective on cosmopolitanism as distinction.

Working together, these three approaches facilitate the application of the new mobilities paradigm to TNE research. Firstly, a subjective view of the (re)production of space through imagination helps us to better understand TNE space itself as mobile and becoming. Thus, in researching TNE student experience, we no longer perceive educational space as something necessarily passive and static, hence only focusing on people's (students') influence on space (campus). Instead, we can see the agency of place and the dynamic interactions among materiality, mobility, and spatiality, whereby we can better understand how students and TNE campuses are mutually constitutive of each other in relation to geographical (spatial) imagination and imaginative geographies (spaces). Secondly, belongingness retains its great

explanatory power in depicting TNE students within a cosmopolitan context, highlighting the importance of social solidarities in their construction of their (imagined) community, even when they are constantly shifting between being present and absent to certain places, people, and cultures. The multidimensionality of belongingness is also useful in making sense of the various interdependent modes of mobilities across these three lines of inquiry. Thirdly, cosmopolitan cultural capital developed from a Bourdieusian perspective enables this study to evaluate students' cosmopolitan orientation and competence, with implications for their future socio-spatial mobilities, whereby the potential for the valorisation of their imaginative mobilities can be suggested. Altogether, they constitute a mobile theoretical toolbox tailored to the researching of TNE students in IBCs, which are not only contextualised in China but also with the potential for cross-contextual application. Equipped with this theoretical toolbox, in the next chapter I will introduce the case-study campus in the context of TNE with Chinese characteristics.

Chapter 4 A Unique Case: The First Chinese-Foreign Cooperative University

This chapter provides a context in which to situate the case study, in terms of both the unique socio-political context of TNE in China and the particular situation of the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China. Section 4.1 presents general information about TNE in China, characterised by a powerful state which has played an important role both in shaping the phases of development and in countering the imbalances and inequalities that emerged during this process. Section 4.2 explores the particular case of UNNC, discussing how it strives for autonomy by negotiating the ‘unwritten rules’ in policies and how its ‘Boya Education’ philosophy has successfully integrated Western liberal arts education with the Chinese Confucianist tradition and has aligned itself with the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

4.1 Transnational education in China: Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools

China is the largest importer of international branch campuses in the world (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2017) and the second largest host of UK TNE (HE Global, 2016). It has long been a major issue for the Chinese government to decide how to legally position incoming foreign education programmes (Huang, 2006). On the one hand, in recent decades Chinese higher education has been through a series of major reforms, including commercialisation, decentralisation, expansion, and marketisation (Cai, 2004), and ‘it is clear that the reform process envisaged that Chinese higher education needed to be able to learn from foreign (and particularly Western) systems and institutions’ (Ennew and Yang, 2009, p.27). On the other hand, the development of TNE in China is still characterised by centralised control and top-down planning (Lin and Liu, 2016). In order to achieve sustainable and equitable development and eventually the Peaceful Rise of China, TNE in China is developing under macro-control; instead of naturally occurring in a bottom-up way that is entirely responsive to the market, it is following a unique model of Beijing Consensus (Cooper, 2004) rather than a Washington Consensus.

The only TNE form that China's State Council has issued regulations for is Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) (Lin, 2016a). By definition, CFCRS refers to:

[...] the activities of the cooperation between foreign *educational institutions* and Chinese *educational institutions* (hereinafter referred to as Chinese and foreign cooperators in running schools) in establishing educational institutions (hereinafter referred to as Chinese–Foreign cooperatively run schools) within the territory of China to provide education services mainly to *Chinese citizens*. (Article 2, The Regulations, 2003, n.p.)

The reason for this insistence upon ‘cooperation’ with foreign HEIs for ‘Chinese citizens’ is closely related to the goals of the Chinese government in developing TNE, which are: ‘training high-quality, internationalised talents, to serve national and local socioeconomic development’; ‘promoting discipline building in Chinese higher education institutions’; ‘promoting the innovation of educational administrative systems and mechanisms’; and ‘satisfying society’s diverse educational needs’ (Lin, 2016b, p.266).

‘Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools’ (CFCRS) is categorised into cooperative programmes and institutions, while cooperative institutions can take two forms: Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities and Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Secondary Colleges. Only Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities have legal person status, i.e. they are considered to be independent legal entities, and these account for a very small proportion of Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Institutions in China because the Chinese government has started to apply ‘strict limits, high standards’ at this stage. There are only 11 Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities in China (UNNC included) (MoE, 2019), which have been recently recognised as a new type of IBCs in the Chinese context. Below, I provide a conceptual map (Figure 4.1) in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of CFCRS (The coloured boxes highlight what UNNC belongs to).

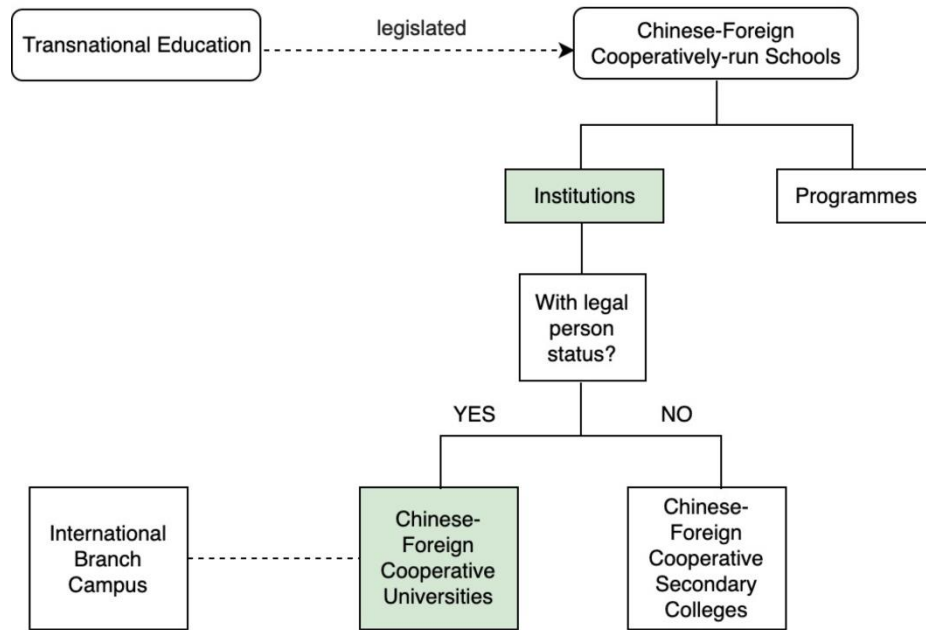


Figure 4.1 A Typology of Chinese-Foreign Cooperatively-run Schools

In what follows, I will introduce two aspects of CFCRS: 1) their historical development, which was structured by key government regulations, and 2) the status-quo, in relation to imbalances, inequalities, and countermeasures.

4.1.1 The development: Rapid growth under strong governance

There are three determinant regulations in the development of CFCRS; namely: *Interim Provisions for Chinese–Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* (1995), hereinafter referred to as *Interim Provisions*; *The Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese–Foreign Co-operation in Running Schools* (2003) , hereinafter referred to as *The Regulations*; and *Outline of China’s National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)*, hereinafter referred to as *The Outline*. Thus, the development of CFCRS is divided into four phases: 1980–1995 (starting period), 1995–2003 (rapid growth), 2003–2010 (developing while adjusting), and 2010 to the present (quality improvement period) (Lin, 2016a). In this section, I will discuss the process of development of CFCRS, with an emphasis on the dynamics between encouragement and control.

The origins of CFCRS can be traced back as early as the 1980s, when several leading universities in China cooperated with US institutions to offer training

courses and programmes in limited areas (Huang, 2003). However, owing to the rise of the Student Movement in China in 1989, all kinds of Chinese–Foreign cooperation were forbidden, including joint staff training programmes. It is widely agreed that the year 1995 was the turning point for CFCRS (Huang, 2003; Ennew and Yang, 2009; He, 2016). In that year, the *Education Act of the People’s Republic of China* and *Interim Provisions* were issued by the State Education Commission (renamed the Ministry of Education in 1998). Since then, the systematic regulation of CFCRS in China has been gradually established. Or, as Huang (2003, p.198) puts it, before 1995 CFCRS was ‘informal’, ‘incidental’ and ‘laissez-faire’; but after 1995 it has become ‘more structured’, ‘systematic’ and ‘well-regulated’. Then, 2003 was another significant year in the development of CFCRS, with the release of *The Regulations* (2003). Its complementary document, *Measures for Implementing the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese–Foreign Co-operation in Running Schools* was released the following year (2004).

As a result, CFCRS has been through explosive growth. In 1995, there were only two CFCRS programmes; by July 2016, the number of CFCRS institutions and programmes had reached 2428, involving 560,000 students on campuses nationwide with more than 1.6 million graduates. This growth is mainly attributed to the state promotion that is reflected in the change of policies. Comparing *The Regulations* (2003) to *Interim Provisions* (1995), it is clear that the importance of CFCRS has been increasingly affirmed. For example:

1995 Article 3

Chinese–Foreign cooperation in running schools is *an important form of Chinese education* in its international exchanges and cooperation, and serves as a *complement* to Chinese education.

2003 Article 3

Chinese–Foreign cooperation in running schools is an undertaking *beneficial to the public interest* and forms a *component* of China’s educational cause.

In *Interim Provisions* (1995), despite the apparent importance stated, the role played by Chinese–Foreign cooperation was merely ‘a complement’. This has been upgraded to ‘a component’, with a more detailed explanation of the importance of

Chinese–Foreign cooperation in running schools, which is ‘beneficial to the public interest’. This is considered ‘a major breakthrough’ (Lin and Liu, 2016, p.235), because it leads to subsequent improvements in quality, fundamental transformations in ‘certain written and unwritten regulations’, and ‘the understanding of Sino–Foreign cooperative education held by certain local governments, schools and parents’.

In accordance with their enhanced importance, the fields of cooperation have been expanded from only ‘vocational education’ to also include ‘the field of higher education’:

1995 Article 4

The state encourages Chinese–Foreign cooperation in running schools in the field of *vocational education*.

2003 Article 3

The state encourages Chinese–Foreign cooperative education that introduces *high-quality* foreign education resources.

The State encourages Chinese–Foreign cooperation in running schools in the field of *higher education and vocational education*, and encourages Chinese institutions of higher learning to cooperate with *renowned* foreign institutions of higher learning in running schools.

But it has also been specified that this cooperation is restricted to only ‘renowned’ institutions and ‘high-quality’ resources. Overall, during this phase, China had started to pay attention to both the quantity and the quality of CFCRS.

The encouragement of CFCRS is beneficial to China for both global and domestic reasons. In the global arena, the Chinese government needs to make use of foreign expertise in order to narrow the gap between China and the developed countries (Zhang and Kinser, 2016, p.328). China has been through rapid economic growth since the policy of reform and opening up in 1978, and becoming a member of the World Trade Organisation in 2001. Confronted with the considerable challenge of retaining self-determination presented by economic globalisation (Cooper, 2004), it is ‘a faster and more efficient way’ (Huang, 2003, p.428) for China to import services directly from the most advanced countries through CFCRS in order to

‘produce competent professionals at all levels, of all varieties, and ranging from the academically erudite to the practically skilled’ (Zhou, 2006, p.281). China aims to integrate its best domestic universities with world-leading universities, to incorporate urgently needed higher educational resources, and to ‘assimilate the strong points and successful governance expertise of foreign education institutions in light of China’s actual conditions’ (Zhou, 2006, p.273). This is an example in which the power of TNE to redistribute educational resources and redress global educational inequalities is being tested.

In the domestic context, CFCRS is also a potential solution to the problem of how to reduce the intensive conflict between the limited local educational supply and the increasing demands of the educational market. Since the late 1990s, China has been transforming elite education into mass education (Hou et al., 2014). The gross enrolment rate for higher education has increased from 2.7% in 1978 to 45.7% in 2018 (MoE, 2018b). Overall educational resources are limited, and the disciplinary structure is unbalanced; hence, competition for places at a desirable university is intense (Hou et al., 2014). As an alternative, CFCRS has become a tool to ‘strengthen the development of the disciplinary programmes at Chinese HEIs in order to meet the ever-growing demand for quality higher education’, which also serves ‘as an experiment and pilot program for the higher education reform in China’ (Zhang and Kinser, 2016, p.328).

In addition to the state on the promoter’s side, on the recipients’ side, students’ families also contribute to the prosperity of CFCRS in China. Education has a very high status within Asian values, and particularly in Chinese culture (Hou et al., 2014). As Lin (2016b, p.267) writes, ‘When the people have money in their hands, the first thing they want to do is give their children a high-quality education’. This statement can hardly be refuted in contemporary China. Furthermore, within Asian values, collectivism prevails, and greater importance is attached to the family than to the individuals within it (Langguth, 2003). This contributes to an Asian way of raising children: it is very common for parents to keep taking care of their children after the legal age of adulthood, which covers the average age range of students in higher education. Reinforced by the ‘One-Child Family Policy’ which only gives one chance to each family, such a commitment to child-raising is now even greater

in China (Zhou, 2006). Working together with the extremely high value attached to education in Confucianism, Chinese families are willing to make huge sacrifices to provide the best possible educational opportunities to the next generation (Welch, 2009), even beyond what they can afford.

As a result, CFCRS has increasingly becoming a popular choice for Chinese people, as a third way alongside domestic and international education. Firstly, compared to prestigious domestic universities, CFCRS offers foreign degrees with similar and sometimes higher symbolic capital and less fierce competition. Secondly, the choice of INE often comes not only with very expensive fees and overseas living expenses, but also with an emotional cost because parents will not be able to stay with and take care of their only beloved child. CFCRS, as a third way, can help Chinese families to gain access to a high-quality foreign education at a relatively lower cost compared to INE. Also, it gives their children a period of time both to physically grow up and to mentally prepare and adjust to a relatively independent life. CFCRS can be conveniently used either as a final destination, or as ‘a kind of springboard’ for a higher degree in INE, or for a position in international companies (Hou et al., 2014, p.310). In fact, in many cases CFCRS is not used as an alternative to, but as a pre-stage of, INE. In 2013–14, 55% of Chinese entrants to UK HEIs had a first degree gained through a TNE pathway (Choudaha, 2015).

From the analysis above, it can be seen that CFCRS brings enormous benefits to China’s political power, national economy, and educational market. However, foreign education, together with the mobilities of foreign people, information, and ideology is perceived as a potential threat to nation-building and hence must be subject to central planning (Lin, 2016b). Therefore, it is not surprising to see that CFCRS has received both strong support and strict control from the state to develop rapidly whilst remaining politically correct. For example, the requirements placed upon university presidents have become stricter, with more specific instructions in *The Regulations* (2003) as compared to *Interim Provisions* (1995):

1995 Article 22

The president (dean) or leading member of the cooperative educational institution shall be a *Chinese citizen of permanent residence within China* and be approved by *the authorities*.

2003 Article 25

The president or the principal administrator of a Chinese–Foreign cooperatively run school shall be a person with *the nationality of the People’s Republic of China, domicile in the territory of China, love the motherland, possess moral integrity, and have work experience in the field of education and teaching as well as compatible professional expertise.*

The president or the principal administrator appointed by a Chinese–Foreign cooperatively run school shall be subject to approval by *the examination and approval authorities.*

It can be noticed that a strong sense of belonging to China is specifically required (‘love the motherland’) while moral integrity has been added as an essential requirement for the president, which may facilitate a tightening of ideological and political control. To provide another example, the requirement of standard Chinese language as the main teaching language remains non-negotiable and the supervision of the curriculum has been enhanced.

1995 Article 26

A cooperative educational institution conducts its teaching with *full autonomy* provided it adheres to the state educational guideline and the goals and basic specifications of training useful personnel for society determined by the state. The *basic language* used in a cooperative educational institution is *Chinese*, but certain courses may be taught in foreign languages.

2003 Article 30

A Chinese–Foreign cooperatively run school *shall offer courses on the constitution, laws, ethics of citizens and basic facts about China*, etc. in accordance with the requirements by China for educational institutions of the same type at the same level.

Article 31

A Chinese–Foreign cooperatively run school may, if necessary, use foreign languages in teaching, but shall use the *standard Chinese language and standard Chinese characters as the basic teaching language.*

The basic teaching language was required to be ‘Chinese’, but the definitions of ‘Chinese’ are specified as ‘standard Chinese language and standard Chinese characters’ in order to limit the possible interpretation. Changes with regard to curricular supervision are more radical, taking ‘full autonomy’ away from CFCRS,

and replacing it with clear instructions to offer a series of compulsory courses with cultural, political, and ideological functions.

Another concern raised during the rapid development of CFCRS is about quality assurance. During the early stages of CFCRS development, students and their parents were ‘perplexed by their choices, creating opportunities for rogue elements’, owing to the misleading admissions publicity of some disqualified CFCRS and some ‘harmful media outlets’ (Lin, 2016b, p.260). Accordingly, there have been some negative impressions of CFCRS and CFCRS participants in China. Since 2010, quality improvement has become the new focus of CFCRS. Following its first mention in *The Regulations* (2003), quality assurance was emphasised in *The Outline (2010–2020)*. It has been implemented by the termination of disqualified CFCRS and the further integration of good-quality educational resources. In respect to the first of these, multiple state-led examinations have been carried out of existing CFCRS institutions and programmes. For example, in July 2018, the MoE approved the termination of 234 CFCRS institutions and programmes (MoE, 2018a), leaving 2342 still in operation (MoE, 2018a). To ensure the second aspect, stricter criteria have been applied to importing foreign resources and more ‘985’ and ‘211’ universities have become involved in CFCRS. These ‘985’ and ‘211’ universities are prestigious, research-intensive universities supported by the national government under ‘Project 985’ and ‘Project 211’ respectively, which are the most heavily invested, highest-ranked higher education projects in the history of China (Fang, 2011). The ‘211 Project’ included about 100 universities entitled ‘High-level Universities and Key Disciplinary Fields’ (i.e. ‘211’ Universities); among these universities, the government then gave extra financial and policy support to 39 ‘World Class Universities’ under the ‘985 Project’ (i.e. ‘985’ universities) (Zhang, Patton, & Kenney, 2013)³. As a result, the research capacity of Chinese universities is stratified according to this national policy: ‘985’ universities are the most prestigious, followed by ‘211’ universities, then other universities. During this new

³ Project 211 is shorthand for 21st century, about 100 universities; Project 985 was instigated in May 1998, i.e. year 98, 5th month.

phase of CFCRS, more than 80 ‘985’ and ‘211’ universities have participated, accounting for 20% of all Chinese partners in CFCRS (Lin, 2016d). As a result, the quality of CFCRS has been gradually improving in recent years, with a consequent positive influence on the public impression of CFCRS students.

4.1.2 The status quo: Imbalances and inequalities under macro-control

Having briefly reviewed the historical development of CFCRS, I now move on to examine the status quo, with a particular focus on the role played by the government in rectifying the emerging imbalances and inequalities, which makes TNE in China different from other social contexts. In terms of government support, China has made efforts to balance out socio-spatial (in)equalities. Globally, according to the *Report on Development of CFCRS (2010–2015)* (Lin, 2016d), the major exporting countries of INE remain the dominant partners in CFCRS, such as the US and the UK. That being said, policymakers in China aim to diversify their foreign partners in CFCRS instead of concentrating cooperation on a few traditional education-exporting countries (Lin, 2016a). As part of ‘the Belt and Road Initiative’, China is strategically pushing educational collaboration with the countries to the West and Southeast of China and is particularly encouraging high-quality CFCRS programmes in partnership with these countries. As a result, CFCRS involves about 600 foreign partners from more than 30 countries and regions.

Domestically, the regional distribution of CFCRS is unbalanced. To illustrate this overall regional distribution, I created a map (Figure 4.2) based on the latest data released by the MoE in April 2019⁴:

⁴ There are two provinces spelled as Shanxi so their names are also provided in Chinese characters.

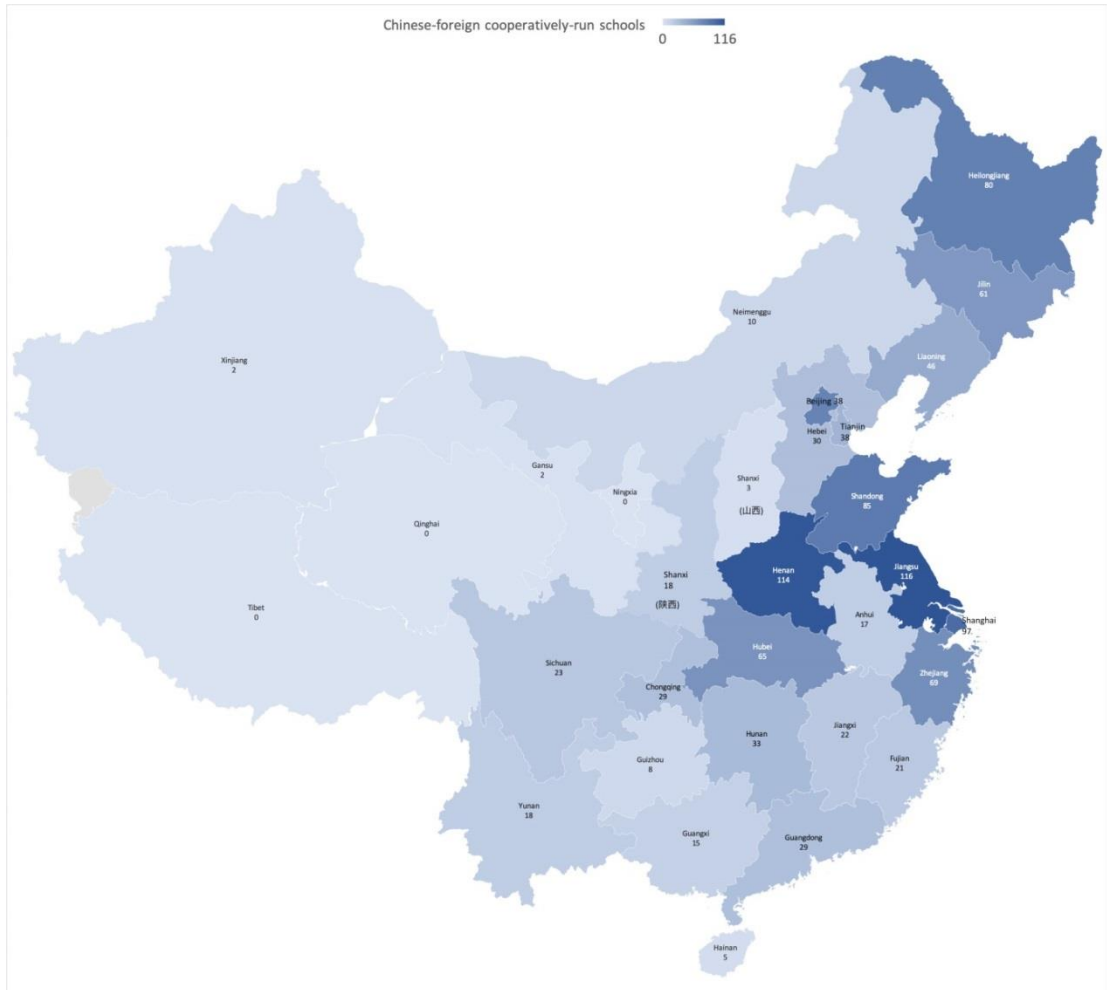


Figure 4.2 The distributions of Chinese-Foreign Cooperatively-run programmes and institutions in mainland China (2019)

As can clearly be seen from the map above, the eastern side of China appears to have far more TNE institutions and programmes than the western side. The top three regions, namely Jiangsu, Henan, and Shanghai, are home to 116, 114, and 97 TNE institutions and programmes respectively; while the bottom three – Xizang (Tibet), Qinghai, and Ningxia – have none (MoE, 2019). If compared with the Gross Regional Product (National Statistics Bureau, 2018), it can be seen that this uneven spatial distribution of TNE is strongly related to social inequalities between Western and Eastern China. This correlation is particularly significant in terms of CFCRS institutions rather than programmes, probably because the establishment of these institutions requires more local resources in terms of economic support, infrastructure, and student groups with relatively high levels of family wealth,

among many other factors. One of the reasons that CFCRS institutions only establish campuses in economically developed areas is that they charge ten to twenty times more in tuition fees than Chinese national universities. For example, New York University Shanghai charges Chinese undergraduate students 120,000 RMB each year for the first two years and 180,000 RMB each year for the last two years. The annual tuition for the case study university, UNNC, was 80,000 RMB during the year of my fieldwork (2017) and has now risen to 90,000 RMB (2019). For reference, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the mean disposable annual income of Chinese citizens was 25,974 RMB while the median was 22,408 RMB in 2017. The tuition fee of UNNC is thus about three times the average disposable income and more than three times the median. This is seldom an affordable price for working-class students. This expensive tuition fee functions as a natural structural barrier, indicating that CFCRS students are unlikely to come from the most disadvantaged groups. Therefore, we also need to bear in mind in this study that UNNC students, or any other CFCRS students, are not representative of the overall student population in China. Instead, they represent an extreme case, allowing us to discuss the new opportunities made possible by TNE, which could be potentially applied to a wider population and context in the future.

In fact, the Chinese government has been taking countermeasures to rectify spatial inequalities and to promote CFCRS to underdeveloped areas. Some underdeveloped regions have directly benefited from this preferential policy; for example, the aforementioned ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ has benefited nine provinces in the middle and west of China. In fact, since the reform and the opening up led by Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the necessity of ‘letting some people get rich first then leading the others to get rich’ (*xianfu daidong houfu*) has been emphasised in the Chinese strategy of developing its national economy with equity and sustainability. Therefore, it is important to encourage Eastern China to develop its education first, and then to help Western China to develop later, as has been clarified in *The Outline (2010–2020)*:

The Higher Education Rejuvenation Plan for Central and Western Regions shall be carried out. New college enrolment quotas shall be tipped in favour of central and western regions that are poor in higher education resources, and eastern colleges’ enrolment in central and western regions expanded. Eastern colleges shall be urged to redouble their support for their

western counterparts, and Eastern China shall be encouraged to take the lead in developing higher education (pp.20-21).

Therefore, the prosperity of CFCRS in Eastern China should not simply be interpreted as creating new inequalities, but rather as potential resources to reduce existing inequalities via macro-control.

In this first section of Chapter 4, I have depicted the big picture of the development of CFCRS, with an emphasis on the role played by the state as a unique feature of TNE in China. What still remains unclear, though, is what I have quoted from Lin and Liu (2016, p.235) at the beginning of section 4.1.1, that CFCRS policies have an influence on ‘certain unwritten regulations’ and ‘the understanding [...] held by certain local governments, schools and parents’. In the second half of this chapter, I will explain these ‘unwritten regulations’ and local understandings in relation to the practice of UNNC.

4.2 University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China: Introducing Western education to the Chinese context

UNNC is the first Chinese–Foreign cooperative university in China. It was officially established in 2004, one year after the release of *The Regulations* (2003), but its conceptualisation can be traced back to 2000. Fujia Yang, the first president of UNNC, was at that time the Chancellor of UNUK. Feng (2013), based on an interview with Yang, revealed that Yang came up with the idea of a China campus and eventually chose Ningbo as the location because it was his hometown. He had social connections there and expected to receive strong support from the local government. In January 2003, Yafen Xu, the Chair of Wanli Education Group (WEG), approached Fujia Yang and Jinping Xi (now the President of China, but then the Secretary of Zhejiang Provincial Committee) to propose and negotiate the details of the establishment of UNNC (Li and Sun, 2015). *The Regulations* (2003) were released five months later, in June. As a result, they signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* in March 2004 in Shanghai (UNNC, 2015c). Several months later, the MoE approved the establishment of this campus with the official name of ‘The University of Nottingham-Ningbo’, the very first Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University (MoE, 2005).

The establishment of UNNC is a typical example of how Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities gain legitimacy in the special socio-political context of China. As Zhang and Kinser (2016) have revealed, the policies of CFCRS in China often *lag behind* actual practices, and these policies are also *vague*, allowing university leaders to interpret them in ways that favour their preferred practices. These, then, are the unwritten rules that have rarely been discussed in formal academic publications. Thus, Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities have many ways to exercise influence in the grey zone between policy and practice: the leaders of these universities can influence government officials, the policy interpreters, by expressing their difficulties during these officials’ visits to the venue; local governments may also align with Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities to solicit support from higher levels of government, such as provincial and national; and the Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities themselves also make allies in order to develop stronger voices, e.g., the Sino–Foreign Cooperative University Union. These socioculturally specific methods are essential to an understanding of the establishment and development of Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities in China, particularly UNNC, which, as the first one to be established, had no precedents to follow.

In the case of UNNC, many inconsistencies can be found in its operation in comparison to the policy. To begin with, the nature of this partnership is ambiguous. It is stated in the approval document that the official name is ‘the University of Nottingham-Ningbo’, which implies that it ought to be a joint-venture university, instead of a branch campus. More explicitly, article 11 defines it as:

The University of Nottingham-Ningbo is qualified as a legal person. It should maintain its own features and brand, no matter whether in operating or advertising, *rather than* becoming a branch campus of the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) in China. (MoE, 2005, my translation)

Yet, it is no less explicitly stated on the official website of the University of Nottingham that ‘The University’s strong links with China resulted in an invitation to become the first foreign university to establish *an independent campus*, under new legislation passed in China in 2003’ (UNUK, n.d., my emphasis). This inconsistency is reflected in the understanding of the Chinese partner of UNNC. On the official

record of China, following *The Regulations* (2003), the Chinese partner is a Chinese HEI named Zhejiang Wanli College (MoE, 2005). On the website of UNUK, it is Wanli Educational Group (WEG), a Public Institution⁵ that owns Zhejiang Wanli College.

In practice, this controversial partnership is arguably what distinguishes UNNC from many of the Chinese-Foreign Cooperative Universities that were established later. For example, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University, Wenzhou Kean University, and New York Shanghai University, with their respective Chinese partner HEIs – Xi'an Jiaotong University, Wenzhou University, and East China Normal University of Shanghai – as indicated in their names, maintain a more equal cooperation between the Chinese and foreign HEI. In these cases, in which both parties have equal academic strength, they usually end up taking shared control of the curriculum (Feng, 2013). In the case of UNNC, however, UNUK enjoys 'full academic autonomy' (Feng, 2013, p.474). Despite the ambiguities in formality, in practice, UNUK was granted full autonomy in academic affairs without any intervention from Zhejiang Wanli College; while it leaves other aspects, such as campus construction, facilities management, and negotiation with local authorities, to be handled by WEG (Feng, 2013).

Secondly, the teaching language at UNNC seems to be inconsistent with the policy requirement. According to both *Interim Provisions* (1995) and *The Regulations* (2003), it is compulsory for the basic teaching language in a cooperative university to be Chinese. However, in practice, UNNC uses English and only English for academic teaching, apart from one required compulsory course introducing Chinese regulations and ethics. English-language teaching is actually the selling point of UNNC, and is advertised with pride on its official website:

All our degree programmes are taught in English, all coursework materials are in English and all exams and assignments are submitted in English. Our students are encouraged to communicate with each other in English. (UNNC, 2013)

⁵ A Public Institution in China necessarily means its property is registered as state-owned and it serves the public interest.

My best guess is that, in the document of approval issued particularly for the establishment of UNNC (MoE, 2005), there are 11 articles, none of which specifically regulates the teaching language. This creates potential room for interpretation and re-negotiation by UNNC together with the local government. Also, as policy often lags behind practice (Zhang and Kinser, 2016), the success of UNNC, as well as other Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities, may in the future lead to a revision of policies. As the guiding philosophy, particularly since the reform and opening up in the 1980s, ‘groping for stones while crossing the river’ (*mozhe shitou guohe*), has become an essential strategy of experimental governance in China, appreciating the openness to uncertainty that may occur in achieving planned objectives (Schoon, 2014). Correspondingly, research on CFCRS needs to refer to, but should not be limited by, national policies in writing, while it should be more focused on the actual implementation in practice.

Despite the relative autonomy that was negotiated in terms of academic affairs and teaching language, UNNC dutifully follows the leadership of the state and the party in terms of management and the political line. Firstly, it carefully balanced the number of members on the Board of UNNC. When it established its campus, there were 15 members in total, comprising seven British and seven Chinese, plus president Fujia Yang, who is both a Chinese citizen in accordance with the law, and was also the Chancellor of UNUK at that time, representing the British interest. Xu Yafen assumed the responsibility of Chair of both the Board of UNNC and the Board of WEG, ensuring highly efficient cooperation between them. Secondly, while the British partner has the absolute right of autonomy in academic issues, a CPC branch has been set up in UNNC to confine its operations to politically safe areas. According to the *Report on the Development of CFCRS (2010–2015)* edited by Lin (2016d), UNNC has established 21 CPC sub-branches to implement comprehensive Party-building, including seven for staff, eight for undergraduate students, five for postgraduate students, and one for those who want CPC support in their non-professional life. These branches can operate transnationally owing to the unique nature of this transnational university. For example, in the case of exchange

programmes or 2+2 programmes,⁶ in which Chinese students need to go overseas, temporary overseas Party branches can be established to ensure ‘the continuous teaching of socialist core values’ (p.82, my translation).

As Feng (2013, p.477) points out, the Secretary of the CPC is ‘a powerful and ubiquitous presence’ in ‘almost all social units’ in China. According to Feng’s interview with Yang, UNNC had the opportunity to refuse a branch of the CPC but eventually chose to accept for three major reasons (ibid.):

- The Party Secretary will ensure that UNNC is in compliance with China’s laws and policies.
- The Party Secretary will interface and coordinate with local governments where his or her counterparts are decision-makers.
- The Party Secretary will help resolve conflict on the campus.

The establishment of Party branches does not necessarily mean that there will be absolutely no room for Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities to negotiate for autonomy. Zhang and Kinser (2016) note the differences in function of Party Committees in Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities from those in Chinese universities. Having interviewed some insiders, including presidents and senior administrators, Zhang and Kinser (2016) suggest that leaders at Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities may aim to balance the shared interest between the home and host institutions, while the leaders of Chinese universities will only follow the government immediately and blindly in order to demonstrate their correct political orientation.

This subtle power balance between the UK and Chinese sides have profoundly influenced the philosophy of UNNC education. Zhang and Kinser (2016) argue that Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities in China take their relative freedom compared to other Chinese universities as ‘a point of pride and distinctiveness’(p.330); therefore, they tend to specifically reject the norms practised in other Chinese universities, including (pp.331–332):

⁶ A type of undergraduate programme, consisting of the first two years in China and the final two years overseas.

- applying general education (instead of four-year disciplinary education);
- treating students as adults (rather than children);
- student-centred teaching and learning (in contrast to passive teaching and learning)
- faculty's emphasis on teaching (instead of solely on researching);
- administrative professionalism (instead of a parallel political administrative structure at the Chinese HEIs).

Feng (2013) suggests that Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities may partially reject or accept the Chinese norms depending on whether they adopt a localisation or a globalisation model. For example, Feng sees that Xi'an-Jiaotong Liverpool University leans towards the localisation model and combines the joint features of the two parent universities, while UNNC finds itself closer to the globalisation model and 'adopts a British liberal arts education model' (p.474).

In my opinion, UNNC has not completely abandoned the norms of Chinese universities, nor has it fully adopted British liberal arts education. UNNC's educational philosophy is named Boya Education, coined by the first president, Fuija Yang, as a creative adaptation of liberal arts education to the Chinese context. Boya Education has been essential to the establishment and development of UNNC, and has had a profound influence on the students. It has been emphasised in most of Yang's writings and speeches given to students at both the university entrance ceremony and the graduation ceremony, and is frequently mentioned in UNNC publicity materials, including official websites and newspaper interviews. During my fieldwork at UNNC, this concept and related terms also emerged in many students' interviews, indicating a wide awareness and probably also a strong influence on university culture and students' collective identity. Therefore, a brief introduction to Boya Education at UNNC is a useful starting point to understanding the cultural atmosphere there. In reviewing Yang's work on Boya Education, I noticed that there are three main sources that he frequently referred to: 1) the prototype of 'Liberal Arts Education' in the Western context; 2) the ancient literatures of *ru* (founded by Confucius, and probably the most influential school of traditional Chinese philosophy); and 3) the key literatures/speeches of CPC leaders.

To begin with, Yang borrowed many concepts from Western liberal arts education. It is mainly characterised by: 1) critical thinking; 2) moral and ethical character; and 3)

using knowledge to improve the world. Yang's interpretation agrees in principal. In Chinese, the character of *bo* signifies comprehensiveness and that of *ya* means elegance and moral integrity. Firstly, with *bo*, Yang believes that Boya Education needs to offer comprehensive knowledge, encompassing social and natural sciences, both from the East and the West, from the past to the present. He connects this principle with the ideas of Jiabao Wen, the sixth Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. Yang quoted from the preface of Wen's book (p.8, quoted in Yang, 2015, p.183): 'An outstanding personnel should be the one who performs well in various fields [...] so that one can see relatively and think reflectively, so that one can create new knowledge and invent new things.' Yang (2015) also states that the fundamental purpose of education is to serve nation-building purposes, to achieve 'the development and prosperity of the nation'. Secondly, *ya* connotes the virtues of humanity in the broadest sense. This is closely related to the 'moral and ethical character' in the original concept of liberal arts education. The motto 'Human beings first, Professionals second' was engraved on the board in front of a tree planted by Year 2012 graduates (Yang, 2015, p.40). In Yang's book, the criterion of *ya* is deeply rooted in *ru*. Especially in *Lunyu* (a collection of the quotations of Confucius), the value of *Ya* was raised to the highest level. Generally speaking, this concept values virtue in personality more than anything else; only after the possession of all good features as a human can one start to pursue the study of knowledge.

In order to achieve both *bo* and *ya*, Yang (2015) emphasises that it is important to encourage students to think critically, to be student centred, and to encourage extra-curricular activities. This coincides with what Zhang and Kinser (2016) have described as rejecting the norms practised in other Chinese universities. In distancing himself from some of the common norms of Chinese universities, however, Yang still pays attention to upholding patriotism as the principle, by specifying:

The first responsibility of all higher educational institutions is to cultivate high-quality citizens *for the country*, leading every student to developing values and outlooks of life, having ideals, having faith (2015).

Through the creative conceptualisation of Boya Education, Yang manages to adapt Western education (liberal arts education) to the contemporary Chinese context with

wide social awareness (New Confucianism), which is also aligned with the CPC and demonstrates UNNC's correct political orientation. This resembles certain features of 'Marxist New Confucianism', which connects nationalism with neo-traditionalism. As a result, the residential school (perceived by Yang as one of the signatures of liberal arts education), Chinese Culture Courses (including courses on both traditional Chinese culture and party-related ideological and political education), and CPC branches widely embedded amongst the staff and students, all somehow manage to co-exist on campus. I argue that this philosophy plays an important role in the sustainability of UNNC as the first Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University with relatively high levels of autonomy.

However, the understanding and practices at UNNC do not always agree with Yang's original intentions. For example, the Centre for Research on Sino–Foreign Universities at UNNC has published many interpretations and findings about UNNC education, probably aimed at increasing public understanding of this young university and serving image-building purposes, representing an official stand to the public. One publication (Hua et al., 2009, p.3) addressed the importance of mastering both cultures, with a surprising twist towards commercial value where students are addressed as consumers, which contradicts the second principle of *ya* and Yang's overall description of *Boya Education*:

For the Chinese students, they are studying in the UK, *purchasing* first-class, good-quality educational services at relatively low cost; for the foreign students, they are studying in China, also at a relatively low cost to *purchase* first-class, good-quality educational services.
(My translation)

It should be noticed that, although this article emphasised the importance of the comprehensiveness of knowledge in both cultures, the underlying reason is the expectation in students' minds when they pay for this service. Students are supposed to be good at both cultures because the product is designed that way and they have paid for it; they are perceived as consumers of Western education, rather than learners or citizens. In an interview with Xu, Yang (2015, p.89) clarified that the 'cultivation of personal quality is far more important than the teaching of technique (my translation)'. Again, my research into the UNNC official publications of the Centre for Research on Sino–Foreign Universities shows contradictory results. There

is even one publication entitled: ‘High-quality employment should become the value orientation of university education’ (Shen and Yu, 2010). In the main body, this article only uses high employment rates as indicators of ‘high-quality employment’. This seems to disagree with the original idea of Boya Education. These contradictions foreshadow UNNC students’ doubts and complaints about UNNC Boya education in their interviews, which I will explore in the empirical chapters 6–8.

4.3 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have introduced UNNC as the first Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University in China, with an emphasis on the uniqueness of the Chinese context and of the UNNC case. Unlike most other social contexts, where the development of TNE is mainly driven by neo-liberalism, in China it is the state that plays the decisive role, with the goal of developing a sustainable, equitable national economy. Thus, CFCRS is developing under centralised control according to a top-down plan, and is integrated into the macro national plan for development alongside many other projects (e.g., the Belt and Road Initiative). To a certain extent, China’s macro-control is beneficial for redressing the imbalances and inequalities that have emerged in development, both domestically and globally, but simultaneously it has cost the autonomy of Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities in various respects and to different levels. Nevertheless, we need to bear in mind the specific socio-political context of China, where policies may lag behind practices, which is informed by a spirit of experimental governance, and where there are many ‘unwritten rules’ allowing space for interpretation and negotiation by both local government and universities. In this context, UNNC as the pioneer, although it remains tightly controlled politically by the CPC, has gained full autonomy in academic affairs and other aspects, particularly during its early years of establishment. As a creative approach, Yang’s adaptation of Boya Education has largely facilitated the localisation of Western liberal arts education to the Chinese context with widespread social approval and in compliance with CPC ideology. The implementation of Boya Education, however, does not seem to be consistent, and this requires further exploration. All of these considerations have a profound influence on UNNC

students as a unique case. This is what led to the methodological decision to perform a single case study, which will be further explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Researching Students at a Transnational Campus: Methodological Considerations

The unique features of UNNC have fundamentally informed the methodological design of this study, which will be at the centre of the discussion in this chapter. To recap, this research aims to understand Chinese students' in-situ experiences at a UK transnational educational institution and the consequent implications for their socio-spatial mobilities. To this end, what kind of methodological design would be appropriate, both for the *case* in its particular context and for *me* with my unique positionality? Addressing this question, I explain in this chapter how my methodological design has been informed by grounded theorising and shaped through a constant dialogue between the empirical data, the extant literature, and my creative imagination. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section introduces fundamental considerations about methodology and positionality, laying out the framework for a qualitative ethnographic case study by an insider-outsider researcher. The second section then explains the choice of particular methods used to generate data, mostly ethnographic observation and interviews, alongside some use of documentary analysis. The third section reflects upon the process of data analysis, with a focus on how various forms of data generated through different methods were integrated together in the analysis in line with the aforementioned methodological stance. Finally, I close this chapter by highlighting post-research reflexivity.

5.1 Fundamental considerations: Methodology and positionality

In this first section, I address the fundamental standpoints of my research, including a focus on ontology, epistemology, and researcher positionality. Informed by 'grounded theorising' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I have constantly come up with new ideas based on the existing data, which then guided my subsequent data collection strategy, and this process went on in a spiral way to the final theory presented in this thesis. The central axis of this spiral, then, is a clear methodological stance consisting of ontology, epistemology, and positionality. During the entire process of research design, data generation, and data analysis, I have been constantly

reflecting upon my original methodological stance in order to retain the focus of this research. I will elaborate on this in the following sections.

5.1.1 Methodology: An ethnographic single case study

In the field of TNE research, as I have explained in Chapter 2, there is both 1) an empirical gap, i.e. insufficient research addressing student experiences in their own voices in relation to the unique spatiality of IBCs, and 2) a methodological gap, i.e. inadequate qualitative ethnographic studies of these phenomena. In fact, these two gaps are interrelated; the empirical gap can be addressed through contributions to the methodological gap. A qualitative methodology reveals both the unique texture of the spatiality of a TNE campus as well as the weave of transcultural campus life, and brings the students' experiences and imaginations to the fore. This is because, as Mason (2002, p.1) points out, qualitative research celebrates the 'richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity' of data; instead of looking for a general picture or the average pattern, qualitative researchers put more weight on analysing and explaining 'how things work in particular contexts' (ibid.).

In the particular context of this study, the richness of the space and the diversity of students' spatial experiences intersect and extend beyond the boundary of the geographical place to intersect with transnational social space through imaginative mobilities. As I have explained in the previous chapter, I agree with the new mobilities paradigm (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 2006) in challenging the ontological distinction between people and places. Instead, I see the TNE space as mutually constitutive of the students within it; I perceive the material immobilities on campus as moorings for students' physical and imaginative mobilities. I understand students' identities as relational to the places, people, and cultures around them, which are all constantly both 'travelling' and 'becoming' (ibid.). I also consider the aforementioned TNE experiences taken together as empirical facts that could influence their physical international mobilities in the future. Following this, to recap, my main research question is:

To what extent and in what ways are Chinese students' socio-spatial mobilities affected by their in-situ experience at UNNC?

In Chapter 3, this main question has been broken down into three aspects:

- 1) *How are transnational mobilities enabled at the immobile UNNC campus?*
- 2) *How do Chinese students negotiate their (imagined) community at UNNC?*
- 3) *How and to what extent does Chinese students' experience at UNNC affect their cosmopolitan outlook and competence?*

It can be seen from these research questions that in-depth interpretations are needed of diverse material, social, and cultural dimensions, which will probably be nuanced and highly contextual. Therefore, an active engagement by the researcher with both the people and the place is essential, during which process the researcher needs to be constantly reflexive and to consciously allow for flexibility in both choosing the approach and explaining the findings. Thus, the methodology needs to be qualitative in nature, following a combination of ethnographic and interpretivist approaches. The answers to the research questions above, I argue, can be generated from a combination of long-term immersive 'first-hand experience' at the campus through *participant observation* (Atkinson et al., 2003, p.55), and a situated interpretation of students' own accounts of what they have experienced through *interviews*, based on a qualitative *case study* because the researched phenomenon is not only contingent upon but also intertwined with the context (Yin, 2014). Primarily owing to the uniqueness of UNNC, as I have explained in Chapter 4, I chose to focus on a single case rather than multiple ones. Additionally, I also have a unique personal relationship to UNNC as I have studied and worked there for five years in total. This gave me insider information as well as easier access, which will be explained later. Overall, UNNC resembles what Yin (2014, p.52) describes as an 'extreme case', which better suits a single case study approach.

Not only do all of these methods suit the nature of qualitative inquiry, but they also integrate with each other both ontologically and epistemologically. It may seem as though the last two sub-questions focus on students' experiences and their own accounts while the first one does not; however, as I have described in the previous chapter, in this thesis place is perceived as subjective and mutually constitutive with people. The empirical realities experienced by students are critical to the ontological

position of this thesis. The mobilities and immobilities of the case study intersect with the experiences and imaginations of the students. This also leads to two other considerations of method. Firstly, I conducted a documentary analysis of research publications produced by the university, their propaganda material, social media coverage, etc. Nevertheless, all of these serve as background information and my analysis in the remainder of the thesis is mainly focused on students' perceptions of these documents. Secondly, my insider-outsider status plays a constructive role in the design and implementation of these methods. I will reflect upon this in the next section.

5.1.2 Positionality: From insider/outsider to insider-outsider

Debates about the impact of a researcher's individual identity often focus on whether or not the researcher sharing characteristics with the study participants necessarily leads to better knowledge (Heath et al., 2009). As Fay (1996, p.9) has asked: 'Do you have to be one to know one?' Insider research refers to instances where researchers conduct research with the social group to which they also personally belong on the basis of their shared characteristics (Gair, 2012). Epistemologically, it relates in part to 'standpoint approaches', which assume that insiders are privileged in creating knowledge about that group with 'a more complete and less distorted knowledge of the social world' (Heath et al., 2009, p.40). Furthermore, some supporters believe that insiders enjoy a privileged research position in qualitative research, especially when self-disclosure is allowed to the participants (Perry, Thurston, and Green, 2004). In general, it is widely agreed that researchers can benefit from their insider status in the sense of having better awareness of the lives of the researched groups, which enables them to engage participants more easily and to gather a richer set of data (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Griffith, 1998; Kanuha, 2000; LaSala, 2003).

However, the advantages of insider status have been challenged in many ways. For example, it may raise issues of 'over-identification', 'over-rapport', and 'going native' (Glesne, 1999). In fact, insider researchers have long been haunted by the difficulty of separating the researcher's personal experience, feelings, and ideas from those of the researched (Kanuha, 2000), and hence they are often confronted with

problems of undue bias (Serrant-Green, 2002). Moreover, when sensitive topics are involved, the blurred boundary between the researcher and the researched may cause severe ethical problems: if the participants consider the researcher to be a friend, a counsellor, or a mentor, they tend to risk over-disclosure of more than they are comfortable with (Birch and Miller, 2000; Watts, 2006).

Therefore, some qualitative researchers value outsider research for its relative emotional distance, whereby taken-for-granted practices are more likely to be questioned (Chawla-Duggan, 2007; Gasman and Payton-Stewart, 2006; Raby, 2007). Many scholars have echoed the advantages of outsider research by contributing various cases in which outsider researchers have shown superiority to insider ones through asking 'naive' questions and noticing features of data that may be overlooked or taken for granted by insiders (Hellawell, 2006; LaSala, 2003).

Nevertheless, none of these benefits can completely outweigh the counter-arguments, whereby outsider researchers are considered incapable of accurately understanding or representing the experiences of the researched (Hayfield and Huxley, 2015). This problem is particularly salient when research is conducted with marginalised groups (Bridges, 2001; Pitman, 2002), including the young people whom this thesis concerns. In particular, TNE students are under-represented in the current literature. Hence, some researchers, although advocating outsider research, call for attention to maintaining the necessary psychological and social relationship between themselves and their participants (Bridges, 2001).

Given the methodological dilemmas on both sides, Glesne (1999) urges qualitative researchers not to hide behind the mask of rapport or the wall of professional distance. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) agree by pointing out that the aforementioned drawbacks and benefits are not exclusive to any particular side. They suggest that outsider researchers are not necessarily immune from personal bias, whilst they are also able to 'appreciate and adequately represent' the researched participants (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.60). Therefore, a binary approach to insider/outsider research is 'overly simplistic' and should be replaced by 'a dialectical approach that allows the preservation of the complexity of similarities and differences' (ibid.). It is correctly pointed out that researchers' identities are never fixed; they are often relative and

constantly changing according to the research topic, the time and place, and the personalities of the researched; even the significance of certain characteristics which are relatively stable, such as gender and race, vary depending on the context (Mercer, 2007).

This leads to the position of this research, as suggested in the subtitle, which is insider-outsider research rather than insider/outside research (a hyphen rather than a slash). I was a member of this cultural group: I did a four-year undergraduate degree at UNNC; I also worked there for a year as an assistant research fellow. During the fieldwork, at least technically speaking, I was formally accepted by UNNC as a visiting PhD student. All of these features made me a member of this cultural group, i.e., an ‘insider’. However, I am an insider in the past tense. I am an insider because I was *one of them*, but at the same time I am also an outsider because I *was* one of them. Therefore, one of the most important questions for me in the field was: how can I conduct research as an insider-outsider, mediated by many other characteristics such as gender, class, etc., so that I can move back and forth between the insider and outsider positions, minimising the drawbacks while maximising the advantages? That is to say, I was seeking to expand the ‘researcher-researched relationship’ by employing ‘strategies for researching at the hyphen of insider-outsider’ (Kanuha, 2000, pp.443–444). This hyphen bridges the gap between insider and outsider; but instead of a ‘path’, it should better be considered as ‘a dwelling place’ for researchers (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.60). This is also where the research topic and the research position of this thesis conjoin and coincide: the space in-between. That is, it is a space of ambivalence, paradox, and ambiguity, accommodating the coexistence of conjunction and disjunction.

5.1.3 Endnotes

At the end of this first section, I invite you to take a moment to think about Cubism; for example, the famous works of Picasso. In depicting one subject, he simultaneously integrated multiple perspectives with a projection of his own imagination. I feel that my methodological design is very much like this. Materials, social relations, and cultural ‘-isms’ (e.g. cosmopolitanism) are not naturally observed from the same perspective and are buried in abundant contextual

information. As a qualitative researcher, I have selected these three aspects based on my knowledge and imagination, and present them on the same canvas to be perceived simultaneously by the audience, whereby inconsistencies emerge and tensions are created. Meanwhile, the same story is told: it is a story about a group of imaginative travellers from immobility to mobilities. In common with most oil painters, I started with a plan, then put some pigment on the canvas, then I distanced myself to observe the painting from afar to see how the whole picture looks so that I could make changes if needed. Through constant distanced observation as an outsider and close-up reworking on the painting as an insider, I have been working on my theory throughout the entire process, from research design, to fieldwork, to data analysis, and even in the writing of the drafts. The process may be concealed beneath the final layer of work, but this does not make it less essential.

Bearing the bigger picture in mind, in the next section I will explain how different methods are used together in this research and how they are constantly informed by the aforementioned methodological considerations.

5.2 Practical considerations: The methods

In the previous section, I have explained the underlying methodology of my research and my positionality as the researcher. Together, these features have framed the kind of knowledge that can be produced and by what means. In the following sections, I will introduce the practical matters that arose while I was deciding upon and implementing the methods, which have been constantly informed by my methodology and positionality. I will roughly divide these ‘messy methods’ (Law, 2004) into ethnographic observation and interviews, although they actually have inherent overlaps which will be reflected upon in Section 5.3. As one aspect, immersive ethnographic observations, both online and offline, were used, informed by an ethnographic approach. As another aspect, interviewing was employed as one of the main methods to collect data following an interpretive approach (Walsham, 1995), whereby I can illuminate TNE students’ own voices, which are sorely lacking in the current literature, and gather valuable insights by drawing upon their own situated accounts. Combined together, these two methods enabled me to generate

rounded and contextualised data relating to both the participants and the sociocultural setting.

5.2.1 Ethnographic observation

An ethnographic approach serves my research purpose by enabling a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973), and contextualising an interpretivist account of the hybrid transnational space of the overseas branch campus in relation to the social actors within it. I stayed in Ningbo for fieldwork for seven months, from August 2016 to February 2017. However, only after 28 September was I officially permitted by the UNNC ethics committee to conduct my fieldwork research (see appendix C, b). As a result, my fieldwork on campus lasted for six months. I arrived at UNNC with my Ethics Approval Form authorised by the University of Manchester, but was informed on my arrival that I also needed to go through the ethics review process at UNNC. However, UNNC did not have the authority to carry out ethical examinations on students from other universities. To solve this dilemma, I had to first register as a visiting PhD student at UNNC, sponsored by a School or Department, and supervised by a member of UNNC staff. Only after all of these procedures was I able to go through the ethics clearance process of UNNC, as a UNNC PhD student. Eventually, I found my temporary co-supervisor at the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies (SCCS), who also happened to be the chair of the ethics committee of SCCS. As a result, my fieldwork on campus was conducted following the research ethics guidelines of both UNNC and the University of Manchester (for ethical approvals please see appendix C).

That being said, my ethnographic observation had started before I formally entered the field with ethical approval. Owing to my insider status, I had existing contacts at UNNC, and I had been following some public accounts of UNNC on WeChat. During my time waiting for ethics approval, I participated in two UNNC activities as an alumna. The first one was an official gala organised by the UNNC Alumni Association, where I met some of the UNNC officials and informally discussed the purpose of my visit and my expectations of the ethics approval procedures. The second one was a much more intimate party taking place at a Bar called ‘Z-Life’ near UNNC, where I met some new UNNC friends, including two of my future

interviewees, James (year 3, Finance and Accounting) and Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade). James initially mistook me for a first-year student, and was very surprised to find out that I was actually a visiting PhD. These kinds of personal contacts before the formal research process began gave me a background that benefited the next stages of my formal research.

Due to ethical considerations, none of the information gathered during these informal talks was used in this research. Those who orally consented to be my interviewees on these occasions were asked to reconfirm their intentions after the ethical clearance, and were given information sheets and invited to sign consent forms before the interview. However, this one-month ‘waste of time’ benefited me as a researcher and was also beneficial to my research. As a researcher, I felt more intimate with this community in the sense that my memories of studying and working at UNNC had been refreshed. I started to establish relational and emotional bonds with the *present* UNNC. I also re-established my understanding of UNNC students, including their appearance and behaviours (e.g., the brands they were wearing, and the language they were using, which was a constant shifting between Chinese and English), the ways in which they interacted with each other, and the things that were bothering them that frequently popped up in their conversations (e.g., discussions about applying for further study, complaints about some professors being too harsh), etc. This informed my research, and my interview questions in particular. Although I did not use any of this preliminary information to directly contribute to the content of my research, it updated my understanding of what would be most interesting to explore, and what might be less relevant to the current situation.

After gaining ethical clearance, I started my fieldwork on campus. A ‘deep hangout’ at UNNC provided me with valuable multidimensional insights into students’ experiences on campus, most of which were recorded using photographs and fieldwork notes. Most of the time, my observations started at the physical and sensory levels, with what I saw, heard, smelled, and tasted. For example, sometimes when I was wandering on campus, I overheard people talking in different (or mixed) languages or saw someone eating Chinese dumplings with a cup of Western coffee. These observations not only provided me with information about the spatiality of

this social space, but also contextualised and conditioned my interviews with participants. Direct observations were made throughout my fieldwork, including observing the physical environment of UNNC, the daily activities and dressing styles of students, even including the immediate situation of interviews. All of these observations provided additional information about the research topic and were recorded in the form of photos and fieldwork notes.

As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995, p.48) have astutely pointed out, ‘all ethnographers have to resist the very ready temptation to try to see, hear and participate in everything that goes on’. It was not possible for me to observe every place all the time, nor was it necessary. Rather, there are ‘particular salient periods’ and ‘junctures’ in every field, and a selective approach that pays particular attention to these ‘crucial times’ can lead to data of better quality owing to a better allocation of time for observation, recording, and reflection (ibid.). In the present study, based on my insider experience of this cultural group, I identified three special time periods before fieldwork that deserved special attention. Namely, the Postgraduate Graduation Ceremony (important to university life), Christmas (important to British culture), and the Spring Festival (important to Chinese culture). These three events created a scene in which Western and Chinese cultures collided, mixed, and merged in a more intensive way than is usual in everyday life and which benefited my observations.

I participated in the Postgraduate Graduation Ceremony and the Christmas Show, to ‘perceive reality from the viewpoint of someone “inside” a case rather than external to it’ (Yin, 2014, p.117). Thanks to my insider status, I was allowed to enter the auditorium and take a seat for the Graduation Ceremony, even though I was neither a student graduating on that day nor a family member of any graduate. I also bought a ticket to the Christmas Show by showing a valid university ID. As for the Spring Festival, most Chinese students left university to reunite with their families during that period. Therefore, I arranged a visit to the student dormitory to observe their festival decorations instead. I chose No. 13 student dormitory as an embedded case and took photographs of the decorations on students’ doors and in the corridors. It is worth noting that this dormitory is for female Chinese students only. According to the university’s policy, as a woman I was unable to gain access to the male

dormitory. Similar restrictions are also experienced by students, and will be addressed in Chapter 6. Among all the other female dormitories, I chose No. 13 because of its accessibility to me, owing to my two-year experience of living in it as an undergraduate.

Given the focus of my research question, this shared experience in the same space was rather important. In addition to the common merits of ethnographic approaches, sharing the same physical and virtual space with my research participants, and also sharing the mobilities among and within these spaces, facilitated my understanding of the participants' accounts of their spatial practice. In short, in this case, the *means* by which I carried out my research was also integral to the research *per se*. I was granted access by UNNC to most of the spaces accessible to the participants, including physical places on campus and virtual spaces online through a PhD student IT account. For the physical places, I was permitted to enter most of the university buildings a UNNC student could enter. Moreover, it is no less important that I was also *forbidden* access to certain places due to being a female Chinese student (e.g. dormitories for both male students and international students were off-limits to me). UNNC gave me an office in the Academic Area and every day I had to go across the bridge to travel to the Living Area to eat, together with other UNNC students. For the virtual space, using my IT account, I was able to access Moodle, the UNNC intranet, and even Google via Edu-roam, which is otherwise inaccessible in China. In these ways, I too embodied the spatiality and (im)mobility of the campus together with my research participants, which was important to my research findings.

The shared virtual space extends beyond university life. Informally, I 'friended' all of my participants on WeChat. Most of them also agreed to make their 'moments' (posts) visible to me for research purposes, which enabled me to carry out observations online similar to digital ethnography⁷. Digital ethnography (also called virtual, online, or cyber ethnography), is an ethnographic data-collection method that adapts traditional ethnographic approaches and theories to online space in order to

⁷ WeChat allows the user to choose whether they want certain friends to see their moments and whether they want to see certain friends' moments.

examine the culture of online groups (Hine, 2000; Murthy, 2008). If digital ethnography is used in a balanced combination with physical ethnography, it enables the researcher to de-marginalise the voice of the respondent and provide a ‘fuller, more comprehensive account’ (Murthy, 2008, p.849).

There are two kinds of account on WeChat: the personal account and the public account. I interacted with my research participants and observed their interactions with each other via their personal accounts. These are used to share personal moments and feelings, and are only available to friends with relatively high levels of privacy. Due to ethical considerations, the information posted on their personal accounts was *not* used in this research. Nevertheless, having access to it helped me to establish deeper and multi-dimensional understandings of my interviewees; thus, I was better able to produce contextualised interpretations of their words as well as to discover creative inconsistencies between their online and offline behaviours.

I also analysed the content of public online accounts. In contrast to private accounts, these are designed to spread information to all of their followers and potentially aim to have public influence. I identified three different types of public account: 1) accounts registered by individual students (e.g. Sad Jokes, a student account sharing personal opinions of the owner’s daily observations on campus), 2) accounts registered by student societies/organisations (e.g., UNNCSU, the official account owned by UNNC Students’ Union, the posts of which included information about events organised by the Students’ Union, official responses to students’ appeals, and introductions to its staff members), and 3) accounts registered by UNNC officials (e.g., the official account of the UNNC recruitment office, which is dedicated to the image-building of UNNC by, for example, posting stories of successful students, alongside explanations of its recruitment policies). Most of the posts made on these accounts allowed for comments by their followers. These spaces assumed certain functions quite similar to the public sphere, where UNNC officials, student organisations, and individuals openly shared opinions that were closely relevant to campus life, and responded to others.

Observations in these spaces gave me valuable insights into public events and public opinions that were otherwise difficult to see on campus. I followed discussions on

public issues in these accounts in order to keep myself well-informed and reflexive. For example, as I will discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, one description which is key to UNNC students' understanding of and sense of belonging to their community is the value of 'critical thinking'. In their discussion of 'critical thinking' in their interviews, 'the Flowertime event' was mentioned several times. This was a conflict that occurred at a café on campus named 'Flowertime' between the students and the shop owner, who was also a graduate of UNNC. It had been widely discussed across campus and people started to pick sides. As I was well-informed via the content published by all parties, I was able to have a holistic understanding of the general situation before listening to the personal opinions of individual interviewees. Often, although the events themselves were not directly relevant to the research topic, my participant observation online facilitated my interpretations of the accounts given by interviewees of other, more relevant topics.

Online/offline integrated interactions also granted me access to shared social space with the students. As a result, I was able to observe them from a different perspective in a different social setting from interviewing, in which I could also play a valued role within their social group. For example, they had an online discussion group that mainly focused on cultural analysis. One of the key members was an interviewee, who encouraged me to follow the WeChat account and to pay attention to their offline activities. One evening, I joined their offline discussion about 'labelling', which was held in the Students' Union Shop in a very informal way over pizza and soft drinks. I did not feel that I was being treated as a researcher during this encounter. Instead, I was welcomed into an interactive and equal discussion in which I was regarded as a senior student who had similar reading and learning experience. Although the topic was irrelevant to my research, the discussion itself was conducted in a very personal way and hence gave me a multidimensional understanding of the current student body. For example, some of them complained about Foucault being overly difficult to understand, while others argued that it was their English that was problematic rather than Foucault; a solution would be to buy Chinese translations instead. Then another student disagreed, arguing that there were many untranslatable words such as 'sexuality', and even if you managed to understand it in Chinese, that would not help you in the exam, which would be delivered in English. This argument was then criticised by others, who said that learning should not only be

about the exam. This small episode contributed to my understanding of sub-research question 2) about their struggles between the Chinese and the foreign, and question 3) particularly in terms of their English competence and cosmopolitan orientations. My interview guidelines were also informed accordingly.

In this section, I have reflected upon my ethnographic observation, including the means by which I aimed to produce thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) and grounded knowledge, as well as my efforts to make these descriptions and knowledge more accountable with a ‘fallibilistic’ spirit (Seale, 1999, p.6), i.e. accepting that any of my situated knowledge may be revised by further observations or from a different viewpoint. I did not simply divide this section into ethnography and online ethnography because I want to downplay the boundary between online and offline space, as much as the boundary between physical and imaginative mobilities. These observations, both online and offline, provided me with various entry points to my next stage of interviews, and profoundly informed my entire research process. It what follows, I move on to reflect on the interviews I conducted with the participants on campus, ranging from brief, informal conversations to carefully planned, semi-structured interviews, which provided the main sources of insight into the students’ experiences and accounts in this research.

5.2.2 Interviews

Formally speaking, the interviews I conducted on campus covered a variety of forms: many informal interviews, eight structured interviews, thirty semi-structured interviews and three unstructured interviews. In this section, I will focus on reflecting upon the thirty semi-structured interviews and the three unstructured interviews, as they were the main sources of data used in the final analysis and were conducted following strict ethical procedures. Meanwhile, other forms of interviews were either conducted beforehand, as background information or as part of the recruitment process, or as an integral part of my participant observations.

After ethics clearance, I started to have informal conversations on campus. Two informants from these informal conversations offered great help with my later recruitment of interviewees. One of them was the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the other was the Acting Head of School of International

Communications Studies. They agreed to forward my interview invitations to their students. Those who responded became my entry points to the student group. Then, at the end of each interview, I asked the interviewees to recommend his/her acquaintances and friends at UNNC according to my immediate research needs. To illustrate, if I thought I had interviewed too many students from the Business School at the time of an interview, I would ask that interviewee to recommend someone from another school. The reason for asking at the end of each interview was that, by then, I could expect a higher level of rapport, which would make it easier for me to ask. It also turned out that, in some cases, interviewees enjoyed talking with me and took the initiative to ask if I would also like to talk to their friends. Possibly because they saw me as an insider, participants tended to trust in my good intentions to improve perceptions and public understanding of the researched group. As mentioned in Section 4.1.1, until the very recent quality-assurance stage, public opinion of CFCRS students had been overwhelmingly negative, similar to the ‘failing young people’ in the case of Hong Kong TNE. Hence, UNNC students might also have the desire to ‘rectify social misconception’ (LaSala 2003, p.18). This made them more motivated to help but could also potentially colour their storytelling. Additionally, I directly approached several participants based on my personal social network, especially when recruiting staff participants. As a result, I recruited thirty informants for semi-structured interviews at UNNC.

It then became clear that I had been mainly using theoretical sampling in order to ‘gauge the multiplicity and singularity’ presented in the chosen case ‘in its full diversity and uniqueness’ (Orne and Bell, 2015, p.69). Most of the interviewees in this research were selected in non-random ways, i.e., purposively, in order to ensure that data potentially useful to the research question could be represented. That is, according to my theoretical understanding of the research questions, I decided that certain categories of individuals may provide unique, informative, or important perspectives on the research questions and as such their presence in the sample should be ensured (Mason, 2002; Trost, 1986). In doing so, ‘the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his [or her] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his [or her] theory as it emerges’ (Coleman, Glaser, and Martin, 1978, p.36). Therefore, theoretical sampling worked perfectly with semi-structured interviews in generating grounded theory. Throughout

the semi-structured interviewing process, I was constantly adapting my interview questions for subsequent interviewees based on my previous interviews; following up on recurring patterns in participant data, and asking key informants to provide more information on categories essential to the emerging theory. This research does not aim to achieve statistical generalisation. However, in order to ensure the credibility of the sample, it was still necessary to maximise the key demographic variables that were likely to have an impact on participants' perspectives on the topic (Patton, 2002). I decided to cover three variables that mattered to a student's views: gender, year of study, and subject of study.

As the notion of 'place' matters to this research, I encouraged the students to choose their favourite spots on campus for interviewing, and I initially intended to take the nature of their choices into consideration in my analysis. All of my interviews with staff were conducted in my office, which possibly gave them a feeling of equality and reminded them of my status as a former co-worker. In contrast, when it came to student participants, I tried to offer informal options in cafés or canteens on both the Chinese and the British sides, and left it to the students' own preferences. That being said, many students still preferred offices due to concerns about confidentiality. As a result, I did not carry out much analysis on their choices of interview location.

Before the semi-structured interviews started, I conducted a pilot interview to test my interview guide. I was able to improve the guide based on the experience of this interview, but it also went through further adjustments and was gradually built up after each interview. The interviews covered seven topics (For the full guide, please refer to Appendix B):

- Basic information about student life
- Perspectives on UNNC and being a student at UNNC
- Habits and interests
- Choosing UNNC: reasons, before, and after
- Perceived difference between UNNC and other universities in China
- Perspectives of British culture and Chinese culture

- Future plans and belongingness

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the main data collection method. Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted, including twenty-seven with UNNC students, and three with UNNC staff members (two of which were UNNC alumna). The topics were linguistically and culturally sensitive; for example, there were questions about their English competence or questions that required specific cultural terms that only exist in Chinese; the students' proficiencies in speaking English also varied. Hence, all of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' mother language, i.e. Chinese. All of the interviews were audio recorded and most of them lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. This method enabled the interviewees to talk relatively freely, which was essential for understanding their subjective perspectives on their understanding of themselves, the social space they lived in, and how they made sense of both (Hopf, 2004). It encouraged the students to tell of their own experiences, to express their emotions, and to reveal their own interpretations of practices in their own terms, without being mediated by structured questions pre-set by the researcher.

Semi-structured interviews also allowed me to generate useful information with respect to theoretical propositions through following a roughly similar format in each interview, whilst leaving enough space for divergence (Esterberg, 2002). Thus, this method was able to accommodate a detailed, precise description and examination of students' experiences and perspectives (Patton, 2002). By following a general guideline, the interviews were kept focused, which to a certain degree avoided low efficiency in data collection as well as consequent difficulties in data analysis.

The semi-structured interview phase consisted of two main stages: student interviews and staff interviews. Whilst interviewing staff members might at first appear to be beyond the scope of a project focusing on student perspectives, it should be noted that two of them were UNNC graduates and one was a researcher at the Centre for Research on Sino-Foreign Universities. They were thus able to provide valuable information in relation to the research questions. Also, one of the staff interviewees worked for the Students' Affairs Office, and had good knowledge of student activities, including preparations for the Christmas Show. So, this informant

was also employed as a source in combination with the participant observation of the Christmas Show.

Three unstructured interviews were conducted to deepen my knowledge of certain topics raised during the semi-structured interviews. This data collection method is advantageous for its great flexibility in pursuing information in any direction, hence allowing the researcher to access a wide breadth of information beyond expectations (Patton, 2002). In the semi-structured interviews, two subjects came to my attention when the informants were describing their daily activities: one was a student organisation called 'Diversity', which aims to promote diversity of sexuality on campus; the other was a student-led project named 'the Integration Project', aimed at improving the level of integration between domestic students (from mainland China) and foreign students. Both societies seemed relevant to an exploration of national and cultural identities. However, it would have been inappropriate to just shift focus during the semi-structured interviews, from the informants' self-disclosure, to the information about these two societies.

Therefore, after all of the semi-structured interviews were completed, I made contact with relevant people and conducted extra, unstructured interviews to gather information about these two societies. Given the newly emerged topics, it was a better choice to allow the key informants to talk freely rather than deciding themes for them based on my inadequate previous knowledge. For example, in interviewing the informant on 'Diversity', I simply invited this student to talk about the events they had organised, the people they had worked with, and what they had found most memorable or interesting. In doing so, I was able to understand the structure and purpose of the society, as well as this individual's account of it in great depth.

5.2.3 Complementary data: Documentary information

Prior to the fieldwork, I carried out policy and archival research to familiarise myself with the policy context of TNE in China, a context which has had a profound influence on the establishment and administrative structure and regulations of UNNC. This knowledge informed my research design and my interview guide. Sometimes documents can also be 'contradictory rather than corroboratory' to existing evidence (Yin, 2014, p.107), or even between themselves. For example, the

official website of UNNC has two language versions. However, rather than mere translations, the English version and the Chinese version sometimes tell different stories, presumably because of their different target readerships, given the different agendas of the UK and China, as indicated in Chapter 4. The politics underlying this difference required further exploration in the interviews.

5.3 Data analysis

In this section on data analysis, I do not distinguish between the analyses of fieldwork notes, photos, and interview recordings. The purpose is to present the interaction between data analysis and data generation from various sources as constantly dialectical, which is ‘at the heart of grounded theorising’ (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995, p.160). In what follows, I will explain how I processed data generated from individual methods and how I strategically integrated them together, as informed by my ontological and epistemological stance. I focus on the following questions: What kind of data can the method(s) yield in relation to which research question(s)? How did the methods feed into each other and integrate both logically and intellectually?

To begin with, my translation of interview data from Chinese to English could be problematic: was it a translation or an interpretation? All of the interview recordings were transcribed in Chinese first, based on which several rounds of coding were also conducted in Chinese. Only after I had started to draft the findings did I start to selectively translate the coded part into English. I cannot claim that these were ‘pure’ translations. Language is not merely a medium; rather, in many cases the medium is also the message (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). I believe it carries meanings, of the original social context, of the speaker, and even of the translator. My supervisors also commented that they could hear ‘my voice’ in those translations. However, to a different degree while in a similar vein, my research is the same as my translation: both of them consist of my situated knowledge. Eventually, as a qualitative researcher, I aim to produce ‘if not objective, then honest and open research’ (Dean, 2017, p.33). I tried to always bear in mind that the research was about giving voice to the research participants, instead of making arguments that could be personally appealing to me. Also, as one advantage of being an insider, I shared a similar

discursive context with my research participants, and hence was arguably better able to make contextualised translations than outsider researchers. However, this also required me to be more careful not to take my presumed meanings for granted. Hence, in translating, my sources were actually not limited to the interview recordings. They could also include my fieldwork notes on the day, my observations of the interviewees, etc. In this way, I made efforts to get closer to the original intentions of the interviewees, and to make my research more accountable by constantly being reflexive and contextual.

The subsequent analysis of the interview data was not straightforward and also required constant consideration of my ontological and epistemological stance. Essentially, before I could begin my analysis, one question was arguably inevitable: what do these interview data mean to me and to my research? For example, there have been methodological debates which pit interview data against observational data, drawing a distinctive boundary between ‘what people say they do’ and ‘what they actually do’. Nevertheless, ‘how do you know if your informant is telling you the truth?’ is not the right question to ask (Atkinson et al., 2003, p.121). Rather, interviews and ethnography have their own explanatory strengths in revealing people’s attitudes and behaviours, respectively; however, as I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, I do not consider them to be essentially distinctive, nor do I believe that ‘the truth’ can be found in observations but not in interviews.

Practically, it is difficult to separate interviews completely from ethnography. As Lamont and Swidler (2014, p.157) maintain, ‘interviews often entail observation, and ethnography usually entails interviewing’. For example, the speech act and performances of interviewees are also important data to be included in observations. There have been cases where what I observed in the interviews, in terms of body language, complemented what the interviewees made clear verbally. For instance, when the interviewees said, ‘I don’t know’, some of them really looked confused and stared at me, while others looked reluctant while playing with their fingers or hair. There have also been inconsistencies between their words and behaviour. It sometimes seemed similar to what Jerolmack and Khan (2014, p.178) have argued, that ‘what people say is often a poor predictor of what they do’. For example, there were cases in which the interviewees were complaining about other students being

‘utilitarian’ and only using UNNC as a springboard for further study at a world-leading university with a good ranking without exploring their own interests, such as opening their own businesses, yet at the same time they were asking me about how to maximise the use of their current grades to get into a higher ranking university.

Rather than turning into doubts about the value of the interviews, though, it would be more constructive to understand that the interview data should not be simply regarded as proxies for actions in the first place. Heath et al. (2009, pp.88–89, emphasis in original) remind us of the inappropriateness of applying ‘accuracy’ here as a criterion on the grounds that all interview data are ‘*representations*’ rather than ‘factual’ accounts. Instead, as qualitative data, they should be considered in terms of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), or whether they are ‘plausible’ and ‘credible’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1998). Interviews can be read as perspectives; in addition to the information to which they refer, it can also tell us more about ‘who produced them’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, pp.125–126). In the previous case, it could be possible that the interviewees did not approve of the utilitarian values, while they also felt desperate about getting into a better ranking university as their only way out because they felt stuck between the Chinese and foreign educational systems. Therefore, interpretations of data collected during interviews should be made in the context of, and in relation to, other sources of data outside the interview room.

My use of photographs as a fieldwork tool required similar considerations. Less obviously, photographs also, to a certain extent, consisted of my situated knowledge, as it was me who decided what to include and how to compose the images. Although in this thesis I have not carried out thematic analyses of the photographs I took for their focus on students’ experiences and voices, the process of taking them was already for me the process of making sense of the objects I observed. Tinkler (2013, p.11) advocates a ‘reflexive approach’ to using photos in research, as the researcher necessarily shapes the data they generate. The researcher therefore needs to embrace ‘critical self-scrutiny’ (Mason, 2002, p.7). In analysing my research data, I therefore regarded my fieldwork pictures as a ‘visual diary’ rather than a ‘visual record’, because the photos were ‘the unique result of the interaction of a certain researcher with a specific population using a particular medium at a precise moment in space

and time' (Prosser and Schwartz, 1998, p.123). Furthermore, the photographs themselves can be generative as they could suggest 'new ways of seeing and thinking' (Tinkler, 2013, p.125). Take one of my fieldwork photos as an example (Figure 5.1):



Figure 5.1 A shot of the clock tower taken from the Chinese garden

In taking this picture, I was deliberately creating a tension, emphasising the cultural clash between Britishness and Chineseness. I could have taken a picture that only included the Chinese pavilion, writing more about how Chinese cultural symbols have been emphasised on a British campus; or I could also have taken a picture focusing only on the British clock tower, making arguments about Western cultural imperialism in China. Instead, I chose to take the photo in the way described above, as I have been reflexively informed by the data generated from my participant observation and my interviews with the students, whereby I made a personal choice to show my contextualised interpretation.

A final practical matter that emerged during the data analysis process was choosing pseudonyms for the participants. In this research, all of the pseudonyms are English. They were decided in two ways. Firstly, I invited the interviewees to choose their own pseudonyms according to their preferences, as long as the pseudonyms would

not make them identifiable. Some of them said they had no clue and asked me to choose; some of them just quickly picked their preferred ones based on various different criteria. Vera (Master, International Communications Studies), for example, picked the name because she always liked it. Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies), quite differently, made the decision and said: ‘Are you surprised? I think nobody would relate this name to me.’ Regardless of the reasons, though, all of the names decided by the interviewees were English names. Thus, for those who had difficulties deciding, I also picked English names in order to be consistent, whilst trying to reflect the meaning of the characters in their Chinese name. This is the reason why there might be some uncommon names. For example, the name ‘Arian’ (meaning golden life) was chosen because the original Chinese name contained characters meaning ‘gold’.

5.4 Reflexivity

Having reviewed the entire research process, from design to implementation to analysis, it is important for me as a qualitative researcher to take a reflexive stance, to step back and look at the whole picture of my research from afar, to question my prejudices, habitual actions, and any ethical problems that may have been incurred by my methodological decisions. I am not claiming that reflexivity should be a final stage *after* research; rather, it is important to always bear reflexivity in mind *during* the research. Nevertheless, this final section highlights reflexivity in a more integrated way in relation to the following aspects: positionality, ethics, and leaving the field.

From the very beginning, my ‘insider-outsider’ status has informed my research design. I have anticipated the potential influence of my research positionality in Section 5.1; now, I am going to reflect on the actual issues that emerged during my research. My positionality has particularly affected my interview design and implementation. For example, in designing the interview guides, after the first question about basic information, such as a student’s subject and year of study, I was able to naturally build common ground with the interviewees by simply asking: ‘what is your favourite course?’ or ‘who is your favourite tutor?’ Because of my insider status, I could easily echo interviewees’ feelings and experiences when they

talked about their favourite course or complained about unpopular tutors. As it turned out, I was familiar with most of the topics which emerged in their responses, including a professor who famously delivered the most boring lecture ever by trying to present 100 PowerPoint slides in a two-hour lecture. Having conversations in a more interactive manner during the first couple of minutes of the interview helped me to establish instant rapport with the interviewees. Also, as a UNNC alumna, I am more familiar than an outsider would be with the types of issues at stake when investigating the factors affecting participants' lives, which contributed to a better-informed interview design, i.e., to asking the right questions (Labaree, 2002; LaSala, 2003). For example, one of my interview questions explored collective identities and relational belonging:

There is a saying that 'UNNC students can identify themselves outside campus, even if they don't know each other personally.' Have you heard of it or had a similar experience yourself?

This question was clearly based on previous knowledge. Otherwise, it would probably have taken several interviews for this theme to have emerged by itself, and only then with luck.

However, insider research also caused problems. On many occasions, when I asked questions about issues where the interviewees (often correctly) believed I knew the answer, they did not finish their sentences, or stopped responding altogether. Instead, they used eye contact, looked me deep in the eyes and responded 'you know...' with a meaningful smile. This happened a lot, especially when sensitive topics were involved. I did enjoy and appreciate their trust; however, I had to push them to talk in their own words as it was essential to the research purpose. Instead of contributing to the data, finishing their answers according to my own assumptions would possibly prejudice the data with researcher's bias (Kanuha, 2000). Additionally, insider researchers tend to overlook interesting data because they take things for granted (Perry et al., 2004). This is where an outsider view becomes extremely valuable. In my case, in addition to my own reflections, this view was also provided by my supervisors. As an international team, my supervisors were also contributing their knowledge of UK education by questioning my taken-for-granted understanding of what would be 'normal' in a Chinese university and in my understanding.

My insider-outsider status also had implications for research ethics. For example, in collecting interview data, my insider status increased the interviewees' self-disclosure to me, probably to a greater extent than they would have felt comfortable with to an outsider. However, also because I was one of them, I was more aware of (and shared) participants' interests and concerns and tried to keep their priorities at the top of the agenda. In particular, it has been pointed out that in participatory research on young people, who are in a less powerful position than older adults (especially when confronted with senior researchers), peer research is crucial for the production of valid knowledge – that is, 'research *by* young people *on* young people' (Heath et al., 2009, p.40). Moreover, Hellowell (2006) suggests that the more resemblance researchers have to the interviewees, the more likely they are to have empathy and implicit understanding. In this research, ethical considerations were prioritised over methodological ones, because it focused mainly on the personal experiences and feelings of young people, who were potentially vulnerable to mental harm. For example, as a study which is grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, use of mobile methods, such as walking interviews, would have been ideal. However, as the campus is small and I had actively participated in campus life, walking interviews may have compromised interviewees' confidentiality and anonymity because both the participants and I may have been recognised by their acquaintances.

All of the interviewees were recruited voluntarily. I paid particular attention to the relatively less powerful position of the participants, not only as young people, but also as Chinese students who had long been educated in highly hierarchical student-teacher relationships, as compared to those in egalitarian traditions. As mentioned before, I asked two high-ranking UNNC staff to send invitations to their students. Given their important position in the university administrative system as Dean and Head, it was possible that the students might feel obliged to respond to their e-mails. Considering this, I phrased the invitation in an informal way, with my personal WeChat account added. I also made it clear in the message that it was an *invitation* from me and merely distributed by the staff, instead of a *requirement* demanded by the department. This minimised the pressure to respond, but might have contributed to sampling bias. Those participants who responded to my invitation were arguably those who were more

willing to understand the world outside their daily lives, and willing to contribute to knowledge even if it was not relevant at all to their transcripts or CVs. This may, for example, have affected their answers to questions like ‘motivations to go to UNNC’.

After acceptance, all participants were informed of the research objectives, data collection methods, the expected duration of interviews, strategies to protect their identities, potential use of interview recordings, their right to withdraw at any stage of research, etc. All of these issues were outlined in an information sheet that was given to each interviewee prior to the interview, with my verbal explanations if required by the participants. All participants involved in the semi-structured and unstructured interviews were also asked to sign a consent form.

Pseudonyms were used in all of the interviews to protect participants’ identity, particularly to avoid any potential harm. For instance, some students expressed negative opinions of UNNC and its staff, and some confessed very personal reasons as to why they chose UNNC over other universities that may not be encouraged by mainstream values (e.g. to avoid long-distance love relationships). In addition to pseudonyms, I also tried to make any given response unidentifiable with a given respondent, either by inferred identity or by hidden identification (Babbie, 1998). There were informants in possession of a combination of attributes that made them identifiable, and those attributes were not mentioned in this thesis (e.g. one interviewee said that he transferred his major twice from A to B to C). However, there was one exception: the president of the Students’ Union of UNNC. Because the information s/he provided was otherwise either not accessible or unreliable, I asked for his/her permission to waive confidentiality and have received his/her consent on the recording. In practice, though, I was still a bit concerned, so I split his/her identity into two: s/he was both the president of Students’ Union when s/he was talking about student affairs, and an ordinary interviewee with a pseudonym when s/he was talking about personal matters.

Exiting the field can also be problematic, which is often neglected but actually deserves more academic attention. As Brewer (2000) correctly pointed out, there are issues associated with ‘exiting the field’ that are as critical to ethnographic research as issues of ‘getting on’ in the field, including both physical removal and emotional disengagement. In fact, ‘exiting the field’ was a pertinent issue in my present study for three reasons. Firstly, it is research on young people by a young person (aged between 18 and 25). Both the research participants and I were at the stage of engaging in the active negotiation of our own identities (Pascoe, 2007). I internalised my experiences in the field and carried them with me even after exiting the field. Secondly, in my case, this was the first independent study to which I have ever committed myself, hence a greater attachment may be expected. Thirdly, I had a strong personal attachment to this research site. The second and third reasons, unsurprisingly, deepened my emotional engagement with the field. The interviewees frequently asked for my understanding, approval, and emotional support during the interviews. For example, a homosexual interviewee revealed that his/her motivation to study English was to go abroad, to somewhere where homosexual love is approved of, and gay marriage is allowed. The emotional and verbal response from the researcher, either acceptance or judgement, could mean a lot. Such kinds of trust, in turn, also made me care more and strengthened my ties with the field, making it even harder for me to exit from the field. As for the last interview question, which is not included in the attached interview guide: ‘Thank you. Now, do you have anything to ask me?’, the most frequently asked question was about advice on life plans. They wanted to know what their lives might be like in a few years’ time. Some of them kept in contact with me and kept asking me questions even after my fieldwork. The aforementioned homosexual interviewee has started to apply for postgraduate study overseas and has been asking me questions on WeChat. As an ‘insider-outsider’ researcher, I may never have really entered the field, but I also may never be able to fully exit from the field either.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reflected upon the considerations that have shaped the methodological design of this research. Firstly, at the foundational level, the empirical realities experienced by students at the case study campus were critical to

my ontological position, hence requiring active engagement with both the people and the place through ‘first-hand’ experience and situated interpretations. It was therefore designed as a qualitative ethnographic study based on a single case, also owing to the uniqueness of the case itself and its connections to me as an insider-outsider researcher. Secondly, at the practical level, this study has incorporated both online and offline ethnographic observations with interviews, both semi-structured and unstructured, and with some use of documentary data. Thirdly, the generation and analysis of the data have been constantly informing each other, alongside a continuous dialogue between fieldwork data, the extant literature and my interpretation and imagination. Thus, informed by grounded theorising, data analysis has been pursued in an ongoing, spiral process, of which the central axis was the aforementioned fundamental methodological stance, which has been frequently informed by reflexivity. Throughout the entire research process, ethical considerations were prioritised with a personal moral intention of empowering the research participants. Although the research was designed for the particular case of UNNC, I argue that it still carries a certain generalisability to raise cross-contextual resonances in researching IBC students through ethnographic and interpretative approaches. This is because the potential of mobilities is moored to the immobilities embedded in the unique spatiality on campus, and the unique values and challenges of TNE are hidden among the diverse voices of the students themselves.

Chapter 6 Space in Imagining

In this first empirical chapter, I shall start with what is immediately observable and explore the various interdependent modes of transnational mobilities that are moored and enabled, imagined and desired at the immobile case study campus. In this way, I aim to build a bridge between the students' corporeal immobility and their imaginative mobilities. As I argued in Chapter 2, a central factor in existing critiques surrounding the value of TNE is its 'immobility', which is believed to come at the expense of its participants' embodied encounters with a foreign environment (including the material environment, social encounters, and cultural experiences) as well as the international (corporeal) mobility that is otherwise enabled through INE. Therefore, this chapter will focus on these two key points and investigate alternative proximities and movements to foreignness at the case study site that are made available to TNE students in their campus lives. By so doing, I will address and unfold the first research question as follows:

How are transnational mobilities enabled at the immobile UNNC campus?

- 1) How are transnational imaginations enabled by the material space?
- 2) What are the consequent implications for the imaginative space, and Chinese students' proximities and movements to this space?
- 3) How do we understand the immobile case study campus and the in-situ students within it from a perspective of mobilities?

This chapter will be divided into three main sections. Section 6.1 explores the place and the spatial imaginations it enables, and section 6.2 focuses on the people and the imaginative space they create, offering answers to sub-questions 1) and 2) respectively. Section 6.1 illustrates the uneven spatiality of the case study campus in terms of layout, the north bank and the south bank, and the bridge in between. In depicting these different areas, I focus on how material space has provoked spatial imaginations in relation to various modes of transnational and transcultural mobilities in different, sometimes contradictory, directions. Section 6.2 shifts the subject from place to people, from spatial imagination to imaginative space. Shaped

by both their spatial imaginations and their predispositions, the students create their own imaginative space which overlays the material space. In everyday spatial practice, the imagined and the material spaces may reinforce or subvert, sometimes overlap, sometimes negate, each other. The students then develop a sense of ‘our’ and ‘their’ space – a sense of belonging and not belonging – in their perceiving, experiencing, and conceiving. The findings in sections 6.1 and 6.2, combined together, will provide an answer to sub-question 3), which will then be elucidated in section 6.3, in which I propose UNNC educational space as mobile and UNNC students as imaginative travellers.

6.1 Place and its spatial imaginations

Material environments and objects are able to offer certain ‘affordances’ that are both objective and subjective, deriving from their reciprocal connections with participants’ kinaesthetic movement within a particular spatiality. As Urry (2007, p. 51) revealed, ‘given certain past and present social relations then particular “objects” in the environment afford possibilities and resistances, given that humans are sensuous, corporeal, technologically extended and mobile beings.’ These ‘possibilities’ and ‘resistances’ afforded within materiality are therefore constitutive of spatial practice and spatial imaginations in terms of mobilities. For example, in our case, it could be the bridge that draws people to walk across it, or the clocktower that facilitates imaginations of British culture, while the river between the Living Area and the Study area encourages people to draw a distinctive line between their academic and personal lives, and overall the multi-cultural campus fosters cosmopolitan ways of being (and potentially, belonging). It is therefore crucial to explore the important role of material space at UNNC, which distributes people, objects and activities in and through time-space, enabling and/or constraining mobilities in various forms, in relation to the spatial imaginations it affords with imperceptible but long-lasting influence on the UNNC students. This section is divided into three sub-sections. It starts with an overview of the campus plan (6.1.1), followed by respective explorations of the Academic Area (6.1.2) and the Living Area (6.1.3).

6.1.1 Overview

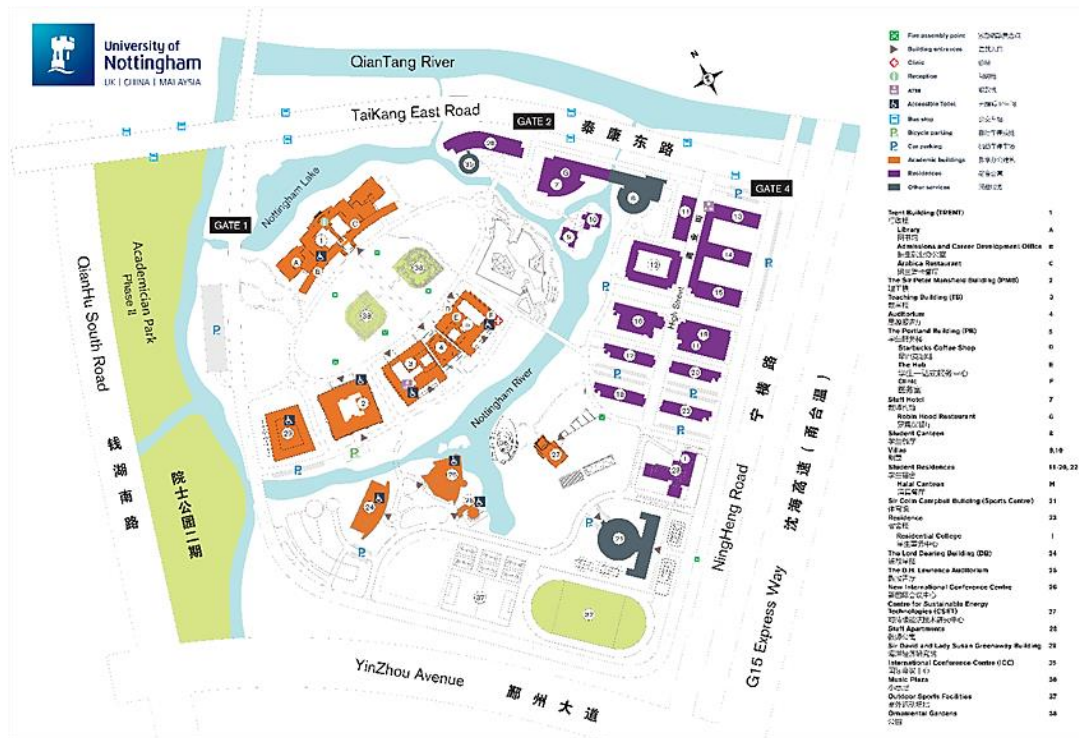


Figure 6.1 A map of UNNC

Source: UNNC official website www.nottingham.edu.cn

UNNC is located in the South Higher Education Park, an area rather remote from Ningbo city centre. There are four gates controlling mobilities between the campus and the surrounding space. It is a university policy that everyone going on and off campus must be granted access before entry. This has made this campus a rather closed community with significant autonomy and a certain degree of separation from the outside space, which was already remote from the urban area, with an enforced feeling of distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘in’ and ‘out’, ‘the campus’ and ‘the rest of the world’. This pulls the participants away from the Chinese urban space while pushing them towards the manufactured transnational campus inside. This feeling is intensified by the architectural style on campus, which is distinctively different from its surroundings.

In order to understand the unique spatiality of UNNC, it is essential to first understand its geographical features and the accompanying implications for social relations. Above is an official map of UNNC (Figure 6.1). It can be seen from this map that most of the academic buildings (i.e. the orange ones) are distributed on the north bank of the Nottingham River, while most of the residential buildings (i.e. the purple ones) occupy the south bank, together with other living facilities such as car

parks, outdoor sports facilities (No. 37), and student canteens (No. 8). Officially, the north bank is named ‘the Academic Area’ while the south bank is ‘the Living Area’. According to these assigned functions, students arrange the spatial practices of their everyday lives, during which process each side also acquires and thickens its distinctive spatiality.

6.1.2 The Academic Area

In this section, I introduce the ways in which transnational mobilities and materiality converge in the Academic Area and thus enable spatial imaginations across time and space. I will start with an analysis of how materiality in this area offers proximity and movements to various interlocking, and sometimes overlapping, transnational spaces, from UNNC, to UNUK, to the tri-campus of the University of Nottingham, to UK educational space and multidimensional social space, and ultimately to the cosmopolitan world. On that basis, I further explore how materiality affords and reproduces social relations, and particularly student–teacher relations, in a transcultural context. By way of an end to this section, I acknowledge the contradictory attempt to localise this campus within a Chinese sociocultural context, which leads us to the next section of discussions about the Living Area.

To begin with, the core values of the UNNC community were engraved in the Academic Area. The walls of the Trent Building of UNNC are decorated with quotes in English from previous UNNC students (Figure 6.2). One of my interviewees helped me to track down one of the alumni who contributed to the quotes. He confirmed to me that those quotes, although written by the invitation of the faculty office, were his own words without modification; but he was not in a position to know whether all the quotes provided were put on the wall, or only a select few.

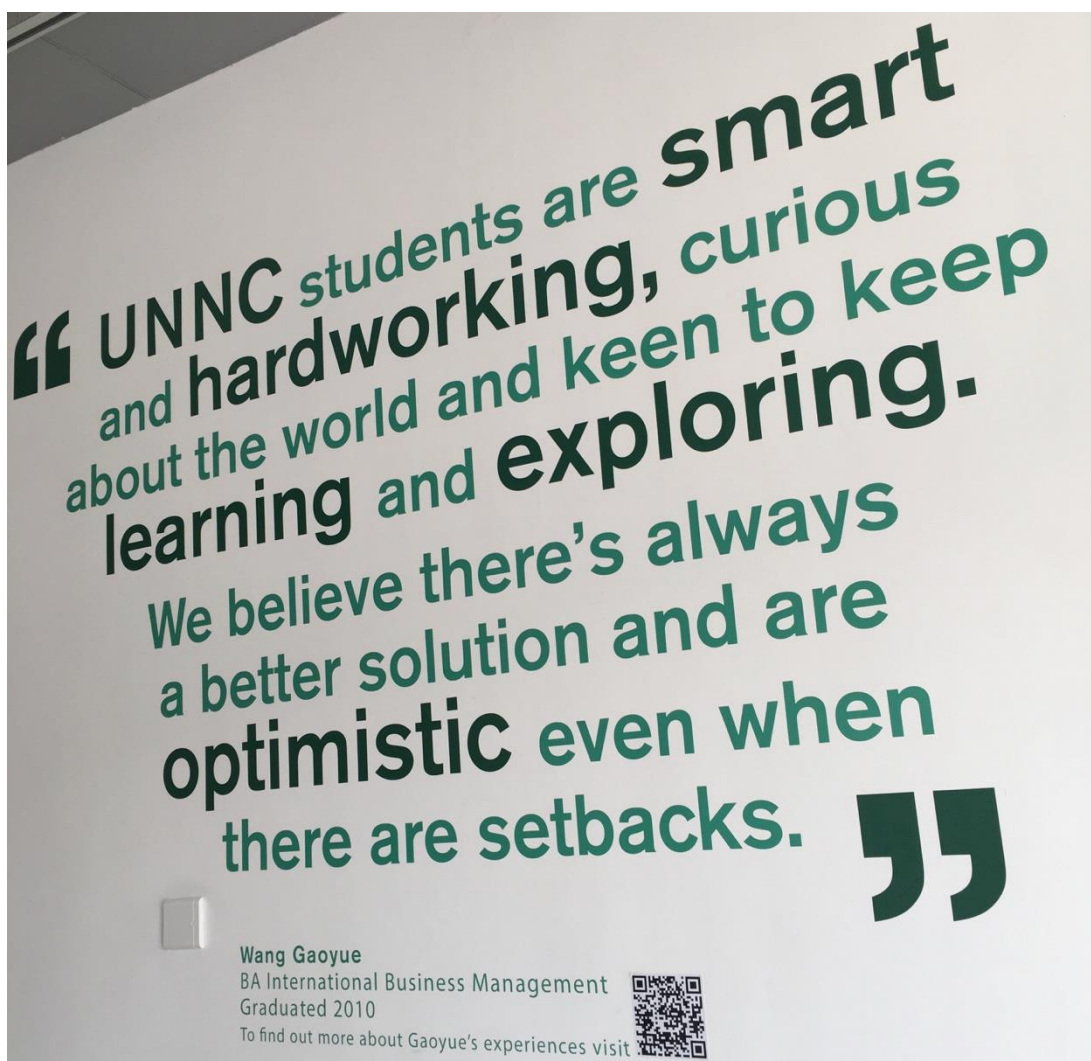
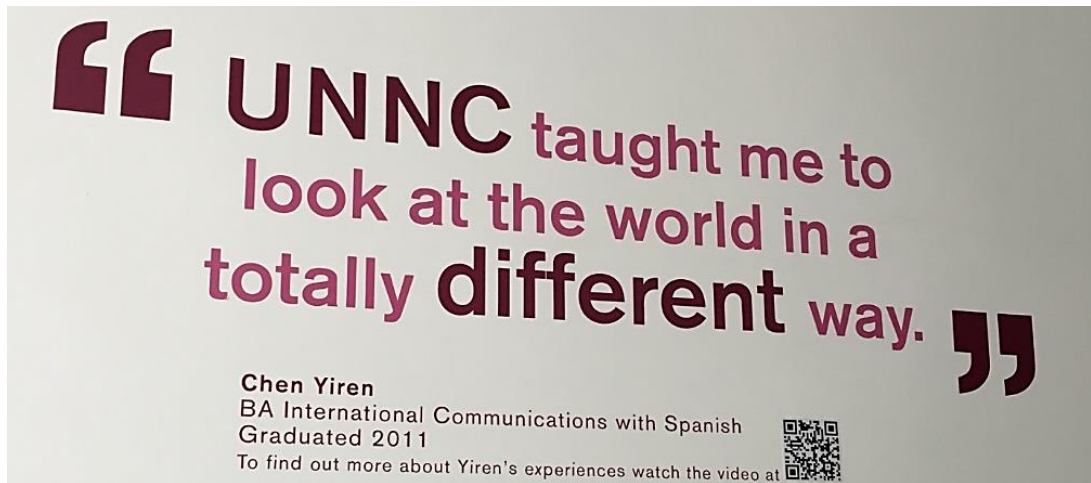


Figure 6.2 Examples of the students' quotes on the wall of the Trent Building

Other quotes located in obvious spots (near/facing the entrance, stairs, or other frequently visited areas) are selected below:

Unbelievable inspiration comes when students from all over the world sit around a table, discussing and communicating freely. (Hnag Qiang, MSc International Business, Graduated 2008)

The four years I spent at UNNC taught me independent thinking. (Jiang Yangyun, BA International Business Management)

At UNNC, teachers won't tell you what the 'correct' answers are. They'll encourage you to investigate and solve problems. (Tang Jin, BA International Business and Communications Studies)

My education at UNNC made me who I am now. (Zhang Qian, MA International Studies, 2008)

Three key messages can be read into these quotes. First, UNNC experience can be life-changing in a positive way. Second, UNNC fosters a cosmopolitan community (or, as the university slogan puts it, the spirit of being a 'global citizen'), both in terms of cosmopolitan orientations (e.g. being 'curious about the world') and competencies (e.g. 'discussing and communicating freely' with international peers). Third, UNNC students are able to think critically, in contrast to the norms promoted in many Chinese universities. By verbalising these invisible values and thoughts, and integrating them into the physical environment, the university is promoting the preferred cultural values of the UNNC community and passing them on to their successors. On their way to the library, waiting outside tutors' offices, or rushing to submit their assignments, on countless occasions students have to pass by or stand next to these quotes, consciously or unconsciously receiving the messages from their alumni and imagining the UNNC community with reference to these preferred images.

In addition, transnational imaginations about UNUK were also carefully planned in the Academic Area. Many of the buildings are designed according to a prototype on the home campus. The clocktower, the most iconic of these, looking very striking in a Chinese context, is a scaled-down version of the Trent Building on the home campus. In recent years, UNNC has implemented an even more explicit approach. When this university campus was first established in 2004, the buildings were named according to their functions, e.g., the Trent Building was named the Administrative Building (AB). However, in celebration of its ten-year anniversary, UNNC decided

to make a change and re-named these buildings after the corresponding buildings on the home campus. For example, ‘the Portland Building’, which I mentioned at the very beginning of this thesis, was previously called the Student Service Building (SSB). In this way, UNNC deliberately encourages transnational imaginations and shared experience across campuses. As these changes had been made very recently during my fieldwork time, the students still habitually used the original names in the interviews. Therefore, to be consistent, from now on I will use SSB and AB to refer to the Portland Building and the Trent Building respectively.

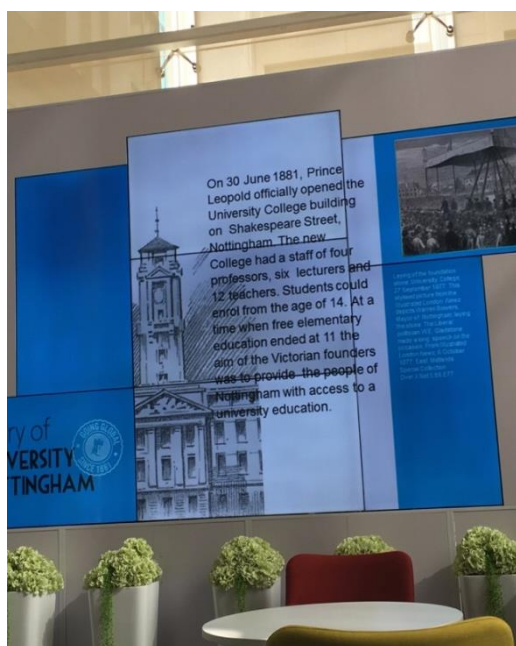


Figure 6.3 (left) The history of the University of Nottingham



Figure 6.4 (right) The Trent Building on the Malaysia campus

Moreover, in building an imagined community across the tri-campuses of the University of Nottingham, transnational media images have been integrated into the material environment to encourage imaginations across time and space. In constructing shared cultural roots across time, the historical origins of UNUK are advertised in major buildings, such as the AB (Figure 6.3) and the New Teaching Building. In addition, Robin Hood is an important heroic figure of Nottingham the city, and his stories have also been widely spread across campus: his stories can be found in text, his sculpture is on campus, and a university hotel is named after him.

In connecting imaginative geographies across space, residents are constantly reminded of the existence of all three campuses of the University of Nottingham. There is also another IBC of UNUK in Malaysia, also with a similarly designed Trent Building (Figure 6.4). UNUK makes sure that images, not only of the home campus in the UK but also those of the sibling campus in Malaysia, are circulated at UNNC. This enables the students to feel that, in addition to the Chinese campus where their bodies are located, there is also a tri-campus shared space of the University of Nottingham, to which their imaginations can extend.

Furthermore, object and virtual mobilities also contribute to imaginative movements to a shared UK educational space. UNNC has its own library with entire English academic book collections directly imported from overseas, some of them from the home campus (which can be told from the library stamps on the books). These books are otherwise difficult to obtain in China, and are usually 10 to 20 times more expensive than domestic books. Inter-library loans are available to UNNC students, and in this case they can be extended to international loans – some books can be ordered on loan from the home campus in the UK. As for the virtual space, in the Academic Area, UNNC students enjoy access to various UK databases and e-libraries by using a UK Federation Login via Edu-roam, just as their peers can do on the home campus (Figure 6.5). All students from the UK, Chinese, and Malaysian campuses submit their assignments to Moodle.ac.uk, where they can see different turn-it-in-UK entries with the icons of their own national flags.

Accessing electronic resources

Most of the library's electronic resources can be accessed on and off campus.


When accessing e-resources on campus via University network (excluding student residence area and Staff Hotel), there is no login required.


When accessing e-resources off campus, **Shibboleth login** is required for most of our e-resources.


Shibboleth login also called "Institutional Login", "UK Federation Login" and "Login through your university" etc. It asks for UNNC username and password.


Please see the examples below.

Quick links

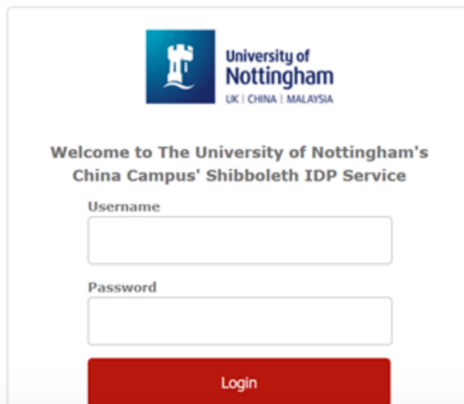
Search NUsearch 

Subject resources 

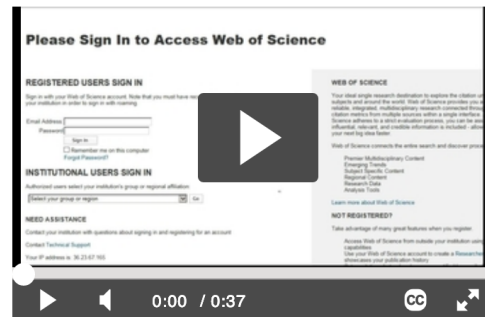
Frequently Asked Questions 

Access Method for Sage Journals 

Situation 1: directly pops up



Situation 2: manually sign in



Find "Sign In" area and Shibboleth/Institutional Login option

Figure 6.5 Screenshot from the UNNC official website

A multidimensional imagination of being in the UK is not only limited to the educational space, but is also implied in the materiality of the space. For instance, the Royal Wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton was broadcast here, which is also an example of the transnational mobility of information that provokes people's transnational imaginations and fosters cultural bonds to a country they have never visited. Another example is the use of sound/music. UNNC uses the bell of the clocktower on campus and plays the British national anthem on important occasions. As Duffy (2005, p.690) points out, music offers a distinctive means of analysing emotions and the consequent affect whereby it can be understood 'why individuals feel they belong or do not belong to particular communities and groups', and 'the significance of space at various and multiple levels in these sonic processes'. It is not a common practice in Chinese universities to sound the hours, let alone from a clocktower. Hence, this is also one of the new things that students encounter at

UNNC. The sound of the bell on the one hand signifies, represents, and reiterates 'Britishness'; on the other hand, it also de-territorialises the space of UNNC, and evokes images and imaginations of UNUK, which is geographically half the globe away, creating transnational emotional ties to it. Moreover, UNNC students arrange their temporal spatial practices according to this sound day by day, year after year. That is to say, this sound, probably in an imperceptible way, has been influencing the ways in which the students inhabit and interact with this very social space. On this point, it can be argued that music and sound have played an important role in negotiating the identities and belongingness of the participants at UNNC. It is a process of being, becoming, and expressing. An interesting related example is that, when the authenticity of this music was questioned, the feeling of belongingness was also challenged. Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) told me that she did not like the way some students at UNUK had criticised UNNC for being 'fake', based on the reason that 'even the sound of the clock bell is a pre-recorded mp3 format copy'.

In the broadest sense, a cosmopolitan imagination is strongly encouraged in the Academic Area. For instance, English is the only language formally permitted here, meaning that if you want to communicate with a member of staff (even if she or he is Chinese), by University rules the conversation must be in English. That being said, if informal conversations take place among Chinese students in Chinese, there is no punishment. All of the texts that can be found on the walls of the Academic Area, as well as instruction boards, are in English. Most of the key buildings resemble a Western architectural style, with a small café representing and facilitating a Western lifestyle (Figure 6.6). Previously named Aroma and functioning mainly as a coffee shop, the café is now called Arabica and functions as a bar and kitchen. Instead of a stand-alone restaurant, this café occupies one spacious room in the basement of the Administrative Building.



Figure 6.6 Café Arabica

Its special location has played a decisive role in assigning its social function and cultural atmosphere. Probably owing to the demands of the academic staff, who are mainly Westerners, this café serves freshly ground coffee and Western food, and also accepts bookings as a party venue. It is a popular choice among academic staff to catch up with each other, and probably also the main location where students go to spot their academic tutors after class. When I was sitting inside, most of the time I could hear conversations in multiple languages, mainly English, then Chinese, but also French, Italian, Spanish, Korean, Japanese, etc. Except for international megacities like Beijing and Shanghai, this ‘foreign exposure’ is rarely accessible in China. The percentage of international migrants in China is the lowest in the world, accounting for only 0.07% of the overall population (World Bank, 2015). Acquiring its multiculturalism from the social actors within, this small space also influences them in return, including those Chinese students who have never had the experience of living in a multicultural environment. Unlike the formal setting of a classroom, they get to at least observe, if not participate in, real-life intercultural interactions on a daily basis; they may or may not like it, but at least they will get used to it and internalise the cosmopolitan atmosphere as part of their lives.

In offering proximity and movements to the aforementioned transcultural imaginations, the materiality of the Academic Area also reproduces the social relations within. In the second half of this section, I illustrate how foreign social relations are reproduced transculturally through the affordance of the materiality. In making use of material objects in our everyday lives, we make and adjust spatial arrangements according to our habits until we feel at ease. Therefore, in transplanting the same spatial arrangements to a different sociocultural context, traces of our habitual movements and spatial practices are reproduced transculturally. In accordance with this, when the UK campus is ‘copied and pasted’ to China, UNNC also partially reproduced the patterns of spatial practices contained within it, which in turn to a certain extent regulates social relations and conditions the everyday lives of the new Chinese inhabitants. The aforementioned clock bell, for example, has been regulating the participants in this social space to organise their daily lives accordingly, rushing to classrooms, leaving the library, going out for lunch, etc. This is an example of how material objects within a space exert an influence on participants’ temporal use of space.

This influence is explicit in the spatial arrangements of classrooms for tutorials. It can be noticed that there is a significant difference between typical Chinese and British ways of arranging classrooms. In Chapters 2 and 4, I mentioned that education in East and South East Asian countries, under the strong influence of Confucianism, is characterised by a hierarchical student–teacher relationship, which is represented by one-to-many, top-down communication from the teacher to the students. As a result, a typical classroom in China is usually larger in size than in the UK. Similar to lecture rooms in the UK, there are usually highly organised rows of desks and chairs, discouraging many-to-many communication. At UNNC, the entire building design, including its inner spatial layout and classroom arrangements, resembles UNUK, which includes pedagogic features such as individual study and group discussion, and downplays hierarchy and authority. In everyday spatial practices, the material environment invites the students to gradually adapt to it until they feel at ease. For example, as the desks are arranged into small clusters instead of long rows, they have started to look at each other’s faces across the desks, and to get used to the tutors walking by between clusters. In this way, this spatial layout

cultivates Western pedagogies in an imperceptible way that is integrated into their everyday spatial practices.

In the interviews, students expressed a fondness for this spatial arrangement. For example, Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication) sensed ‘a style of freedom’ owing to the lack of spatial constraints at SSB.

I think the arrangement of rooms inside the buildings, including the layout inside rooms, make people feel free. Maybe our classes are also delivered in a casual manner. Also, think about the hall, the hall in SSB, it’s super liberal. Plenty of seats in an open space.

Seth (year 2, Computer Science) expressed similar feelings, giving more details about how the spatial design outside classrooms in the New Teaching Building had influenced his feelings and his learning, in comparison to his experience in Chinese universities.

It looks comfortable. I mean, the colour outside makes me feel comfortable, and creative, its inner space also makes me feel comfortable. [...] there are some small tables, with appropriate distance from each other. [...] I don’t know how to say, it just looks casual to me. [...] You know how they arrange rooms in Chinese universities, don’t you? One row of desks, and one row of seats, very organised, but makes me feel depressed.

As Seth further explained, it is true that Chinese learning spaces are generally quieter and more orderly, but he feels more relaxed at UNNC and therefore can be more efficient in his learning. Based on these reflections, it can be revealed that the spatial arrangements at UNNC, which allow greater opportunities for private space and greater freedom of spatial movement, have contributed to the overall sociocultural atmosphere. Working together with a British curriculum, the material environment satisfied most of the interviewees by making them feel ‘free’ and ‘equal’.

However, in an informal conversation with UNNC senior administrative staff, I was told that it was included in the jobs of the WEG logistics team that they had to rearrange the desks and chairs back to the Chinese way after class, because the Chinese side found it ‘more disciplined and pleasant’. As a result, when the class starts, the academic staff, who are either Western or educated in a Western context, have to organise the chairs back into clusters as they find the Chinese style uncomfortable and inconvenient for seminar discussions. Thus, this rearrangement

on both sides continues and the making and remaking of the space is always ongoing. On a larger scale, it is worth noticing that, in contrast to the mobilities and materiality that encourage transnational imaginations, there are other forces that pull the students back and anchor them firmly to China. For example, there was control over object mobilities entering China. Given the sensitivity of this topic, I only gathered information from informal conversations about the censorship of imported cultural goods. Several students told me that there had occasionally been missing pages in UNNC library books and they suspected that they had been deliberately removed owing to censorship. A British staff member, who was not included in my interviewees, had complained that sometimes his book requests were rejected for containing sensitive information.

Meanwhile, reminders of being in China also appear in the campus design. For example, in front of the AB, there used to be a vast lawn, but it is now occupied by two gardens to transmit the message of intercultural harmony. On the west side, there is a garden designed according to the Western style, while on the east side, the garden resembles traditional Chinese style (Figure 6.7). Inside of SSB, a red mailbox stands out in the environment, offering students a channel to communicate with the CPC branch on campus (Figure 6.8). All of these representations of Chinese culture and Chinese institutions have disrupted and complicated the manufactured imagination in the Academic Area.



Figure 6.7 (left) Gardens in both Western and Chinese styles

Figure 6.8 (right) Suggestion box to CPC at UNNC

However, they also make it more consistent with the Living Area, controlled by WEG, which I now move on to explore.

6.1.3 The Living Area

In this section, I move on to analyse the transnational imaginations encouraged in the Living Area. Firstly, I illustrate how the materiality of the Living Area offers proximity and movements to cosmopolitan culture in students' social and personal lives; on that basis, secondly, I will discuss the social relations implied within, taking a closer look at the various attributes of students' bodies and how these have differentiated their spatial uses, and consequently the social relations among them.

The Living Area is mainly designed to meet the needs of students to maintain a functional life on campus, given that during term time they have to live on campus and follow certain rules (they need to seek formal approval to live off-campus, and are only permitted to do so under special conditions) (Figure 6.9). At first glance, Chinese culture dominates this space. Here, students no longer have access to Edu-roam, they have to use a China Telecom cable connection instead (and hence lose access to many foreign websites, such as Google). Chinese food is served in three university canteens (now increased to four), in addition to privately owned Chinese

restaurants and grocery shops, accompanied by a Chinese post office and a Chinese bookstore along a very short but condensed high street. That being said, in most cases Chinese culture is entangled with other cultures and negotiated by transnational movements of information, media images, and objects. For example, in most cases Chinese texts are accompanied by English translations, on information boards, shop signs, regulations, and also restaurant menus. A newly built fourth canteen now serves non-Chinese food, and there you can find a branch of Subway. In the picture below, there is a shop with a billboard headed ‘UK Property’, offering a transnational service for students helping them to rent accommodation in the UK, mainly targeted at those entering exchange programmes.



Figure 6.9 A cosmopolitan environment in the Living Area

Top left: UK Property agency in the high street;

Top right: Subway on campus;

Bottom: The breakfast selection at No.1 Student Canteen

In order to complete ‘a whole English environment’ on campus, even inside the Chinese students’ dormitories many of the instructions are in English. Sometimes notices are bilingual, but some of them are English only. It seems to a bit inappropriate that even the advertisements for counselling services and safety tips in the elevators are English only; should an emergency happen, the Chinese students will need to keep calm and be able to read English in order to save themselves (Figure 6.10)

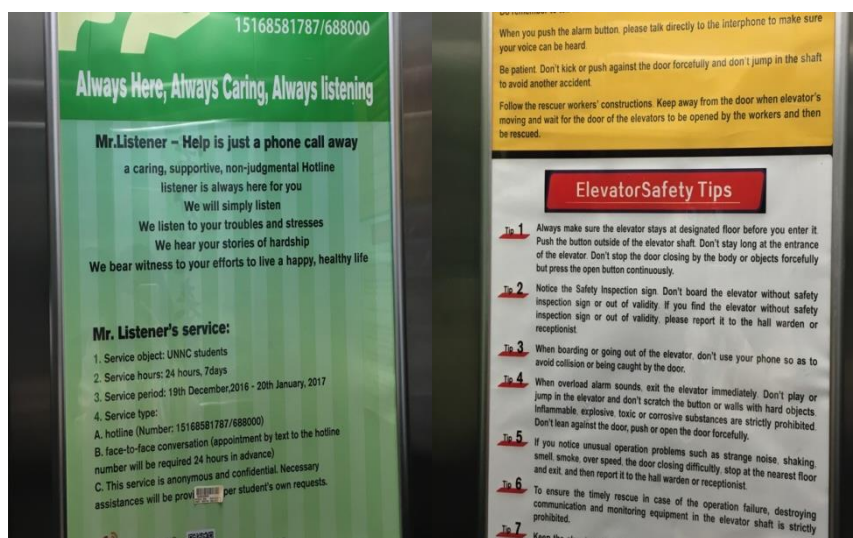


Figure 6.10 English notices in the elevator at No.13 Chinese student dormitory

Both British and Chinese histories are represented in this area (Figure 6.11). For example, there are sculptures representing the story of the Ming Treasure Voyage, in which seven far-reaching ocean voyages were successfully conducted during the Ming Dynasty (early 15th century). Representing British culture, a statue of Robin Hood together with several swans has been placed opposite this Ming Treasure Voyage sculpture.



Figure 6.11 Representations of Chinese and British culture

Left: Ming Treasure Voyage Sculpture Right: Robin Hood Sculpture

A modern international lifestyle is also sustained in this area. There was once a bar on campus selling wines and spirits from the Western world (which was shut down after student conflicts in the bar); there is also a shop on campus run by a purchasing agent making sure that international designer brands are available to the Chinese students, importing bags and clothes by Meli Melo, Boy London, Kenzo etc. upon request.

Given the general cosmopolitan impression, however, it is worth noticing that there are also cases in which spatial uses are differentiated by the students' 'bodily beings' (Hopwood and Paulson, 2012). For example, student accommodation is assigned according to their gender, age, race, and ethnicity, during which process certain identification categories of their bodies precede others in terms of the priority in sorting. As Calhoun (2003b) points out, material power can be an important element in constituting social solidarities. All international students are allocated together to one dormitory. The international student accommodation is mixed-gender, mixed year of study, mixed ethnicities, and with no restrictions on time of entry. In contrast, Chinese students are allocated according to their year of study and gender; and there used to be a curfew requiring Chinese students to be back in their accommodation before 11pm, which made the students feel that 'it's inconvenient' for them and 'unfair' compared to the international students, who enjoyed free access.

University buildings, including halls of residence, libraries, and classrooms assume functions ‘to enforce the identity of being a student’ and to isolate them from those outside ‘this institutional framework’ (Hopkins, 2010, p.188). In a similar vein, this isolated international student accommodation has the effect of attaching the label of ‘the international students’ to them, which precedes any other division, regardless of whether they are Asian students from Korea or European students from the UK. This has profoundly affected their identities, not only as individuals but also as a social group. It appears to promote intercultural communication among all of the international students, while constraining their communication with Chinese students who potentially share other identities with them, such as students of the same gender or age, which they would be more likely to identify if given a shared space.

There are alternative places for Chinese and international students to share, though, such as the playground and the gymnasium. The sports area (also part of the Living Area) is designed in a more culturally inclusive way than the residential area, where Chinese students’ favourite sports, including table tennis and badminton, are made available in the same space as more Western ones, less commonly seen in China, such as squash, Frisbee and tennis. Playing the typically Western sports that are otherwise hard to find in China with foreign others also facilitates Chinese students’ imaginings of being somewhere else. This shared space creates new possibilities for foreign encounters and is hence essential to social relations, especially between Chinese and non-Chinese students. However, it is worth noticing that there are some PE sessions that are compulsory for Chinese students; therefore, the same space may be experienced by the Chinese and international students at different times in different ways. Despite these restrictions, it is worth noting here that UNNC Chinese students still enjoy much more freedom in using living space than their peers in other Chinese universities. In China, the sharing of space is encouraged, especially in the Northern provinces, not only for saving space but also for promoting collectivist values. It varies according to different universities, but in most other Chinese universities, students tend to share more personal spaces with each other than at UNNC. For example, it is common for six to eight students to share the same room; and the shower rooms in universities, especially in Northern China, have no separate spaces for students of the same biological sex.

In this section, I have explored the unique materiality of UNNC campus in relation to the transnational imaginations it affords, and demonstrated its imperceptible but profound influence on the UNNC Chinese students. Nevertheless, it is important to note here that the constructive role of material space should not be overestimated. As Brooks and Waters (2018, p.14) point out, spaces do not ‘necessarily determine the practices that take place within them’. It is therefore crucial for this chapter to shift its subject of discussion from place to people, i.e. from the campus to the students, and to investigate their imaginative space in relation to the spatial imaginations the material space affords, which I now turn to explore.

6.2 People and their imaginative spaces

In this section, I investigate the Chinese students’ imaginative spaces by looking at how they perceive, experience, and conceive various spaces, with a focus on transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. I firstly present how the Academic–Living Area divide is perceived in their aesthetic judgements, in which most of them preferred a Western style (6.2.1); secondly, I take a close look at their sensory belongings emplaced within their university experiences, which they interpreted as beyond materiality (6.2.2); thirdly, I investigate how they conceive festival space as a representation of their cosmopolitan imagination (6.2.3). In perceiving, experiencing, and conceiving the UNNC space in relation to their imaginative space, the students also develop a sense of (not) belonging. Thus, issues of ‘whose space’ it is emerge when the control over space is challenged (6.2.4).

6.2.1 Perceptions: Western style preferred

Students have developed differentiated perceptions in accordance with the uneven material space. In the interviews, they showed affection for the Academic Area in general, while almost uniformly disapproving of the style in the Living Area. For example, Vera (Master, International Communications Studies) made it clear that the ‘UNNC campus’ should not be considered as a unity and specified that:

I like this area [the Academic Area], but I don’t like the Living Area. I really don’t like the Living Area.

Paul (year 2, Finance and Accounting) elaborated on his preference for the ‘Western style’ in the Academic Area as something ‘relatively modern and very novel’, which he had not seen in other universities in his hometown. Seth (year 2, Computer Science) also attributed his preference for the style of UNNC campus over that of other Chinese universities to its ‘novelty’.

Probably I’ve been seeing too many Chinese ones, this British style looks quite *unfamiliar* and *novel* to me.

In expressing a similar opinion, Siena (year 4, International Business and Management), Gabriel (year 2, Finance and Accounting) and Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies) explained their preference for a ‘modern’ style as being due to liking a ‘simplistic’ design.

Siena: My favourite would be AB. Then... I also quite like SSB. You know, everybody has different taste... Me, personally, I prefer this modern, *simplistic* design.

Flora: AB is very good-looking. Especially the wall. I really like architectures that have this kind of simplistic design. Looks pleasant, and also looks good on camera.

Gabriel: I like the new conference hall, I really like the design. It looks very modern. There’s no waste (of space), there are very few meaningless things, and everything useful has been used.

Sometimes the appreciation of Western style was connected to a sense of high technology. Take Grace as an example (year 4, International Communications Studies), whose favourite building was the New Teaching Building because:

It’s new. And it looks very similar to one of the buildings at the UK campus, called ‘cots...’ something, I don’t remember, very modern, has the feeling of the future, of scientific technology, so I like it.

Others who are fond of the Western style may link it to a historical vibe. For example, Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies) acknowledged the beauty of modern designs, while also commenting that:

My ideal university should be more historical... should possess the feeling of having been through a long history. I’ve been to Princeton, there were many old buildings, creating a very good, harmonious atmosphere.

Despite their different readings, students showed a uniform tendency to appreciate the styles promoted by the UK partner. The styles encouraged by the WEG logistics team in the Living Area, by contrast, were perceived as disturbing. For example, Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies) continued to say: ‘unlike here at UNNC, there [at Princeton] there wouldn’t be anything weird suddenly popping up in your view.’ By ‘weird’ he was referring to the architecture and sculptures in the Living Area. Another student, Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies), specified that the Western style of the Academic Area should represent the legitimate way for UNNC to look.

I don’t think there should be *any* buildings taller than the landmark building (the clocktower). It could be extremely annoying when filming the university campus. The landscape used to be clean behind the clocktower when you shoot, but now the buildings in the Living Area are mushrooming.

(Because the cultural style is different?)

Yes. And it’s ugly. Those brick-red walls look ugly.

By appreciating ‘the West’ and ‘the novel’ as legitimate, while perceiving landscapes that are inconsistent with this style as ‘ugly’, or ‘weird’, the students drew a boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’, whereby the imaginative space of UNNC students starts to take shape. These differentiated views imply that their imaginative spaces were mainly built upon the transnational imaginations encouraged in the Academic Area, but at odds with the spatial imaginations afforded in the Living Area that anchored them to China.

Moreover, some students did not like the architectural style in the Living Area, not because they were old-fashioned or Chinese, but because they perceived them as clumsy imitations of ‘the original’ by the WEG logistics team. It was not decisive whether ‘the original’ was Chinese or Western. Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies), for example, explained that he found the style in the Living Area ‘really weird’, and ‘terrible-looking’ because they were artificially created, pretending-to-be historical sites, such as the Robin Hood sculpture. In another example, Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) perceived the design of the Living Area as ‘overly awful’ because it was a typical Chinese interpretation of the

Western style, named *jian'ou* (in Chinese, 'jian' means simplistic and 'ou' means Europe):

In design, Chinese people call it '*jian'ou* Style'. Actually, there is no style called '*jian'ou* Style' in real Europe, nor in any other places in the world. It's a fake European style appropriated by Socialist China, so that it's called '*jian'ou* Style'.

In explaining '*jian'ou* Style', Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) used Gate No. 4, i.e. the main entrance to the Living Area as an example (Figure 6.12). Strictly speaking, neither the '*jian'ou* Style' in the Living Area nor the 'Western style' in the Academic Area was original; both of them are imitations. By claiming one of them as fake and the other as legitimate, students developed distinctively different perceptions according to their criteria for how UNNC should look. Or, more precisely, how 'the West', 'Europe', and 'the UK' are supposed to be in their imaginative spaces.



Figure 6.12 Gate No. 4

Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) also disliked the style in the Living Area, particularly Gate No. 4. But she also showed an understanding of the WEG logistics team, and explained that probably for them, this style is 'the European style'.

They [the WEG logistics team] felt more than OK. They considered it to be very chic. They said they invited famous designers to do it.

(Who is the designer?)

I would say some designers from rural areas.

‘Some designers from rural areas’ was used by Siena as a judgemental phrase to refer to a group with a low class position, and hence with ‘poor’ cultural taste. A feeling of cultural superiority can be sensed in the students’ responses, which indicates that they identify with a more privileged social class and the corresponding cultural taste. In this way, ‘*jian’ou* style’ could be understood as an attempt to imitate European style while lacking the corresponding cultural taste. Therefore, their differentiated perceptions of these two areas could also be understood from a Bourdieusian cultural class perspective. As I have emphasised in Chapter 2, class struggles are essentially classification struggles; cultural taste is not ‘pure’ or ‘disinterested’. Social actors’ possession of economic capital plays a decisive role in their class status, which is generative of their cultural tastes and a determinant of their cultural capital accumulation.

Accordingly, one’s cultural taste is supposed to be a reflection of one’s class position, which is defined by the composition and overall volume of the economic and cultural combined (Bourdieu, 1984, pp.169–175). For example, a modern style of architecture, pioneered mainly in Europe during the interwar period, is believed to express the cultural taste of the intellectual bourgeoisie (Gartman, 1998), and is therefore the cultural representation of a relatively privileged social group. What the students felt uncomfortable about here was probably related to ‘class imitation’ (Bourdieu, 1984), a group lower in class status imitating cultural taste even though they do not have the corresponding embodied cultural capital or the associated habitus to appropriate them.

Overall, students’ aesthetic preferences were distanced from the style promoted by WEG while resonating with the one encouraged by UNUK. This could be partially attributed to their affection for Western style, but is also possibly hinting at their proactive appeal to a more privileged cultural taste. Furthermore, it is worth noting here that, in addition to taste, their differentiated perceptions of the two areas were also related to their different sensory experiences and different social interactions in

these two areas, which are also constitutive and reflective of their imaginative space and consequently their belongingness, which will be addressed below.

6.2.2 Experiences: Transcultural sensory belonging

May (2011, p.131) reminds us of the importance of the senses by suggesting that: 'our sensory experiences of the sights, sounds, smells and feel of our surroundings constitute an important dimension of belonging'. Urry (2000) also agrees that the 'unmediated' senses are crucial to people's sense of belonging. During their university experiences, students develop simultaneous feelings of 'belonging' and being 'out of place', which have a profound influence on their desire for and embodiment of cosmopolitanism. As I have emphasised in section 3.1, this proximity to foreign materials is an exclusive feature of IBCs, which is otherwise not available through other forms of TNE, which will be the focus of exploration in this section.

To start with, comfort of food is important for the feeling of being at ease with our environment. When asked about their favourite cuisine, most of the interviewees preferred Chinese, or at least Asian, food over Western food. Petö (2007, p.159) emphasises the importance of food in creating national identity by pointing out the role it plays as a tie to imagined community. There were a few students who had been to UNUK as exchange students for a short while, and they told me that they had started to learn Chinese cooking very quickly because they found it difficult to get used to British cuisine and also because, in this way, they could get close to the taste they had been comfortable with back home. Several interviewees believed food was so important to them that they would take it into consideration in their future plans. For example, during the interview, Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) actually showed a strong preference for the British elements on campus, such as preferring certain buildings on campus because of their similarities with the original building at UNUK. But when asked if she would prefer to live at UNUK so that she could enjoy the original view on a daily basis, she said 'no' without hesitation because of her discomfort with British food.

I didn't enjoy the life at UNUK. I mean, I liked the campus, but I didn't like the life. I prefer to live here at UNNC because I'm more used to the food here. At UNUK, I lived in catered halls, which served me food that was really difficult to swallow.

Later on, I also asked about her long-term future plans. She said that she would definitely stay in China, and among all her other reasons, she specified the importance of the comfort of food.

I will stay in China, without doubt, because I can't survive without food.

Petö (2007) maintains that this comfort with cuisine carries collective symbolism; and people cooking and eating familiar food like this is a constant reaffirmation of their cultural identity and sense of belonging. In the case of UNNC, because the Living Area is entirely under the control of the WEG, students' daily essentials are still mostly, if not solely, bound to Chinese culture, of which food is one of the representative examples. Every day, a student may or may not go to the north bank, study in a Western-style classroom, write an essay in English, and talk with foreign others; but every day, when everything finishes, he or she will most likely go back to the Living Area and eat Chinese food with chopsticks, sitting next to their Chinese classmates, and be constantly reminded of their national identity. In this process, the Living Area reaffirms their belongingness to Chinese culture.

Often, it is our sensory experience that initiates our sense of belonging to a particular place, then it is complicated by our interactions with other social actors and our understanding of the contextual culture. Things as small as a burrito, or as ordinary as a toilet-paper roll, could be important enough to set off ripples of feelings of belonging in the interviewees. For example, when asked about his favourite places at the Arabica Coffee Café, which was his choice of interview venue, Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting) said 'my favourite place is the burrito here'.

(Sorry, was it even a place?)

Yes. It was the burrito, at a particular spot. You see that corner with a sofa? My favourite place is there, with a burrito, with my friend.

He refused to identify his favourite place as a place. It was 'the burrito', or more precisely, the setting around 'the burrito' at Arabica with his friend in his favourite

spot. He also liked ‘the Xinhua Bookstore on the high street after 11pm’. The bookstore closes at 11pm, after which he and his friend would break in and eat late-night food inside.

It’s getting too cold in other places. The light there would be off after 11pm, but the streetlights would shine in. Then there are seats.

What made him feel that he belonged to UNNC was not only the taste of the burrito and the night-time food, but also the particular combination of place, people, and timing. These factors interacted together, with a tendency to reinforce each other. Once a sense of belonging takes shape, it then in turn regulates the way in which we gather information and how we read its meaning. Taste itself is subjective; our own grannies are most likely to be the best cooks according to our own perspectives.

Therefore, sensory belonging, together with other dimensions of belonging, cannot be isolated and read on its own, but instead always functions interdependently with other dimensions. It comes with the feeling of being at ease, so that it melts into our everyday lives and can easily be taken for granted. Very likely, we realise a sense of belonging only when we lose this sense of ease. Just like the salt in our food, we only notice it when it is too salty or too tasteless. For example, Peter (PhD, English Studies), emphasised the importance of ‘a sense of comfort’. His belongingness to UNNC was aroused when he was visiting other universities in China and realised there was no toilet paper in the toilet.

I’ve been to many highly prestigious Chinese universities, including those in Shanghai and Beijing. I noticed that none of these universities provided toilet paper in their toilets, and none of them had a water boiler⁸ in their buildings. These kinds of details.

Instead of just accepting the fact of no toilet paper, he started to reflect on it and relate to the values of different universities. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, being ‘student centred’ is one of the guiding principles of the Boya Education at UNNC. Peter seemed to be proud of it and argued that this value can be told from details such as the provision of toilet paper and carpets.

⁸ For Chinese people, this is essential as we have the habit of drinking hot water.

It's not about money, OK? I've heard that these universities are very rich; they have sufficient funding for equipment and research. They're financially supported by the national government. But when it comes to students' daily lives, they just don't care. As another example, these universities are not carpeted indoors. I know these are small things. But if you were at UNNC, you would be very comfortable. You would get used to carpeted floors, especially on rainy days, and you could easily slip without them.

Later in the same conversation, he extended this to the values of Western culture in contrast to Chinese culture, and argued that the former values humanity and social responsibility more by referring to other examples of campus life. The 'toilet paper', 'water boiler', and 'carpet' have become significant materials underpinning his imaginative space, implying a whole system of values and cultures regulating how things should be in the UK and in China, pulling him towards the imagined territory where he has never been.

Through everyday sensory experiences, UNNC students have developed attachments and belongingness to the place in which they study and live. This sensory belonging does not seem to be exclusive to Western or Chinese culture. Rather, it is deeply rooted in the UNNC campus, in this transcultural environment, in the people who experience this transcultural social setting together in a similar way, but subject to the students' own interpretations according to their imaginative spaces.

6.2.3 Conception: Cosmopolitan festival space

Festival space is arguably the most concentrated representation of students' imaginative space. Owing to the home campus being British, Christmas becomes the most important cultural festival at UNNC. Because it is celebrated by students who are mainly Chinese, a wide range of cultural elements are represented in this festival space. Some are quite classical: for example, before Christmas, the Students' Union had arranged Christmas-hat chair covers in many self-study rooms and snowman door decorations, as shown in the picture on the left (Figure 6.13). Other aspects are less commonly seen in the main countries where Christmas is traditionally celebrated. For instance, in the picture on the right (Figure 6.13), instead of a white-bearded old man, the Christmas hat was worn by a cute little chicken. This was owing to a merger with Chinese culture: the approaching new year (2017) was 'the Year of the Chicken' in the Chinese lunar calendar. Here, Christmas was conceived

as displaced from its original context, while embracing the cosmopolitan connotations of Western culture, Christmas, Chinese culture, New Year and Spring Festival all mixed up together. These images, together with the culture they connote, reflect the students' imaginative space as transnational and transcultural.



Figure 6.13 Christmas decorations at UNNC

Mutually, the influence of Christmas can also be observed in students' decorations for Spring Festival. I was at student dormitory No. 13 taking pictures for Spring Festival, the most important festival in Chinese culture, when I was surprised to also find many Christmas decorations (Figure 6.14). From left to right, the figure shows three examples of: traditional Chinese decorations, purely Christmas decorations, and Chinese–Christmas mixed decorations. Here Western and Chinese culture co-existed and the boundaries between them were downplayed whilst the shared connotations of new beginning, luck, and celebration were emphasised. With various cultures immersed together in the students' imagined cultural space at UNNC, it was very difficult to find clear distinctions based on national borders as given; rather, cosmopolitanism has largely replaced nationalism, whereby a diverse set of perceptions and conceptions co-exist.



Figure 6.14 Spring festival decorations at UNNC (at No.13 Chinese student dormitory)

Bearing this general cosmopolitan impression in mind, I now move on to a more focused exploration of the Christmas show, a student-led performance to celebrate Christmas. From the beginning, the Christmas Show ticket was English-only, with a Western-style castle popping up (probably inspired by the logo of UNUK), as shown on the left (Figure 6.15). During the performance, there were two screens at the sides of the stage, offering English subtitles for the programme if it was in Chinese, or real-time comments posted by the students on the Students' Union's WeChat platform. The whole design of the show was also based on a Western-style bedtime fairy-tale book. Basically, the idea was that the entire show started as a fairy-tale book, and consisted of various programmes just like different chapters of a story. Hence, the backdrop to the stage was a picture of an opened book, representing a typical scene of Western Christmas Eve as shown on the picture to the right (Figure 6.15). There is a crowded yard covered with snow and filled with happy children, surrounded by Christmas trees and colourful cabins as we commonly see in Europe at the Christmas markets. The mise-en-scene on stage, together with the Christmas theme of the entire show, had built up a Western cultural atmosphere that called for familiarity and identification with Western culture. However, this Western story was told in a multicultural way. For example, in the picture, what was presented in front of the Christmas background was a group of Chinese girls wearing *qipao*, a Chinese traditional costume. That being said, these traditional costumes were in a way

presented against Chinese tradition. In China, girls are traditionally encouraged to limit their physical expression (for example, when sitting, girls are encouraged to put their knees together rather than spread; traditionally, the length of the *qipao* should be lower than the knee). In contrast, these performers' bodies were largely exposed, with much exaggerated physical expression, possibly appealing to global pop culture.

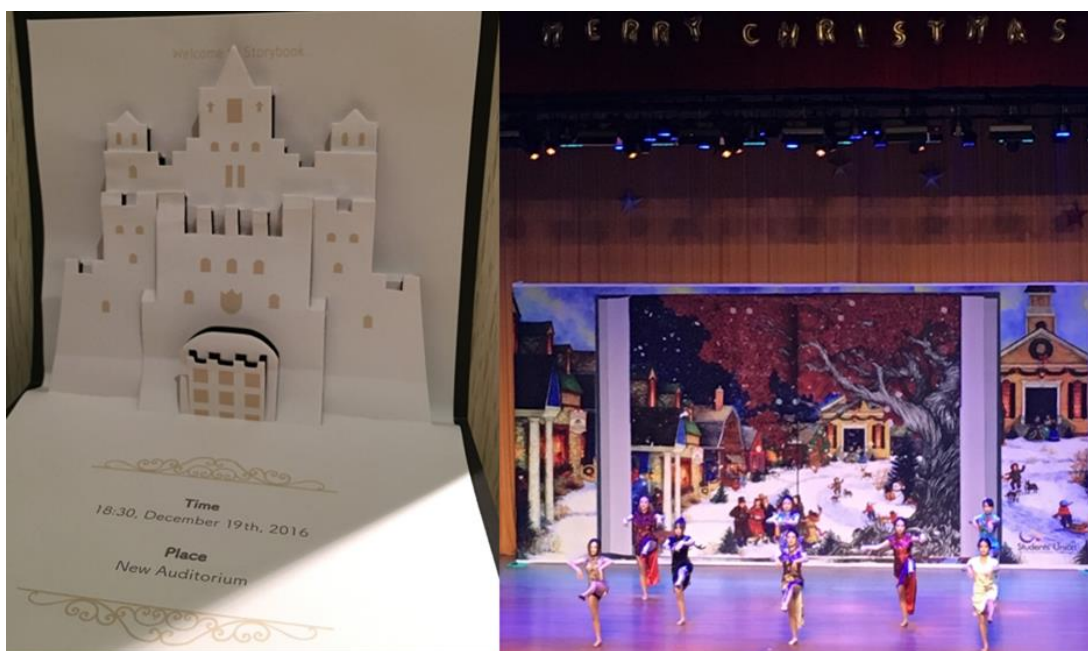


Figure 6.15 Christmas Show 2016 at UNNC

It may be argued that, in their daily lives, UNNC students would not present themselves or their cultures in the ways they did on stage. However, I argue that this does not make festival space any less worth researching. Festival spaces are usually designed for prepared performances, i.e. with a public awareness of 'faking' or 'acting'. As social actors, we all arguably perform certain identities in our everyday lives, varying across a wide range of different contexts (Goffman, 1978). In contrast to the lack of awareness of the everyday performativity of social identities, festivals advocate for performances loudly and publicly, and conceal them with festival costumes. As liminal spaces are removed from our more routinised everyday lives, festivals offer opportunities for experimentation with identity that may often be less feasible or acceptable with little regulation (Bennet and Woodward, 2016). Given this, I believe that festival space does not contort identities or conceptions, it just provides social actors with a safe zone to experiment with their identities and a theatre to bring their imaginative space to life. I intend to treat the performances at

the festival – of both the performers and the audience – as representations of, or at least exaggerations based on, the imaginative spaces in their everyday lives.

In this case, the students' imaginative space appears to be cosmopolitan, rather than either Western/British or Chinese. It is not only a product of students' imaginative mobilities across national borders, but also serves as a site for the articulation of cosmopolitan culture. As the most popular collective celebration event at UNNC, the Christmas Show assumes the role of legitimising, promoting, and naturalising 'the UNNC culture'. This show is conceptualised and delivered by the Students' Union, with the assistance of the Student Affairs Office. Throughout the entire process, careful decisions are made concerning which items, as representations of which culture, are selected or eliminated, and on what grounds; and those selected are performed in a particular way and in a chosen order. The ones chosen to be performed on stage, on the one hand, represent the mainstream values and culture at UNNC while, on the other hand, being perceived as legitimate and thereafter functioning symbolically. They are therefore constitutive of 'the UNNC culture'.

Furthermore, many students said that they did not just like the Christmas Show because of the performance. Additionally, many of them enjoyed a lot of liberty during the entire process and hence felt happy and unique because their impression was that it was opposed to the norms exercised in other Chinese universities. In China, the Students' Union usually works as an agency of the university authorities and, like all other organisations on campus, it is supervised and regulated by the CPC branch at the relevant university. As a result, there is not much room allowed for student autonomy. Correspondingly, cultural activities such as festival performances are usually used as a platform for nation-building purposes, which stands shoulder to shoulder with the CPC propaganda. Most of the time, the programmes performed on stage adhere to the 'mainstream' culture of China, and should fit into the characteristics of a Harmonious Society as propagandised in CPC documents.

Unlike most universities in China, the Students' Union at UNNC answers to the students, hence enjoying a higher level of autonomy in the organisation of student

activities, including the Christmas Show. As one of the interviewees from the Student Affairs Office, as well as a UNNC alumna, Ellen said:

[The Christmas Show at UNNC] is something the students push us towards; traditionally [in China] it is us that pushes them to do [things]. Yeah, so it's completely different; it seemed a bit reversed. This year, one of the participant staff had work experience at traditional universities [in China], from his/her perspective the atmosphere was totally different. Traditionally... it's more like the Spring Festival Gala [at Chinese Central Television]. You know, that feeling of a compulsory assignment... In contrast, our show gives people the impression of happiness. Real happiness.

Being able to realise their imaginative space with their peers in a festival setting was important for the students' sense of belongingness to UNNC. In one way, the right to participate is decisive to the emotional feeling of a community, and consequently to their sense of belonging. Belonging is a mutual feeling: 'I feel this community belongs to me' is an important part of 'I feel that I belong to this community'. It is a two-way flow, each reinforcing the other (May, 2013). As the interviewee further points out:

I mean, people are really celebrating. Because it's the students themselves who are preparing everything happily. They have a strong desire to present it to their alumni, tutors, and peers, to present what they want to present.

In another way, rejecting the cultural norms of other Chinese universities also contributed to their sense of community in distancing themselves from who they are not (May, 2013). Therefore, for UNNC students, what was crucial was not only what was in the festival space, but also with whom they constructed this space, and for whom. It was a space made by the UNNC community, for the UNNC community, and contributing to the space to be at UNNC. These shared imaginations are essential to the constitution of the imagined community at UNNC, which is constantly negotiated by mobilities across cultures and national borders, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

6.2.4 Challenges: Whose space?

In this section (6.2), I have explored students' imaginative space in terms of their perceptions of different styles on campus, their experiences in relation to

transcultural sensory belonging, and their conception of a cosmopolitan space on festive occasions. Thus, some cultural imaginations and social relations afforded by the material space are confirmed and reproduced, some are negotiated and transformed, while others are negated and refused. For example, transnational imaginations of the UK and the West are embraced and longed for. This has possibly coloured the students' perceptions of their material environment, including a value-laden appreciation of the facilities in the Living Area as well as their simultaneous dislike of the architecture and buildings in the Living Area. Festivals, be they traditionally Western or Chinese, were celebrated in a cosmopolitan way, and in a student-led format which more resembles the practice at British universities.

Via this process, students develop a sense of 'our place'. As Tilley (1994, p.15) points out, as we feel and create a sense of comfort with a social space, and arrange our social practices accordingly, we also create a sense of self 'through place'. This was also an important factor that created 'real happiness' during the Christmas Show as students were granted the power to participate, while strengthening their negative impressions of the Living Area when this power was rejected. In section 6.2.1, the most disliked construction work carried out by WEG was done during the summer break without the students' knowledge. Therefore, in addition to aesthetic judgements, the violation of rights was also considered another important reason why UNNC students had strong feelings against the style of the Living Area. As the president of the Students' Union said:

Students, on the one hand, think this is distasteful; on the other hand, they also feel excluded, violated, I suppose.

According to him/her, the logistics team had good intentions but did it in the wrong way. Essentially, the students' disapproval of the style of the Living Area was due to the inconsistencies, not only between their imaginative space and the actual space, but also between the social relations and social rules as they imagined them and as the WEG practised them. The president of the Students' Union elaborated:

Gate No. 4 is way too ugly. Actually, we've been trying to contact the logistics team throughout the entire summer, because of the drama caused by the construction. But they gave me the feeling that they were not deliberately hiding from the students or wanting to be

authoritarian. They just haven't got the awareness, because of *their Chinese ways of doing things*.

They're not like people who have *Western ways of doing things*, for example *us*... if anything happens, the university staff will inform the students promptly via email. But the logistics team just didn't realise that they should've informed the students. They only think that, ok, I'm in charge of this Living Area so it's my responsibility to make something happen. What you students can and should do is to see the results when the new semester starts. They even feel like... They were even shocked when we approached them for the first time, because they assumed that the students would like it. You know, new semester, new changes on campus, surprise! But we told them that wasn't the case. It was ugly.

It can be noticed that s/he has taken 'people who have Western ways of doing things' as 'us', in contrast to those who adopt 'Chinese ways of doing things', who are characterised as 'them'. Similar expressions were used by other students in sharing their stories in which students fought for their right to use the space in the way they wanted. For example, complaints about the locations of rubbish bins, the quality of the elevators, the unfairness of Chinese-student-only curfews, among many other things. In all cases, they were trying to adopt a 'Western way' to argue with the Chinese authorities, who reason in a 'Chinese way'. All of these examples seem to be daily episodes in which students defend their own rights, which are probably commonly seen in campus life in the UK. However, it needs to be borne in mind that this is not a common practice in China, where collectivism and obedience are stressed, and the Students' Union is subordinate to the university administration and answers to the CPC Committee. This taken-for-granted obedience of students and the Students' Union was what WEG logistics was used to, but it no longer applies to the imaginative space of UNNC students. As the president of the Students' Union concluded:

Now the situation is, the students have a Western-style mindset, they have an awareness of their rights and have the willingness to stand up for them. However, the logistics team has Chinese-style, deeply rooted values. So, some conflicts are easily provoked.

Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) made it clear that he was aligned with UNUK in this matter, by telling me that the British side has also made attempt to control potential disturbances of the overall image-building of a British campus.

It's a violation of the Nottingham visual identity system. [...] The British side has actually strongly advised them to introduce a designer who can advise on modern design. But the WEG people refused to listen, as they believe they should be the ones in charge of the Living Area.

I have verified this with a senior officer in the Administration system. According to him, there have been many instances of power struggles between the British side and the Chinese side, and these have been reflected in the changes in the landscapes on the north and south banks, including staff assignments and location of facilities, among many others.

In addition to those who found the attempts made by WEG disturbing, there are also some moderate voices. For example, Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting) said: 'I don't really like it, but I'm trying to accept it'. He explained:

Of course, it gives me a feeling of dissonance, but I think it's necessary. I mean, most of the students I know, they would understand. Although they probably think it's stupid, they also understand what it stands for, why it's here...they would understand why this phenomenon exists.

(Can you specify?)

It's for the university's image-building. We can't persuade people out there [that we're a good university] simply by saying how many talents we have, while showing them a shabby campus.

As long as they [the Chinese part] don't intervene in the key areas that are closely relevant to us as students, such as education, the learning experience, extra-curricular activities, as long as they don't put too much pressure on us in these respects, I would think it's fine.

[...] As long as I can have the freedom to do the things I want, I will show respect to whatever it looks like. I can understand it, really, because it has to be presented to certain authorities and sponsors, of other interest groups, of other countries.

As a result, the mutual reproduction of spatial imagination and imaginative space extend beyond the material level of how things should look, but also extend to a social and cultural level of how things should work and contribute to the regulatory power of the UNNC's imagined community. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

6.3 Mobile educational space and imaginative travellers

In sections 6.1 and 6.2, I have explored the spatial imaginations at UNNC in relation to the imaginative space of the students, both of which are characterised by the Academic–Living Area divide, which represents a WEG logistics team–UNUK contrast. Physically, there is a bridge between the Academic Area and the Living Area at UNNC across the Nottingham River, a feature that arguably also takes on a symbolic significance. Students have to cross this bridge to access UK education and Edu-roam, and they return across the same bridge to their Living Area to eat Chinese food and gain access to the China Telecom cable connection, with its stricter limit to information. Switching between these two different sociocultural settings can be as unobtrusive and taken-for-granted as switching the Wi-Fi on and off on mobile phones while crossing the bridge. This bridge, also as a *divider*, was referred to many times by the interviewees, according to which their feelings about UNNC campus differed. For example, Vera (Master, International Communications Studies), after she revealed that she had a strong sense of belonging to the cultural atmosphere of UNNC because of ‘the feeling of liberty’, specified that:

I mean, it’s liberal on this side of the bridge. On the other side, it’s a different story.

Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) shared a similar feeling, and extended the symbolic meaning of ‘the bridge’ to the entire university when she said:

We’re special, kind of stuck somewhere in-between. It’s difficult for us to go to either side.

Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies) expressed his frustration at this division. He appreciated having access to the global virtual space beyond the Chinese ‘great firewall’, which sometimes made him feel as though he was ‘living in foreign countries’, although he was also disappointed by the fact that ‘sometimes I feel I am back in China again’. On the one hand, sometimes he is enabled by the material environment at UNNC to access a language environment that is non-Chinese and by the Internet to enter a virtual space that is outside China, and these made him feel like ‘living in foreign countries’. On the other hand, however, he also feels constrained because of these facilitators, because their very existence as the

pre-requisite for him to access foreign virtual space is a constant reminder of the fact that he is physically immobile.

If I had this kind of *illusion* [of being in a foreign country], it would be on those days when I've spent all day on the other side of the wall, I mean looking at English stuff and Googling foreign news, then I've felt that I live in foreign countries. However, essentially, I still need to make the move to go across the wall, so I know for sure that I'm still in China.

[...]

Physically, every day I still need to go back to the Living Area, that's when I realised that I'm a Chinese person and live a Chinese lifestyle.

However, in addition to the two destinations, we also need to pay attention to the movements between them *per se*; instead of focusing solely on being *either* here *or* there, we need to notice that the UNNC case is also about being *both* here *and* there, about intermittent presence and absence in both physical and imaginative forms. Travelling between two different spaces, between the Academic Area and the Living Area, between the Chinese and the foreign, has become a daily routine for UNNC students, contributing to their embodiment of transnational mobilities in an imaginative form and giving shape to the transnational imaginative space they conceive. Informed by their spatial imaginations as well as their own predispositions, the students then start to conceive their own imaginative spaces, according to which they make differentiated judgements about different styles in the material spaces, develop senses of (non)belongingness to different cultures through their sensory experiences, and mix and match various elements during festivals celebrations. It is worth noticing here that, instead of a linear process, this is more like a multi-centred, ongoing ripple effect. Students' imaginations have been constantly informed by multiple sources, through which they have been conceiving their own transnational spaces piece by piece in a multidimensional way; those pieces of the imaginative spaces then ripple around, perhaps joining or perhaps clashing with others, contributing to another new round of sources informing their further imaginations. This has contributed to the remaking of the UNNC space in return, which is itself mobile and always becoming.

Accordingly, I perceive UNNC as a ‘ship’, a vessel that is always on the move and enables the mobilities of its passengers, rather than a ‘bridge’, which is a static object. It is a fact that UNNC students remain in-situ on a small university campus in China; however, this very space is also where various interdependent modes of transnational mobilities converge across diverse geographical locations, social rules, and cultural norms. As a result, they embody transnational imaginations and mobilities in-situ, transform into people whom I perceive as *imaginative travellers*, who never physically go abroad but whose identities and belongingness have been constantly informed and negotiated by their everyday experience. The feeling of being ‘stuck somewhere in-between’ is not merely a stasis, as I have seen in my fieldwork; rather, it is a dynamic status as they were intermittently proximate to or distant from certain spaces in being and imagining, always *struggling* but constantly *attempting* to understand both sides. The embodiment of mobilities, of the feeling of being ‘out of place’, as well as the competence developed while constantly adapting to it, actually implies the great potential for cosmopolitanism of this TNE experience at UNNC.

Based on the explorations in this chapter, it can be seen that the imaginative travelling at UNNC is more vivid and powerful than the original conceptualisation of Urry (2002). Developed from but different to Urry’s conceptualisation, ‘imaginative travelling’ in my case does not only refer to the feeling of being somewhere else generated by images in the mass media in a one-dimensional, passive way and hence to a very limited extent. Rather, UNNC students have been affected by the multi-dimensional, interrelated, transnational movements of objects, images, people, and information that converge with the materiality of the campus. Not only were the sources of influence expanded, but also the ways in which they imaginatively travelled were diversified and extended, with an increased level of agency and in a more multidimensional way. Instead of passively receiving media messages on the TV at home, they have touched foreign objects, tasted foreign food, talked to foreign people, experienced foreign culture, actively engaged with all of these transnational movements, and finally embodied these mobilities within their everyday spatial practices, thereby becoming ‘imaginative travellers’ in a fuller sense.

However, this degree of autonomy should also not be overestimated. A reader with a British background would probably notice cultural familiarities in the Academic Area and understand some of them as attempts to recall an image of the UK; yet, we cannot assume the same for the UNNC students. The majority of these students have never had real living experiences in the UK. Therefore, UNNC is not only *recalling* cultural roots in the UK, but also echoing stereotypical representations of the UK in the Chinese mass media in appealing to the market, as well as producing its own image of the UK and of the UK campus. This is probably one of the major differences between imaginative and corporeal travellers: the former have much less control over the ‘destination’ of their trips than the latter; what they experience in many cases is what they are supposed to experience, and therefore subject to political economy in the wider sociocultural context. In this case, the strategies of both UNUK and WEG, conditioned by the Chinese political context, need to be taken into consideration in further analyses.

6.4 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the space of UNNC is immersed in imagination, which is characterised by fluidity, contradictions, and ambiguities. In this chapter, I have explored the first research question: ‘*How are transnational mobilities enabled at the immobile UNNC campus?*’ through an elaboration of both: 1) the place and its spatial imaginations and 2) the people and their imaginative space. These two aspects are actually two phases of the same process, whereby the transnational space and the transnational imagination are mutually constitutive of each other, in a multi-centred, on-going, rippling way that involves perceiving, experiencing, and conceiving, rather than a linear, one-off process. Thus, the space at UNNC is itself mobile and always becoming: various interdependent modes of mobilities are moored to immobilities; physical and imaginative movements and relations are entangled together; imaginative space overlays and sometimes overflows the boundaries of the physical place, intermittently intersecting with the transnational social space beyond national borders. Thus, the students were enabled to embody mobilities and cosmopolitanism in-situ and to conceive their imaginative spaces transnationally and transculturally, thus becoming transformed into what I perceive as ‘imaginative travellers’. Based on this exploration of the students in relation to

space, I then move my focus to their co-presence with each other, and investigate how UNNC students develop solidarities as an imagined community within the mobile, constantly changing educational space.

Chapter 7 Community in Travelling

As imaginative travellers, UNNC students' shared sense of community is constantly in a state of flux. In fact, during the interviews, they revealed diverse and inconsistent understandings of being a UNNC student and being part of the UNNC community. Regardless, they still manifested a strong sense of belonging to UNNC. Therefore, in this chapter, I examine the second research question:

How do Chinese students negotiate their (imagined) community at UNNC?

In addressing this question, I adopt a relational approach to UNNC students' (imagined) community in the mobile educational space through the 'flexible ties' of belongingness generated from both physical co-presence and imaginative connections. I perceive their (imagined) community as 'socially produced, shaped by material factors, culturally organised and yet also open to human action' (Calhoun, 2003b, p.549). Therefore, I will be looking at not only their predispositions in terms of social, material, and cultural attributes, but also how they have been proactively identifying with and/or othering themselves from certain groups, and engaging in the (re)making of community. Thus, I break down the second research question into three aspects:

- 1) What are the features shared by Chinese UNNC students, in terms of both predispositions before UNNC and educational experiences at UNNC?
- 2) How do UNNC students negotiate their (imagined) community in relation to non-UNNC students?
- 3) Bringing 1) and 2) together, to what extent is UNNC students' (imagined) community shaped by their predispositions and/or educational experience at UNNC?

7.1 With UNNC students: Shared features

In this section, I explore two aspects of the features shared among Chinese UNNC students. Firstly, I analyse their possible shared predispositions by looking at the criteria applied by UNNC during recruitment. Secondly, I examine their shared educational experience in relation to their own perspectives, which is characterised by contradictory agendas and approaches between the Chinese and British partners.

7.1.1 Predispositions before UNNC

To begin with, based on the threshold set by UNNC, the Chinese students can hardly be considered a disadvantaged group. On its official website, UNNC clarifies two requirements in its recruitment policy. Firstly, in most cases, UNNC recruits only *yiben* (the first batch in the first class) students, based on their results in the *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination). In China, higher educational institutions at the undergraduate level are mainly divided into two categories: the first class, Normal Courses (*benke*) and the second class, Short-cycle Courses (*zhuanke*). The first class is further divided into three batches, *yiben* (first batch of *benke*), *erben* (second batch of *benke*), and *sanben* (third batch of *benke*), which are sometimes called respectively the elite, the key, and the others (Liu, 2016). In most cases, only students who manage to reach the benchmark of *yiben* can be admitted to ‘211’ or ‘985’ universities, i.e. the most prestigious universities in China, usually accounting for 10 to 15% of the participants in the *Gaokao* (except for megacities like Beijing and Shanghai, where students benefit from preferential policies). Therefore, UNNC students actually have a good academic performance. This is in contrast to the case study of UK TNE in Hong Kong, as I introduced in Chapter 2, where TNE students are perceived as ‘less successful’ (or ‘failing’) young people who found TNE to be ‘their only option’ (Waters, 2018a, p.678).

Secondly, UNNC also has strict requirements regarding the English proficiency of entrants. Students need to achieve at least 77% in the English test in the *Gaokao*. Again, this also distinguishes UNNC students from existing case studies of UK TNE, where Waters and Leung (2013, p.615) were told that students at local universities had ‘far better English’ than TNE students. In the particular case of UNNC, this is

quite the opposite. For reference, most higher education students in China need to take the College English Test (CET), the national English-as-a-foreign-language test in China, in which UNNC students' performance has long been far ahead of their peers at other Chinese universities (Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences, 2010).

These two recruitment thresholds have ensured that, in the particular case of UNNC, the TNE students not only have an outstanding overall academic performance, but in particular, they are also good at English. In addition, there is a third, hidden threshold: the expensive tuition fees. This makes the chances of entering UNNC very slim for students from working-class families with insufficient economic capital. In addition, capital composition in terms of the cultural capital possessed by a student's family is also important: those parents who are better-endowed with cultural capital are more likely to invest heavily in their offspring' education. UNNC's international branding and its transnational positioning also functioned as a filter; deciding to invest in attending a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University also indicates certain dispositions among students and their families. As Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting) put it, 'I feel like 80,000 RMB is a threshold, which selected a certain group of people to enter, although not very clearly'.

7.1.2 Educational experience at UNNC

University of Nottingham Ningbo China (UNNC)'s mission statement is "Academic Excellence in the Service of *Global Citizenship*". (Nottingham.edu.cn)

According to *Higher Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, UNNC has established its own committee in order to ensure its *socialist* orientation, maintaining the implementation of national laws and regulations, disseminating Chinese culture, communicating interrelationships, delivering Chinese traditional ethical education and *patriotism* education to the students, and providing training for those communist activists who want to join the *Party*. (Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences, 2010, my translation)

The quotes above from different sources indicate the dilemma faced by UNNC education. As a British university in China, UNNC needs to localise the 'British-style learning', 'management system', and 'network and reputation' to the Chinese social context (nottingham.edu.cn), in pursuit of the dual missions of both 'global

citizenship education’ and ‘Chinese patriotism education’. This hybrid nature of the intentions of different parties is reflected in the power balance of the UNNC administrative system, and has resulted in the unique learning experience of UNNC students. In what follows, I analyse two aspects of students’ experiences and perceptions of UNNC education: the Chinese Culture Course in particular and British-style pedagogy in general.

Firstly, the Chinese Culture Course is offered exclusively to Chinese students at UNNC. As a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University, UNNC follows the *Higher Education Law of the People’s Republic of China*. Therefore, the Chinese Culture Course is designed to encompass a range of courses to deliver both ‘Chinese traditional virtue education (*zhonghua chuantong meide jiaoyu*)’ and ‘patriotism education (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu*)’.

For Chinese students, we put particular emphasis on our work of ideological and political education [...] We created courses like ‘*The Principles of Marxism*’, ‘*Ethics and Law*’, ‘*Marxism with Chinese features*’, etc. [...] (Hua et al., 2009, p.5, my translation)

This course was designed and delivered by the Centre for Research on Sino–Foreign Cooperative Universities (CRSU) at UNNC. Therefore, in order to understand the content and purpose of the Chinese Culture Course, I interviewed a staff member, Nancy, who has personally participated in both the delivery of lectures and the design of the textbook for this course. According to Nancy, the purpose had nothing to do with Party propaganda:

First, of course we would like them to understand more about Chinese culture, yeah, the dissemination of Chinese culture. Also we would like to encourage them to *think about many things as adults*, such as *how to face themselves, face others, and face this society*.

Her answer seems to fit well with Yang’s principles of Boya education, while differing from the claims made in CRSU publications. I was not very convinced because it did not make sense to me that a course designed primarily to disseminate Chinese culture and reflections on self and others would only be made available to Chinese students. Foreign students could also presumably benefit from such a course. It nonetheless appears to me that the Chinese Culture Course was primarily designed to provide patriotic education.

According to the interview responses, the goals of the Chinese Culture Course were rarely achieved. Only a few students said that they benefited from this course, which was limited to an improved knowledge of Chinese history and culture. No one mentioned that they were inspired in the sense emphasised in Nancy's response, although Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies) said that the course had made him feel more patriotic with an increased sense of cultural belonging, particularly given the foreign environment at UNNC:

To be honest, the Chinese Culture Course is my favourite. [...] Especially, in an English-only context, suddenly you got the chance to attend a course that is delivered in Chinese, delivered by Chinese native speakers, talking about Chinese culture... this makes you feel you culturally belong.

This sense of belonging was strengthened by the contrast with the unfamiliar foreign environment. Regardless of its intention, the Chinese Culture Course provided UNNC students, especially those having difficulties adapting to a new foreign environment, with a haven of their own culture where they could feel a sense of belonging. The majority of students, although without such a strongly positive attitude as Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies), in principle mainly appreciated the idea of a Chinese cultural course delivered in Chinese, and considered it 'essential' at a foreign university like UNNC.

What made them dislike the course, however, was not only what was taught but also how it was delivered. As a result, most of them believed 'it was only a formality' and they attended this course only to tick the box on the registers. As Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) described it, many students attended but did not pay attention to what the lecturer was teaching. One of the staff, Mateo, also told me that there were no exams for this course; students just needed to be there for the teachers to take the attendance. CRSU noticed and was concerned by this phenomenon, and they had been actively experimenting with reforms of the Chinese Culture Course. However, it appears that these reforms did not deter students from complaining about its 'mere formality'. For example, CRSU tried to introduce a digital signature system in order to make it more difficult for students to fake attendance. According to the interviews, this reform only increased students' resistance and enhanced their feeling that this course was merely a 'formality'. Also,

CRSU tried to learn from the British pedagogies by introducing seminar discussions into the Chinese Culture Course. However, this was also perceived as a change merely in formality rather than substance. As Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) said:

There's a mismatch between the quality and the format [...] of this course. I felt like there was actually nothing for me to discuss even though it was a seminar, which is good for facilitating discussion.

He then explained that, if the course content were more thought-provoking or encouraged questioning, it would be natural for students to have discussions with each other even without being ordered to do so. If not, then changing the format would not help, which is exactly what was happening. Other students shared their dissatisfaction with the content of the Chinese Cultural Course. Siena (year 4, International Business and Management), for example, noted that:

I think the Chinese Culture Course has been overly focused on culture. I mean, it didn't connect culture with humanities. What it offered was only a simple review of the history. In fact, as we always say, we should use history as a mirror. So I believe it's better to be tied with either humanities, or campus life, something like this would make it easier for us to relate.

What she meant by 'overly focused on culture', according to the context, was that the content was descriptive rather than analytical; focused on abstract theories without any applications to empirical examples.

Overall, the Chinese partners of UNNC have made great efforts to follow the guidance of the Party and the nation to educate Chinese patriots at a British university, yet this did not work as expected. This unsatisfying outcome could be partially attributed to the course content being fundamentally unattractive to the students, who were more interested in Western culture. However, based on the interviews, it should also be understood in relation to the conflict of mind-sets between CRSU, who expected the students to passively accept what they had to teach, and the UNNC students, who wanted to really engage and question. That being said, their unwillingness to attend the Chinese Cultural Course and their unfamiliarity with Communist ideology and politics did not necessarily mean that UNNC students were not patriotic. On the contrary, having spent most of their time in the presence of foreign others and with access to foreign information, UNNC

students arguably had a better sense of ‘being Chinese’ than other students who only spend time with Chinese peers representing their local cities or provinces. I will come back to this point in Chapter 8.

Secondly, in general, British-style education is applied at UNNC. Interviewees showed broad awareness of the implementation of Boya education and referred to them frequently in interviews (i.e., to encourage students to think critically, to be student centred, and to encourage extra-curricular activities (referred to as ‘the second classroom’ by president Yang), for details see section 4.2). Most had also noticed significant differences between British and Chinese pedagogical styles, based either on their own direct experience at other Chinese universities or, indirectly, on experiences described by friends at other Chinese universities. Generally speaking, ‘encouragement of questioning’ and ‘critical thinking’ were perceived as key to British-style teaching and learning; while in talking about Chinese education, the most frequently chosen adjectives were ‘passive’, ‘rigid’, and ‘judgmental’. For example, Vera was a postgraduate student who had completed her undergraduate study at a relatively good Chinese university (*erben*, second batch of first class), which gave her first-hand experience of both styles. During the interview, she talked about two major differences that she had experienced. Firstly, she felt that there was a strong teacher–student hierarchy in traditional Chinese education, which was intimidating for students to question. As she said, ‘basically, we listen to whatever the teacher has to say’. She referred to the biggest difference between the Chinese education she had experienced during her undergraduate study and the British education at UNNC as ‘opposite’:

One is, the teacher puts something into your head, you just need to memorise it and answer the exam questions accordingly. The other one is, you need to question, and think for yourself. They’re totally different.

She complained about her experience of undergraduate study, saying that it was ‘no different from high school’. During term-time, students had to sit in the classrooms passively receiving education all day long according to fixed timetables. Before the exams, the teachers would tell them which key points were most likely to be included in the exams, and the students had to memorise these. In contrast, what she experienced at UNNC was heuristic education. She gave me an example of one of

her favourite courses, in which the lecturer asked them to play a video game, based on which the students had to figure out a research question.

Right at the beginning, I was very concerned. I had no experience of playing video games, and I had to come up with a research question, and I had to do all of this in English! [...] I chose the seemingly simplest one and played it for a while, very simple, you just needed to stay on an island, no need to eat and no need to worry, just take a walk around. At the end of the game, my character died, and I still had no clue what kind of thoughts I was supposed to have.

The lecturer then encouraged her to reflect on her experience of powerlessness and to think about the intention of the game designer, the subjectivity of the environment instead of human actors, etc. She felt that it was ‘really impressive and I have learned a lot’. Furthermore, she believed that academic malpractice was still common in Chinese academia. This could be an understandable consequence of students’ own ideas not being encouraged. According to her, in some Chinese universities, originality is not valued; ‘an original essay could be marked lower than a plagiarised one’, she said. This phenomenon was also observed by other students and has been addressed by the research of CRSU (Hua et al., 2010), which found that UNNC distinguishes its strict rules on academic integrity from the tolerance of academic malpractice in ‘many Chinese universities’.

Most of Vera (Master, International Communications Studies)’s perceptions were echoed by other students. Many students noticed the differences in student–teacher relationships between Chinese and British education as the former tend to be much more hierarchical. However, every coin has two sides: a few students noted that, while at UNNC they were less controlled by their teachers, they were also taken less care of and felt ‘entirely on their own’. For example, Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) missed the Chinese style:

I think this is what UNNC is missing. In other Chinese universities, your counsellor will initiate the contact with you, talk with you, and help you to make use of the resources available at the university and to fit into this environment. [...] Here at UNNC, you’re on your own. You have to explore everything by yourself.

The majority of students acknowledged that they were offered all the resources they needed; but the extent to which they could make use of them was mostly dependent

on themselves. As Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) said, what they learnt most was how to self-study. Lola (year 4, Mechanical Engineering) shared a popular, self-mocking saying among UNNCers that ‘at UNNC I pay 320,000 RMB to study self-study’. Therefore, Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) concluded that ‘it’s entirely up to my own will’. For some students, this encouragement of self-study was good news and was understood as respect for individuality. For example, Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) said that:

The teachers are always there, available. Whether or not you come to me it’s your business, I’ll be here anyway. If you need me, come to me; otherwise I won’t bother you. [...] I really like this style. If I want something, I’ll fight for it; I don’t want external forces to intervene.

Underlying these differences in teaching style could be the fundamental cultural differences between collectivism and individualism, as the former emphasises the community and the strict hierarchy embedded within it, while the latter places greater emphasis on individual performances. This difference was indicated in Chapter 6 in terms of the spatial arrangements, where I have noted that Chinese students have traditionally tended to share more of their space and to follow the orders of the authorities to make change of their living spaces without question. In a similar vein, it can be seen here that, in classrooms, Chinese students were traditionally encouraged to fit into the community, keep their individual thoughts to themselves, and respect the teachers without questioning, while the teachers felt more responsibility to take care of everyone by actively intervening in students’ personal matters.

In contrast, at UNNC, students felt they were encouraged to communicate and express their own ideas freely, in a less judgemental environment. For example:

Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies): In British education, we have many chances to communicate with the tutors. In seminars, I wave, and they come. It’s really good.

Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade): I feel like here at UNNC the teachers have more passion, and I felt more welcomed. Even when sometimes I ask really simple questions, the professor still responds to me in a very positive way, no judgement at all. While, in Chinese schools, some of the teachers will have the ‘obvious attitudes’ towards you, I felt the same way in high school.

Although the actual methods implemented in different courses for different subjects varied, most of the interviewees felt that at UNNC their tutors encouraged them to practice ‘critical thinking’ by themselves.

However, not every student considered this to be a good thing, and several critiques were made. Some students regarded this British-style heuristic education to be less efficient than the traditional Chinese one. For example, James (year 3, Finance and Accounting) complained:

The British teachers kept saying, ‘we’re not here to teach you the answer, we’re here to teach you how to find the answer; instead of teaching you $1+1=2$, we’ll tell you how to do the maths yourself.’ I think this is not necessarily a good thing. The British teachers, they seemed to look down upon Chinese education, repetitive exercises, but I think these are good. In my subject, Finance and Accounting, there are many fixed patterns and I don’t see the need to ‘inspire’.

Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) also expressed concern about the ‘heuristic method’. However, her critique was focused more on the inappropriate application of it:

During this semester, we [students] have been complaining about the language course being overly difficult. [...] The teacher doesn’t follow the textbook, just keeps pushing us to practice, asking for output, asking you to write, to speak, without giving you any input, such as a vocabulary list, grammar table, nothing.

For her, it would have been better for the Chinese students if the teachers had followed the step-by-step procedures they were familiar with from high school, in which they were given summarised key vocabulary lists and structured key grammatical points and were expected to memorise them well before any practice could be done. She thought it would be ideal if these approaches could be combined together, if the ‘teaching mode’ (which I understood to refer to the overall teaching strategy) could be Western while the ‘teaching method’ (specific teaching techniques) could be Chinese. In other words, keeping the ‘lecture, seminar, and resources from the British side’, while having all of these delivered in a ‘clear, structured, step-by-step Chinese way’.

This spirit of encouraging ‘critical thinking’ is also implemented in promoting ‘great diversity in the second classroom’, with a great awareness among students. When asked about ‘what made UNNC unique’, many students emphasised that their diverse student-led societies and projects were what made them feel proud to belong. Several of them used the exact term ‘second classroom’, indicating a successful inculcation of this concept. Most of the students appreciated the fact that they enjoyed great liberty and support in developing student societies. Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting) agreed that ‘it’s democratic’, but also expressed his concern by saying ‘it’s too democratic’, ‘sometimes it’s too much’. He explained that, while it was true that students were given great power of autonomy, it was questionable whether they could handle it, as ‘the primary task of students should be studying’. But he also pointed out that, overall, it is beneficial for UNNC, especially for the sustainability of UNNC values. He gave me an example: in encouraging current students to go back to their own hometowns to recruit new students, UNNC culture was transmitted between old and new generations of students. This cultural transmission could be a crucial part of the construction of UNNC’s (imagined) community.

Thus far, it can be seen that the extent to which the students were able to benefit from this British-style education was largely contingent on their individual abilities and willingness to adapt, but their overall attitude towards British-style education is mostly positive, particularly compared to the Chinese Culture Course and Chinese pedagogies. In general, most of the students tended to believe that the education they received at UNNC was more advanced and beneficial for personal development. Even those who struggled with this at the very beginning have been trying to adapt and improve:

(But you just said you’re having difficulties adapting to the educational system at UNNC?)

Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies): I was talking about last year. This year it’s been a bit better. [...] To be honest, if you asked me to go back [to Chinese educational system], I would dislike it more.

This encouragement of questioning and the valuing of individuality empowers UNNC students and contributes to the unique cultural environment. As Josh put it,

‘what distinguishes UNNC from other Chinese universities is the chance given to students to figure things out by themselves’.

In this section, I have explored the shared features of Chinese UNNC students in terms of predispositions and educational experience. These shared features have contributed to their in-group solidarities; however, they have also arguably pushed them away from non-UNNC Chinese students, which I now turn to explore.

7.2 With non-UNNC students: Distancing and othering

During the interviews, UNNC students tended to distinguish themselves from students at Chinese universities. In most cases, this was not personal; it was simply that they unintentionally perceived ‘students at other Chinese universities’ as ‘others’. Although they had diverse understandings of what it means to be a UNNC student, they were quite unified in believing that UNNC students are different from ‘students at other Chinese universities’. Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication) cherished his company at UNNC and said:

I feel it [the experience at UNNC] is a great fortune. Such as, I’ve got to know so many interesting people here, I think, they’re difficult to find at other universities. Really difficult to find, really difficult. [...] And I really have this feeling, that people here think *differently* from those at other universities, *completely different*.

This process of ‘othering’ plays an important role in constituting UNNC students’ imagined community. Our sense of self is not only partly based on our knowledge of ‘who we feel similar to’, it is also based on knowing ‘who we are not’ (May, 2013, p.79). Very often, the process of knowing ‘who we are not’ involves reductionism and essentialism, by which people tend to exaggerate in-group sameness and out-group differences. In many cases, othering becomes a ‘process whereby a dominant group defines into existence an inferior group’ (Schwalbe et al., 2000, p.422). As an inferior group, though, it is possible to subvert this definition either by ‘dis-identification’, i.e. refusing to occupy the position of ‘the other’ and trying to distance oneself from the assigned category, or by ‘capitalisation’, i.e. ‘appropriating (elements of) them in an attempt to imbue the category with symbolic value’ (Jensen, 2011, p.66).

In the case of UNNC vs. non-UNNC Chinese students, it is hard to distinguish which group was the dominant one, and the process of ‘othering’ was mutual and dynamic. On the one hand, a general negative impression of CFCRS students persisted. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, China started to focus on improving the quality of CFCRS very recently; hence, the public image of them was still largely negative when I conducted my research. The South China Morning Post reported that there was a Chinese TV drama ‘featured a character who had studied at the university saying “students at the China branch are struggling with their work” and a joke that implied undergraduates just needed to turn up to get a degree’ (cited in Times Higher Education, 2017, p.3). This reflects the social perceptions of CFCRS participants as under-achievers who rely on family wealth to buy a degree, which often purports to be foreign, international, and advanced in appearance, while in fact they barely speak any English or achieve any academic advancement. For many years, UNNC students were weighed down with public misunderstandings. On the other hand, UNNC students dis-identify from this negative impression. Furthermore, it appears that they even had a sense of superiority over the local student community. As noted in section 7.1, UNNC students performed well in the *Gaokao*, particularly in English, and came from families that could afford expensive tuition fees. Locally, UNNC is the only *yiben* university at South Higher Education Park in Ningbo; hence, UNNC students also have advantages over other students in academic performance.

Bearing this background information in mind, in this section I explore UNNC students’ relational belongingness to their imagined community through processes of ‘othering’. I will explore how they perceived their Chinese peers in traditional domestic universities as ‘others’ under two themes that emerged during the interviews: ‘lack of a common language’ (7.2.1) and ‘differences in social rules’ (7.2.2), in which they manifest an imaginative distance from those who are physically proximate. In this section, I underline the English words which the students opted to use in their interviews, in order to represent their habitual language use in a real setting.

7.2.1 Lack of a common language

Lack of a common language was one of the most common comments by UNNC students on their relationship with non-UNNC Chinese students. To different degrees, the interviewees experienced reduced communication with non-UNNC students. As an extreme case, Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies) said:

I live my life completely on campus. I feel that I can't communicate with people outside this university anymore. I can't imagine how a person can be so rude, so lacking respect. But that's what the majority of people are like outside our university. I've started to give up on communicating with them.

It appeared that, by 'lack of a common language', the interviewees were actually addressing two aspects: *what* they talked about, and *how* they talked about it. Many interviewees said that UNNC students talk differently from the usual style of other Chinese students in both senses:

Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication): You can tell from the ways of talking, the things in their eyes, and sometimes in their postures when walking. I've met people from other universities, their temperament is completely different.

Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies): It's more obvious when they start to talk. Once they start to ask about each other's essay progress, then they're one of us for sure.

Oliver (year 2, International Studies): I feel that UNNC students are better at communication. Meaning, how to make the atmosphere more comfortable for both parties to talk. [...] I think maybe UNNC encourages us to communicate, and gives us plenty of opportunities to practice in student organisations and societies.

Many interviewees said they did not feel they had much in common to communicate with non-UNNC Chinese students. Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies), for example, said that even her close friends at high school had become more distant now.

We don't talk much...I actually don't know how they're doing at other universities. I feel like since I've been here I've started to become estranged from everyone's life. Many schoolmates at UNNC are like this. [There are] plenty of breaking-up stories because one of a couple attended UNNC while the other went to a Chinese university. Can't communicate. Just feeling... different from other people.

When I further explored with her the sense in which she felt ‘different’, she said it was both in terms of ‘values’ and ‘common topics’. This feeling was shared by many. As university was the key difference here between UNNC and non-UNNC students, these differences can be partially attributed to their educational experiences. As I have elaborated in section 7.1.2, UNNC students experienced contrasting forms of education, which may have caused their lack of shared topics with non-UNNC Chinese students. In general, interviewees felt that the learning experience at UNNC was more flexible and heuristic, while at other Chinese universities it was more structured and based on spoon-feeding. In particular, the curricula were different, the textbooks were different, the assessments were different, even the teaching languages were different. For example, Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) mentioned that her friends from high school were busy with *Advanced Mathematics* and *Chinese Politics and Ideology* (both are compulsory in most Chinese universities, no matter what the subject of study), while she was busy with planning her own extra-curricular activities according to her own interests. Meanwhile, Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies) explained: ‘when we talk, we can’t avoid topics like essays and deadlines’, none of which mattered to non-UNNC students. This is probably why Aldo (year 4, International Communications Studies) sighed: ‘I don’t talk with them about these things. I only ask them: how have you been, and have you found a girlfriend?’

Unexpectedly, some interviewees revealed that they related more to Chinese students at other TNE institutions and even those participating in INE overseas. For instance, in sharing her experience, Alice (year 2, International Business and Management) compared the development of her friendships with high-school classmates who went to traditional Chinese universities to those who went to another Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University:

If you think about it, you’ll realise that, if you study at this kind of university, you’ll have much fewer topics in common with your high-school classmates. [...] I have another classmate, also from the same high school, s/he is studying at Wenzhou-Kean University, and knows more about my situation.

As CFCRS participants, the minority in Chinese higher education with a persisting negative public image, both UNNC students and other CFCRS students may feel close to each other owing to their similar social exclusion. On that basis, similar educational experience contributed to their shared topics and mutual understanding, as in the case of Alice (year 2, International Business and Management).

Not only TNE participants, but also INE participants, who receive a similar Western education, were considered easier to communicate with. Several students said that they had more ‘language in common’ with friends overseas than those who had stayed in China and were geographically closer. Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies), for example, said that she could only enjoy conversations with friends who had overseas educational experiences from the US, Australia, and Canada. They were able to ‘have a nice talk’ because ‘the things [in their lives] are the same’. She struggled to do the same with friends at Chinese universities because ‘they have no idea what those things are’. Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies) also expressed similar feelings but extended the differences to everything in life, from cultural products to social activities: ‘we watch different TV programmes, we use different things, and we have different lifestyles [...] we really have nothing in common’.

In addition to Western education, the different presence of the CPC also contributed to the gap between UNNC and non-UNNC Chinese students. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the CPC at Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities functions differently from the Party at Chinese universities, as the former considers the interests of both home and host institutions, while the latter only follows the government blindly (Zhang & Kinser, 2016). This difference has affected the extra-curricular activities of UNNC students. In Chinese universities, students’ extra-curricular activities were commonly used for propaganda purposes. For example, Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) commented on the compulsory Party-related activities at other Chinese universities:

Their universities have many activities that I find meaningless, such as singing the praises of the Party, and Red activities,⁹ which most of the time are compulsory. I have a friend, for example, and the university demands his entire class to do that kind of dance. You know, like sports dance, everybody dances with a national flag in their hands.

The UNNC students had no experience of this kind of activity, which further reduced their shared topics with non-UNNC Chinese students. However, as can also be noticed from the quote above, Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) did not feel that he was ‘missing out’ because he found these activities ‘meaningless’. Many students shared similar opinions and felt lucky to be able to escape from these obligations.

As a result of their English-language education, there has been a change in the language use of UNNC students. When they talked, as was evident during the interviews, they tended to use a mixture of Chinese and English. In particular, they were more likely to use English vocabulary in academic discourse, such as ‘seminar’, ‘group work’, ‘deadline’. Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) confirmed this and explained that:

It’s inevitable to use English in my conversations, because it’s part of my habit now. Sometimes I don’t even know how to translate words into Chinese, for example, I don’t know the corresponding Chinese expression for seminar.

At first glance, a small amount of English vocabulary mixed into Chinese conversations should not affect the conversation to the extent of being ‘unable to communicate’. It could happen sometimes, as Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies) said, that ‘they have no idea what I’m talking about’; however, this was something that could be overcome by explanation, given that both parties were Chinese native speakers. According to UNNC students’ own explanations, what mattered more in these cases was non-UNNC students’ negative judgements of this mixed use of language. The UNNC students frequently complained that, when they used English in Chinese conversations,

⁹ ‘Red activities’ in a Chinese context refers to CPC related activities.

non-UNNC students considered them to be ‘pretentious’. For example, Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) felt as though: ‘whatever I say, they think I’m pretentious, due to the 80,000 RMB and the English vocabulary’.

It is interesting that the 80,000 RMB per year tuition fee and the use of English vocabulary were listed together as the reasons for being considered ‘pretentious’. If perceived as economic capital and cultural capital respectively, the tuition fee and the use of English could be understood as proxies for social class. Chinese and English, instead of being two equal forms of human language, are in an unbalanced power relation. As linguistic cultural capital, they have very different values in this context, both in terms of investment, because more capital is required for a Chinese student to learn English than Chinese, and in the sense of convertibility, because English is more desired in the global field of higher education and even on the global job market. The participants strongly indicated, then, that in this case the use of English was something that indicated a higher social class than the use of Chinese alone, the difference in which is perhaps as great as the difference between the 80,000 RMB tuition fee at UNNC and the average 5,000 RMB tuition fee at normal Chinese universities.

Some of the interviewees applied reasoning that seemed simplistic to me about non-UNNC students and attributed their comments about ‘pretentiousness’ to the latter’s lack of knowledge:

Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies): Sometimes I said something they didn’t understand, *and then* they thought I was pretentious.

Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies): They don’t know what the English words represent, *so* they thought I was just pretentious.

However, there might be another explanation: it could be that non-UNNC students were commenting on UNNC students’ behavioural inconsistencies, which did not fit into their common-sense understanding. Generally speaking, people would expect those who cannot help using English expressions to have spent a reasonable amount of time overseas in English-speaking countries such as the UK or the US, which are associated with images of socially privileged groups. Yet, as imaginative travellers who embody foreign culture in a domestic

context, UNNC students (apart from exchange students) have never left China, which might be perceived as a mismatch with their habitual use of English. This mismatch could cause students without TNE experience to think of ‘class imitation’ (Bourdieu, 1984), and to perceive that UNNC students were pretending to be a more privileged social group than the one they were recognised as belonging to, and therefore ‘pretentious’.

7.2.2 Differences in social rules

In addition to the lack of a ‘common language’ in communication, different ‘rules of the game’ in social interactions were also perceived as a major factor that drove UNNC students away from other Chinese students.

Two students said they had never been close to their Chinese peers before UNNC. Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) said: ‘I never had strong attachments to high-school classmates’. According to her stories, the social groups from which she distanced herself have always been the same, with or without her experience at UNNC. She believed that it had nothing to do with family income (before this topic, she was talking about the expensive tuition fees), because her high-school mates were generally rich. She only started to have close friends at UNNC because she agreed more with the social rules there. Another student, Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication), attributed this lack of connection with Chinese peers outside UNNC to his own personality. According to him, he only started to become sociable at UNNC for two reasons. The first was that he felt, at high school, students were allocated to classes as a pre-assigned group to which one could automatically belong, and that this also applied to other Chinese universities. In contrast, at UNNC, grouping was ‘vague’ and ‘loose’, with a ‘high degree of liberty’. In order to be included in any groups, he felt that he had to make an effort to look for and interact with like-minded people. The second reason was that UNNC had a vibe that encouraged ‘interpersonal interaction’. As an example, he shared his experience when he was first admitted to UNNC. He received great help online from senior students, who gave it voluntarily. He compared this with other Chinese universities:

There are many online groups for new students where senior students voluntarily answer your questions. I haven't seen things like this in other Chinese universities. I also asked students from other Chinese universities if they had anything like this. Some of them might have, but unlike ours there are not many active members. [...] I feel much closer interpersonal relationships at UNNC, generally speaking. I feel that, here, everyone wants to have connections with others.

The majority of students, however, acknowledged the influence of UNNC as the main reason why they did not identify with other Chinese students, because at UNNC 'the ways of doing things' were different from other Chinese universities. After further exploration, I noticed those differences initially in their learning experience but fundamentally in socialising rules. To begin with, as I have elaborated in section 7.1.2, at UNNC different pedagogies are employed and these have affected students' ways of doing things. Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies), for example, criticised the negative effects of 'spoon-feeding' in many Chinese universities:

Those students who study at other Chinese universities, their ways of doing things are, like, you know... they expect everything to be given by the teachers, and they don't want to do anything for themselves. They don't even know how to do references. As for reading, they do it by Google translation. I can't understand how their brains work anymore.

There were two things in particular that UNNC students disapproved of in relation to non-UNNC students: *guanxi* and relational hierarchy. These two features are at the core of Chinese relationships: the former looks at the social networks of mutual favour exchange, while the latter refers to the vertical power structure that obligates the lower to obey the higher. Firstly, *guanxi* refers to a 'dyadic, particular, and sentimental tie that has the potential of facilitating favour exchange between the parties connected by the tie' (Bian, 2006, p.312). As Tsang (2013) reveals, *guanxi* is essential to the Chinese middle class's valorisation of cultural capital such as education or career opportunities; hence, it is important for upward generational mobility. The interviewees in Tsang's (2013) research, who were middle-class children studying at a private university, held the belief that it is hard for people to get a good job without *guanxi*, even if they have been very well educated at prestigious universities. Secondly,

‘relational hierarchy’, although also widely used in a Western context, is much more highly valued in East Asian countries such as Japan, China, and Korea (Xu, 1998). Based on a comparative study of college students in China, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, Zhang et al. (2006) conclude that China is still the most traditional Confucian society in terms of relational hierarchy, which is associated with a series of ‘ordering relationship by status, filial piety, loyalty to superiors, and having a sense of cultural superiority’ that are highly influential across many aspects of society (Zhang et al., 2006, p.110).

In terms of the first key factor, the operation of *guanxi* was mainly perceived by UNNC students as something they were not good at and which they tended to look down upon. Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies), for example, expressed her disapproval of *guanxi*-based social rules in many Chinese universities.

Chinese universities are more troublesome. I mean *guanxi*. You have to work on *guanxi* with the teachers and life instructors. Because it’s really relevant to everything that matters to you, for example, scholarship, grades, etc. I really don’t like this. Even some universities with a very good reputation, they still have things like these.

By contrast, at UNNC things were deemed to work differently.

Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies): I can have what I want here, I mean, not too much *guanxi* or profit involved. For example, scholarships are decided according to your grades. People can’t see each other’s grades, but you can have what you deserve to have. I think it’s fairer here.

Lexi (year 4, International Communications Studies): Back home, if I needed anything like a doctor, I would look out for acquaintances... But at UNNC you will only manage to get into interviews [with your *guanxi*]. And you need to go through three rounds of interviews by yourself.

Even in the cases where the interviewees did not feel a strong sense of belonging to the UNNC community, they still perceived the lack of *guanxi* operation as something good. Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies), for example, believed that she had got something better after she compared her experience at UNNC with her friends at another *yiben* (first class, first batch) university in China.

After I heard their stories, I started to think that, although not everything is perfect at UNNC, there is a bright side. That is, UNNC had the aspect I wanted, not much *renqing* (favour), interest-involved things.

The second key factor, hierarchical power relations, also played an important role in UNNC students' othering of their Chinese peers. In most cases, the interviewees looked down upon non-UNNC students for their flattery of people in power, mostly teachers. George (year 2, Mechanical Engineering) shared his experience of when he cooperated with non-UNNC Chinese students in a fund-raising activity for underdeveloped areas. There was a motivational meeting during the fieldwork, and he really disliked another student's 'bureaucratic style' of talking and how hard he applauded in a flattering way when the important people gave speeches. He explained that: 'maybe he was a good person. It's just...I didn't like how his ways of doing things made me feel.'

The president of the Students' Union at UNNC shared another example. In a meeting for leaders of university Students' Unions, s/he was told that, at other Chinese universities, Students' Unions had to plan activities and events for the CPC, for the sake of propaganda and the implementation of governmental guidance and policies. Therefore, the leaders who shared this story with her did not feel much autonomy in running their Union. As I mentioned briefly in Chapter 6 (6.2.3), the Party Committees have superior power to lead student activities at most Chinese universities, while at UNNC they are only there to advise. In contrast, s/he felt that s/he had the power to serve students without pressure to obey the powerful members of the Party Committee.

Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) also shared his story of a friend studying at a different Chinese university. According to him, 'they have a different set of methods of socialising'. When I asked him to clarify, he said:

That's obvious, just running *guanxi* with the teachers. He's a 'capable' person, keeping in close contact with the teachers, and frequently does the *Chinese ways of socialising*.

When I asked what he meant by 'Chinese ways of socialising', he said:

Just, giving expensive gifts to teachers when it's New Year or other festivals. He's also very close to the Dean. According to him, even if he failed in the examinations for

certain modules, he can ask the Dean to talk to the teachers and then everything will be OK.

Representing a collectivist philosophy, the ‘Chinese ways of socialising’ promotes *guanxi* in support of social integration and stability, and obedience to tradition and social hierarchy, whereby a harmonious society can be achieved (Chinese Cultural Connection, 1987). Standing in stark contrast, at UNNC more individualist values were promoted, and deeply informed by Western culture. This is probably why Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) commented: ‘when I met my high-school classmates again, I felt deeply that we [UNNC students] have this special feature of being brave’. Learning and living at UNNC meant a transition of social context, to a place where the social obligations associated with *guanxi* and unconditional obedience according to social hierarchy were no longer promoted. The students were thus enabled to pay attention to their own needs as individuals, instead of the collective. As Siena then elaborated, she felt as though her schoolmates were still behaving in the same way as they had behaved at high school, following every instruction of the teachers; while UNNC students, in contrast, were encouraged to criticise and to act independently. Moreover, the choice of UNNC in the first place also indicates that students’ predispositions are potentially open or even appealing to Western contexts and values. As a result of these mutual effects, UNNC students have been gradually moving away from the social rules that dominate in other Chinese universities, and away from their Chinese peers as followers of those rules.

Thus far, it can be seen that UNNC students are distanced from other non-UNNC Chinese students, despite their physical proximity of being in the same region and sharing the same ethnic background. Instead, they seemed to relate more to TNE students and even INE students overseas, who were geographically distant, owing to similar educational backgrounds and the values embedded within them. In this case, the imaginative distance was more relevant, according to which they built up their (imagined) community, and whose solidarities were provoked by the distinct social rules and cultural norms, profoundly informed by foreign education and foreign social rules that were geographically distant, instead of

adhering to the locally-rooted collectivist traditions. As a result, the imagined boundaries of the UNNC community became clear as students proactively distanced themselves from the core values of Chinese social rules, characterised by *guanxi* and relative hierarchy, which then generate regulatory power over which beliefs and behaviours should be accepted and encouraged and which should be excluded and oppressed. Through constantly measuring and creating the imaginative distance from different social groups, UNNC students built an imagined community that was not dependent on physical proximity. It has to be acknowledged, though, that a certain degree of attachment to and approval from the mainstream Chinese group was also sought after, although in an implicit way. UNNC students desired difference from ‘the others’ but also hoped for their understanding – otherwise, they would not be alerted to defend themselves and respond emotionally to misunderstandings.

7.3 UNNC and UNNC students: Reproduction and transformation

In section 7.1, I have analysed UNNC students’ shared features in terms of both their predispositions before UNNC and their educational experiences at UNNC; in section 7.2, I have explored their belongingness to an (imagined) community that is characterised by proactive othering of non-UNNC students. In this section, I bring these two together and discuss the causal relation between them, asking: to what extent is the (imagined) community of UNNC, characterised by imaginative distance from other Chinese students, shaped by their experiences at UNNC and/or their own predispositions? In what follows, I discuss students’ responses in two overlapping aspects: firstly, some students believed that UNNC accommodates them as who they have always been, just providing them with the resources and space to fully develop their global outlook (7.3.1); secondly, some of them also pointed out that their educational experience at UNNC and social interactions with other groups has had a direct effect on them, leading them to become less ‘typically Chinese’ (7.3.2). Furthermore, they reminded me that UNNC has also been changing in order to adapt to both Chinese students and the market; hence, I will close this section with a discussion of the changes in UNNC in relation to the remaking of the UNNC community (7.3.3).

7.3.1 Developed at UNNC: Tolerance and diversity

Most interviewees felt that the atmosphere at UNNC was characterised by ‘liberty’ (*ziyou*), followed by ‘diversity’ (*duoyuan*), and ‘inclusivity’ (*baorong*). UNNC students in general felt the freedom to say and do the things they wanted in many senses, such as making friends, expressing their opinions, or choosing between focusing on extra-curricular activities (second classroom) and academic performance, without worrying too much about the consequences. Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) described the general atmosphere at Chinese universities as ‘judgemental’ according to unified and stereotypical values.

In Chinese schools, I always felt I was being judged. Sometimes, you even have to be judged for what you do. For example, you study social science because you’re not smart enough [for ‘real’ science].

In contrast, at UNNC, students enjoyed much greater freedom to express themselves and to fight for what they truly wanted. Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies) revealed that she had a clearer mind when discussing her future with her parents and was more encouraged to express her own opinion, thanks to her experiences at UNNC.

It’s because there has always been freedom at our university. Nobody would demand that you do anything. What the tutor[s] have told you in the lecture, is meant to be taken away so that you can have your own set of ideas, not to simply convince you. [...] Everybody is like this, then we discuss, we influence each other on our values and outlook.

In accordance with no demands being placed on them about what they should believe, students also felt that no constraints had been placed on things they could not do. For example, Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) revealed that he enjoyed much more freedom of speech than his friend at a Chinese university. Compared to the overall strict environment in China, he felt much more encouragement to engage in public affairs and to express himself, even to make mistakes.

Nobody has constrained anything about me. In my first year, I registered a WeChat public account to openly criticise things I didn’t like about UNNC, making many unverified assumptions, but nobody has tried to shut me up.

A friend of his who was studying at a very good Chinese university (a ‘211 university’), was not as fortunate as he had been. According to Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry), the friend was running a ‘very cool’ WeChat public account where he published some stories about the university’s history. For ‘unknown reasons’, the friend got a warning from the university in the form of an ‘administrative penalty’ urging him to stop. In contrast, ‘at UNNC, unless it’s illegal, there’s no single occasion when anybody would stop you from doing anything’, said Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry). There had been people disagreeing, thinking that their ways were better than his, but ‘they wouldn’t tell you that you can’t do this’, which was important for him.

In addition, British pedagogies at UNNC also made him realise that it was not good to make ‘unverified assumptions’, which helped him to develop ‘critical thinking’ in a more convincing way.

Influenced by the way of writing essays and reports, I understand now that, no matter what kind of conclusion you’re going to make, you need a reference. No matter whether you want to praise or criticise something, you need a reference, you have to explain why, list 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 reasons, what are the advantages compared to others, and you need to make it clear. The more you want to say, the more references you need.

There was a wide awareness among UNNC students of ‘critical thinking’ as one of the key principles in president Yang’s conceptualisation of Boya education at UNNC. In rejecting Chinese social rules characterised by *guanxi* and relational hierarchy, UNNC students were proud of themselves for being able to think critically and independently, which is essential to the core values of the UNNC community. However, they differed in their understanding and practising of ‘critical thinking’. Some of them, like Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) in his first year, as revealed by himself, tended to make ‘unverified judgements’ and mistook this for ‘critical thinking’. Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) expressed her concern about this ‘merely rhetorical’ misinterpretation of ‘critical thinking’, which unfortunately she had seen in many UNNC students. In extreme cases, ‘critical thinking’ was twisted into ‘rebellious thinking’. As she put it, ‘sometimes students criticise only to be critical’, meaning that they did not understand the substance and only scratched the surface of this idea. Siena (year 4, International Business and

Management) also agreed, saying that she felt the true philosophy of Boya education was ‘sometimes not properly delivered to the students’. Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting) agreed, but held a more optimistic opinion. He said, ‘after all, it’s better than nothing. If everybody says no, no, no, to you, you no longer exist’. For him, it was better to be given the chance to make mistakes first then improve on them later, rather than being denied the chance to do things from the very beginning.

That being said, it is worth noticing that UNNC is not completely isolated from the wider Chinese context. Previously discussed ‘Chinese ways of doing things’ were also observed by several students at UNNC, but these were limited to Chinese administrative staff and some Chinese student organisations. For example, Lola (year 4, Mechanical Engineering) expressed strong discontent at the ‘Chinese ways of doing things’ of some student societies, because she was under the impression that their recruitment criteria were *guanxi* based; as for the academic system, she felt there was ‘no *guanxi* involved’. Having further explored this idea with other students, it seems that, instead of an even fusion, the social space at UNNC has multiple layers that operate within their own spheres, although sometimes with overlaps and interlocks. As Lexi (year 4, International Communications Studies) explained:

[...] I don’t think it’s a fusion [of Western and Chinese cultures]. Should say, there are both. Fusion means both sides are merged together. But here, they’re divided with a clear boundary. The teaching is Western style, while the living is Chinese style. For interpersonal communications, it’s Western style when hanging out with foreign schoolmates but it becomes Chinese style with Chinese schoolmates. There is no fusion, just division, but there are both, yeah that’s the feeling.

(So it’s like a fruit salad bowl? Different fruits are displayed in the same bowl.)

Exactly. It’s not a juice, not a smoothie where everything is blended together.

Instead of being merged into one even tone, students at UNNC enjoyed a more ‘loose’, ‘free’ environment to imagine their own spaces and community by mixing and matching different cultural norms and moving back and forth between different social rules. As Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) expressed it:

Earlier [before UNNC], we were judged according to the same criteria. I disliked it because I think everybody is different, everybody has a different background. But here it’s different.

What I like most about UNNC is that everybody's different. [...] You can focus on the academic, or not; you can focus on student societies, or not; these are all personal choices. But no matter what the choice is, you will be respected. [...] Yes. Diversity.

7.3.2 Made by UNNC: 'Less typically Chinese'

In addition to being given an environment to develop themselves freely, the majority of interviewees believed that their experiences at UNNC had changed them in many ways. Most of them considered themselves to be 'less typically Chinese', with an increasing approval of British or Western culture. As I have elaborated in Chapter 6, UNNC campus is roughly divided into the Living area, which is under control of the Chinese partner WEG, and the Academic area, where the University of Nottingham is in charge. Consistent with that, when talking about the influence of British culture, the interviewees rarely referred to examples in an everyday setting, such as a sense of humour or lifestyles. This might be one of the limitations of imaginative travellers in transnational educational space, as compared to corporeal travellers in INE, who are immersed in an all-round foreign environment. In most cases, they did not have a clear sense of what these would be like in the UK. For example, Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) said 'I only felt a British style in learning at UNNC, not in our everyday lives. My understanding of UK culture is mainly based on TV shows.' Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade)'s mother often buys clothes for him based on her understanding of a 'British gentleman', which has influenced his impression of 'Britishness' as something that reminds him of good tailoring, long umbrellas, and tartan shirts.

Most students said that they had experienced changes in their personality and values at UNNC. When asked if their experience at UNNC had changed them, only three students said that it had barely done so. The rest, though, talked about their experiences at UNNC having made them 'chattier', with a 'higher tolerance for difference', 'improved adaptability' and 'critical thinking', etc. For example, in the interview with the master student, Vera (International Communications Studies), who had spent four years as an undergraduate at a traditional Chinese university, I put the question in a more direct way and asked her if she thought these two kinds of universities would also produce different kinds of people, to which she responded immediately:

Of course. My previous schoolmates, they just want to find a stable job, follow the will of the people in power, and progress slowly up the social ladder.

I was like that, but since I started learning at UNNC, I've been more open to changes and challenges, and I now want to try different careers.'

In many cases, the aforementioned changes were perceived as equivalent to becoming less 'typically Chinese'. For example, Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) said:

I feel less typically Chinese. I can't tolerant unfairness anymore. I will try to do the right thing if I see unfairness. For example, earlier we complained about the unfair bundles of China Intercom to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Many students used the phrase 'typically Chinese' in the interviews, to represent values centred on *guanxi* and relational hierarchy, which were usually accompanied by a lack of respect for justice and fairness and the denial of individuality. Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) felt that her mother was 'typically Chinese' and had had a profound influence on her personality, which only started to change after she went to UNNC. She felt that UNNC had given her a lot of courage:

I think what UNNC changed in me most is courage. Because my mum was a teacher ... she's actually a nice person, but she used to lecture me to follow many rules. Yes. I had been very obedient since I was little. Maybe sometimes I didn't know how to express my thoughts, nor did I really try to make a change.

Her mother was a teacher at a Chinese school; hence, she sometimes felt intimidated both as a daughter and a student to her mother and so she felt that she had to be very obedient. Moreover, she attended the school where her mother was teaching; hence, she received many privileges owing to her mother's *guanxi*:

I studied at the place where my mum worked, from elementary school to junior school. You know? Everything is about favour (*ren qing*). I felt I could do whatever I wanted without getting punished.

As a result, she adopted the 'typically Chinese' social rules when she was little:

So at that time I felt *guanxi* was important, and I acted accordingly and tried hard to please the adults.

She considered UNNC to be a turning point in the transformation of her personality. As she revealed:

[...] I've changed a lot at UNNC on this matter. [...] I think at UNNC, because I've seen that the senior students are equal to me, they gave me a lot of advice and many opportunities, so I changed a lot. Now even when I'm dealing with my parents, I no longer obey blindly as I used to. Sometimes I even try to critically analyse the problems with them.

In contrast to her childhood experiences, at UNNC, hierarchy between junior and senior students is downplayed, while fair 'rules' are respected more than *guanxi*. It may be difficult in some cases to adjust, and may come at the cost of some privileges. But, as Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) explained, 'I would prefer no *guanxi* to be involved at all. As long as it's fairly applied to everybody, I will be happy'. Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) also appreciated the social rules at UNNC, saying: 'I feel at UNNC, rules are rules'. He became more respectful of the rules and 'longed for British-style ways of doing things', which he perceived to be 'definitely related' to his experience at UNNC. He acknowledged that sometimes rules are not perfect; however, they are still better than no rules:

Of course, there might be loopholes in the rules. But it feels good to have some rules to rely on. Even though I have no social connections, these rules can enable me to achieve things. [...] Sometimes the rules are even heartless. For example, those who fail to achieve the required academic performance will face termination of studies, no negotiations. This is not going to happen in China.

Overall, based on the observations so far, it can be argued that this Boya education at UNNC has had an impact on its participants at the level of dispositions; but it would be imprudent to exaggerate its influence on students' educational habitus. Even Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies), who had already been experiencing UNNC education for almost four years at the time of interviewing and agreed that UNNC had changed her a lot, still chose to say that the changes that had happened to her were more 'in practice', 'at a technical level', rather than something essential to her personality.

Also, unlike Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade), not everybody attributed their unique experience at UNNC to British or Western culture. For

example, the president of the Students' Union argued that UNNC is unique. It is different not only from Chinese universities but also from other Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities. S/he believed that the unique social environment at UNNC was due to its short history, together with president Yang's educational philosophy.

On the one hand, it's because this university is relatively young, there hasn't been any fixed pattern. Some universities with hundreds of years of history, I mean, after hundreds of years some fixed modes of thinking have come into shape. But in our university, this is rarely seen. That's why everyone can explore his/her own path. On the other hand, I feel that, compared to other Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities, our university is really 'student centred', with a relatively free and open environment. As I understand it, in other Chinese–Foreign Cooperative Universities students have much less power. [...]

Sometimes I talk to people from the Students' Unions of other Chinese universities. They tell me that they experience many interventions from the staff. For example, the curfew is solely decided by the university.

Seemingly consistent with her opinion, as time passed, this privilege of UNNC seemed to go into retreat. Many students complained that they felt UNNC was changing in a more commercial and utilitarian direction. This was also addressed by Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry), who pointed out that 'the real prosperity of student activities only happened during the early years of the establishment of UNNC'. His definition of 'the real prosperity' is where everybody does what he or she truly feels passionate about, rather than something that is short-sighted or profit driven. He said:

At the very beginning, there was real liberal arts education. At that time, we had wide-ranging options for projects [...] At that time, we were really given options. Unlike now, when it appears that we have many choices, but nobody dares to do it. [...] The majority of people are choosing a path that can see the future, based on whether it's good for employment or applications for postgraduate study. It's changed.

7.3.3 Changes at UNNC

The belief that 'UNNC has changed' was shared by almost half of the interviewees. Some of these changes were not necessarily perceived in a negative way. For example, several students mentioned that there have been many changes in teaching methods. According to Mateo, an academic staff as well as a UNNC alumna, while

not intentionally promoted by the university in any official documents, it seems that most of the changes have been made locally in class, in response to the needs and feedback of the Chinese students. According to the students, the foreign staff had started to adopt a ‘Chinese way’ of teaching. For example, Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) mentioned that, probably owing to little response from the students, the seminar tutors had given up on facilitating discussion and turned to non-interactive methods. They also felt that there had been changes in curriculum content and design, in order to be more appealing to Chinese students. For example, they had noticed that the foreign staff had started to teach them textbook knowledge in a more structured way, with clear instructions in relation to the exams. This was exactly what students like Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies) had hoped for, as mentioned in section 7.2. There were several students who even felt that it would be the best to replace some foreign teachers with Chinese ones for their foundation year in order to help them to ‘enter the game’. Overall, the changes in pedagogy satisfied the needs of the students, who were expecting better results from UNNC’s explorations of mixed, Chinese–British education.

Some of the other observed changes, at a deeper level of values, have disappointed many students. Year 3 and year 4 students in particular found it ‘disappointing’ that, in their view, UNNC had become more ‘utilitarian’. Some of them put it more radically as ‘going downhill’. Of course, ‘utilitarian’ is not necessarily a negative idea; what is problematic is the gap between what UNNC initially promoted, and what it had latterly begun to deliver. This observation coincided with the inconsistency between Yang’s conceptualisation of Boya education and the later publications of CRSU, as discussed in section 4.2. Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) explained her feeling as:

The university is the same university, but I feel it’s not the same university. [...] The most important change is, [it] focuses on the outcome, and no longer has the consciousness of enjoying the process. [...] I like the original slogan of Nottingham University; it’s something like ‘a city is built on wisdom’. It’s something really humanitarian. But now, for example, for the 10th anniversary the slogan of UNNC is ‘Academic excellence, Bright futures.’ It made me feel very utilitarian. It feels like, if you don’t have academic excellence then you don’t have a bright future.

Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) expressed his disappointment for similar reasons, and further argued that this change in values was most directly represented in ‘the branding strategy’ and the ‘recruiting strategy’.

They just violently tie branding to further education and employment. [...] For them, the value of this university equals to output minus input, plain and simple. The pathways for the students are getting narrower and narrower. When they’re recruiting students, they neglected the most important thing in higher education: the four-year experience on campus.

What Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) wanted to get was probably the ‘disinterestedness’ of Boya education, which was promoted by UNNC when it was first conceptualised and established. Oliver (year 2, International Studies) made similar observations and attributed this change from ‘humanitarianism’ to ‘utilitarianism’ to Chinese values. ‘Ultimately, this university is run by Chinese people with inherent traditional Chinese values’, said Oliver. He elaborated:

Well, I think it was me who expected too much at the very beginning. [...] In essence, UNNC is a Chinese university with foreign staff. [It is Chinese], including most of its learning environment, the learning status of most of the students inside of it, they’re probably just coated by a layer of ‘international education’. I’m not saying that they’re completely different inside, of course more or less they will be influenced [by the outer layer]. But essentially it’s a Chinese university. Because what decides a university is not the teaching, or the teachers, they’re influential factors but not decisive. It’s the culture transmitted across generations, and I think in this respect UNNC is going downhill.

I then encouraged him to further explain what he expected by way of cultural transmission, and why he thought that it had changed. He shared similar concerns with Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry). Basically, at the very beginning, he explained, UNNC was really struggling and did not even have a campus. The people who were attracted to it were those who really had an open spirit, really longing for ‘foreignness’, ‘international education’, ‘new/different experiences’. But now UNNC had become famous for its expensive tuition fees and was selling itself by quantifying successful cases of employment/further education, which had consequently attracted a different group of students with a different agenda. As a result, increasing numbers of students were using UNNC as a ‘springboard’ to better opportunities in the job market.

Alice (year 2, International Business and Management) echoed this by using the same expressions – ‘springboard’ and ‘going downhill’ – as Oliver (year 2, International Studies) and Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry). She added that she felt as though UNNC had become increasingly ‘rigidified’, stepping into a rigid ‘business pattern’, both the university and the students around her. When I asked for more details about this ‘pattern’, Alice could not offer more information, she simply said that she just felt its existence but was not clear about the particularities. Nevertheless, what Aldo (year 4, International Communications Studies) said in his interview can offer us a possible answer:

The marketing of UNNC exploits the utilitarian culture in China. Meaning, it tells the students, if you come here, you can have a good job, you can have a bright future. However, I think this kind of utilitarian culture does not belong to the University of Nottingham, nor belong to UNNC; it’s not integral to British education. I think they should reduce this [utilitarian culture] while working harder on the cultural output of humanitarian education.

These comments provide valuable insights into students’ perceptions of the changes that may have actually occurred at UNNC. Furthermore, they offer more information about their imaginative space, whereby the potential differences between imaginative travellers (TNE) and corporeal travellers (INE) can be noticed. Interviewees tended to attribute the tendency towards utilitarianism to the localisation of China, with Alice (year 2, International Business and Management) even asserting that it had no relevance at all to UK education, with UNNC or UNUK. By contrast, although consumerist discourses vary across nations, many studies indicate that it is very common for European HEIs to perceive students as consumers (Brooks, 2018). In the particular case of the UK, the prevailing market discourse has pushed students from a ‘being’ mode as learners seeking learning experiences, to a ‘having’ mode as consumers only focused on the possession of a degree (Molesworth et al., 2009, p.285). These students’ impression of UK higher education being free from ‘utilitarianism’ is arguably based more on their imagined geographies than on the actual space in the UK.

7.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have explored the second research question: *'How do Chinese students negotiate their (imagined) community at UNNC?'*. Firstly, I have discussed their in-group similarities in terms of both their predispositions before UNNC and shared educational experience at UNNC. In section 7.1, I demonstrated that they shared similarities in language, nationality, and social class, and received an integrated education with both Chinese and British elements. They are akin to 'the missing middle' in youth research (Roberts, 2014) in terms of socio-spatial mobilities: they are neither the most privileged group if compared to INE participants, nor the most disadvantaged who had no choice but domestic education. Consistent with their preference for a Western style in material space, as presented in Chapter 6, they showed a strong preference for British-style education and tended to be more thoroughly convinced by it, despite the difficulties they experienced in adjusting to it. Secondly, this preference is generalisable to a wider social space beyond the classroom, whereby they showed a tendency towards distancing themselves from people and rules which they consider to be 'typically Chinese'. In section 7.2, I explored their negotiation of imagined community through othering, whence they proactively distanced themselves from non-UNNC Chinese students because they felt 'the lack of a common language' and 'different social rules', regardless of their shared ethnicity, mother tongue and social context. This finding indicates inconsistencies between physical and imaginative distances, and their tendency towards cosmopolitanism while moving away from being 'typically Chinese'. Thirdly, I explored the role played by their own predispositions and/or educational experiences at UNNC in their construction of an (imagined) community, as distinct from Chinese students at other universities. According to the interviews, they believed that UNNC has both developed their predispositions, and shaped new attributes within them, during which process UNNC itself is also changing and adjusting to the Chinese context. Therefore, we need to understand this mutual reproduction process between UNNC and its students as an ongoing spiral of development, instead of a closed circle of reproduction.

Thus far, I have explored UNNC students' space and community, both of which are deeply informed and entangled with their transnational imaginations. The final

question is: so what? Based on the analysis of the previous two chapters, the next chapter will address this question by evaluating students' acquisition of cosmopolitanism, whereby their future chances of excelling in the global job and postgraduate educational market could be suggested.

Chapter 8 Cosmopolitans in the Making

In this chapter, I explore students' acquisition of cosmopolitanism at UNNC, and its potential for valorisation in global position-taking. As noted in Chapter 3, cosmopolitanism is 'the class consciousness of frequent travellers' (Calhoun, 2002, p.869). Thus, as a different form of mobility, to what extent can imaginative mobilities facilitate the acquisition of cosmopolitanism? Therefore, in this chapter, I employ the concept of cosmopolitan cultural capital to explore the third research question:

How and to what extent does Chinese students' experience at UNNC affect their cosmopolitan outlook and competence?

In order to understand the influence of their UNNC experience, I investigate students' cosmopolitan orientation before UNNC, their acquisition of cosmopolitan cultural capital at UNNC, and their expectations for future life trajectories after UNNC. Accordingly, the research question is unpacked into three sub-questions, as below:

- 1) What does their decision to attend UNNC imply about their predispositions in terms of cosmopolitanism?
- 2) To what extent and in what ways have they acquired cosmopolitan cultural capital at UNNC?
- 3) What are the implications for their future trajectories regarding corporeal global mobilities?

In section 8.1, I critically examine their decision to choose UNNC, whether it was driven by their cosmopolitan predisposition or capital-seeking strategy. In section 8.2, I evaluate their cosmopolitan cultural capital in three forms: institutionalised, linguistic, and embodied, with reference to their foreign encounters on campus. Finally, in section 8.3, I explore their potential future trajectories by looking at their own preferences and predictions, in order to reflect upon the implications of UNNC experience for their corporeal mobility in the future.

8.1 Decision to attend UNNC: Cosmopolitan adventurer and/or strategic capital seeker

In this section, I look into the students' decision to attend UNNC, a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University, an option which is simultaneously locally based and cosmopolitan oriented. These motivations matter because they tell us about their initial attitudes towards, and competence at, being mobile, which is also indicative of the role played by UNNC in their future (im)mobility. In terms of educational (im)mobility, Ball et al. (1995, p.56) have identified two types of decision-makers, 'the working-class locals', who prefer their children to stay locally for education, and 'the middle-class cosmopolitans', who tend to travel more frequently and make decisions for their offspring according to the educational market in more strategic ways. This is related to their middle-class habitus whereby they make use of the educational system to reproduce their various forms of capital intergenerationally, in terms of both the overall high volume and the large proportion of cultural capital more specifically. In applying it to global higher education, then, how do we understand the rationale behind the decision to participate in TNE in relation to students' class status?

Before exploring this question, however, it is important to note that only a few students put UNNC as their first choice. Here, I need to briefly explain how university application works in China. In most cases, Chinese students have to participate in the nationwide *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination), based on the result of which they will be ranked with millions of their peers in their own provinces. Particular policies and rules vary every year, but in principle students are required to list several universities, sorted according to preference, then wait for the decisions from the universities of their choice, which are made primarily based on their *Gaokao* result. During the interviews, many students said that they ended up at UNNC because they were rejected by their first choice. Some even said that they only put UNNC on their list as a backstop plan. For example, when asked if UNNC was their first choice, some interviewees answered as below:

Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies): No. My first choice was Dalian Tech. [...] In that year, in my province, there were about 10,000 students who were able to get into

yiben universities. I was ranked about 4,000. So [not top of the top], UNNC was my best choice.

Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies): No. My *Gaokao* performance was not good, and other universities within my score range are rubbish.

Neal (year 4, International Communications Studies): No. UNNC was the second of my second choice. I screwed up the *Gaokao*.

It was actually very common for interviewees to say that they did not perform well in the *Gaokao* or even that they ‘screwed up’. However, as clarified in Chapter 7, UNNC only admits students from *yiben* (first class, first batch), a category which accounts for 10 to 15% of the annual national student population. When further asked about the reasons behind this self-perception of poor performance, the interviewees then explained that they had actually aimed higher before the *Gaokao*, expecting to get into ‘985 universities’ and with great expectations for their futures. China only has 39 universities in the 985 project, for which the average student acceptance rate in 2017 was less than 2%. Hence, it would be more appropriate to say that it was their disappointment at not achieving their ambitious goal that made them feel they had ‘screwed up’, rather than an objectively poor performance in the *Gaokao* among all participants. For example, Peter (PhD, English Studies) said: ‘I’m here because I screwed up the *Gaokao*. The lowest mark I had ever got in high school was 560, but in the *Gaokao* I only earned 512.’ But after further exploration, he told me that the benchmark for *yiben* in his province that year was only 475, which was much lower than the score he had achieved. Many other interviewees told me similar stories, in which they actually performed well but did not achieve what they wanted.

Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade): My father chose it [UNNC] for me. He was thinking like this: my score was not high but not low; too much for a ‘211 university’, but not enough for a ‘985 university’.

Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication): It was an awkward situation. I didn’t perform well in the *Gaokao*. I could probably have managed to enter a ‘985 university’, but only the bottom ones. [...] I think ‘211 universities’ are no different from other ordinary universities.

Lexi (year 4, International Communications Studies): It was my second choice. [...] I managed to achieve the benchmark for the first tier, but I didn't exceed it by a lot. I didn't want to go the average ones [in the first tier], but I couldn't make it into the top ones.

Hence, most of the interviewees would have preferred to have gone to other, more prestigious domestic universities if they had had a choice. In their minds, UNNC was very likely to be ranked lower than most of the '985 universities', which would be the first choice for most of them; however, compared to '211 universities', UNNC was still competitive and surely perceived as a good option among *yiben* universities.

However, even as a second choice, why did the students choose UNNC over other universities? To this question, the answer given by Axton (year 4, Mechanical Engineering) was very informative.

(Why did you choose UNNC?)

In fact, I didn't expect this, well, probably also within my expectations, I didn't perform well in the *Gaokao* and wanted to choose a not bad university. Relatively speaking, this option [UNNC] is highly *cost-effective*. I'm not talking about money. I mean highly *score-effective*.

(What do you mean by score-effective?)

It means that with the score I had, this university was a good deal.

(What's good about this deal?)

Maybe in the future, *applying for postgraduate study will be easier*, and... I felt this university was *different*.

His answer covered two types of decision-making: 1) curiosity about difference, novelty, and foreignness and 2) strategy for capital accumulation with careful calculation of convertibility. Although both types of decision-making may seem to resemble the features of the 'cosmopolitan middle class', they are actually related to different class statuses and informed by different forms of habitus. I will now consider each of these in turn.

8.1.1 Cosmopolitan adventurers

To some degree, students' decisions to go to UNNC were driven by their curiosity about foreignness. This type of decision-making can be further attributed to three

factors: 1) disapproval of certain Chinese social rules that pushed them away from China; 2) the appeal of foreignness, particularly Western culture, that pulled them towards a foreign education; and 3) a desire for novelty and uniqueness in general that encouraged them to try new options.

Firstly, the majority of UNNC students were more or less critical or sceptical about the social rules in China, which has become increasingly evident during the course of the discussions in Chapters 6 and 7. For example, Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies) regarded the compulsory courses on Chinese socialist ideology and politics education at other universities to be ‘scary’, and she felt lucky that she was able to avoid all of these at UNNC, whereby her mind could be freed, in contrast to her peers at other Chinese universities.

I think other Chinese universities are really scary. They have to learn Chinese political ideology every day, like Marxist philosophy, etc. Their student societies are not as good as ours. [...] And they’re really narrow-minded.

In addition to the content of education from a cultural perspective, Oliver (year 2, International Studies) was ‘disgusted’ with the social rules at some prestigious Chinese universities. Apart from the ‘985 universities’, and probably some top ‘211 universities’, he was under the impression that the majority of Chinese universities are characterised by plagiarism, cheating, academic malpractice by the teachers, etc. In his particular case, UNNC has preferential recruitment policies for students originating from Zhejiang Province (where UNNC is based); hence, the level of entry is much lower, almost to the benchmark of *yiben*. Therefore, since his score was not high enough to get him into one of the best universities, he preferred to choose UNNC, a British university that is famous for strict and fair rules, without *guanxi* involved, so that he can ‘really learn something’.

Other reasons [in addition to his unsatisfactory results in the *Gaokao*] ... Probably, I did like it, based on my understanding at that time. I liked the ways of doing things at this university, at least I had the feeling that UNNC was *different from other Chinese universities*.

(Can you specify what’s different?)

At that time, I felt that many Chinese universities were chaotic and dark. Many guys just stay in their dormitories and play video games during term time, and study overnight before the

exam. Or, you give expensive gifts to the teachers, then you can pass. Then you're good. Even if you can't pass, you can pay 300, or 500 RMB, retake the exam. Or... find some 'teammates' to cheat in the exam. I didn't want a life like that. I'm not saying that it's like this in every university. I mean, those universities within our score range [lower than '985 universities'].

Peter (PhD, English Studies) also had a negative impression of Chinese social rules, especially due to the influence of his father:

My family wanted me to see the world, not always stay in the same place. There's no future for those who always stay in the same place. My father has a strong disaffection for the 'rules of the game' in his working unit, he works in the government. Have you heard about the *Jianggang* Culture? He disliked it and didn't want to compromise. As a result, he didn't have a happy life. So, he told me: 'You see, I've been experiencing the same thing day after day, year after year, and I don't see a way out. I don't want you to repeat my life. I even hope, if you have a chance to leave, you'd better not stay here anymore. It's not good for people who are young and have ideals. So, you'd better go and see the outside world'.

Jiang means soya sauce and *gang* means vat. Together, this term connotes that the harmful, unspoken 'rules of the game' that have been established across time persist to become taken for granted and then they corrupt everybody involved. Peter (PhD, English Studies) was not fully convinced by his father's argument, though, as he knew that his father had only received education from a Chinese university and had never really been overseas himself. However, this did not stop him from feeling curious about 'the outside world', as his father described it:

He was educated at a traditional university in China, though, but he's read many books about this aspect. He's been telling me about how good America is, how good capitalism is, and human rights stuff. Of course, I know it's not necessarily true, but since I was little it gave me the impression that *the outside world is beautiful*. At that time [of decision-making], I was also considering that UNNC was probably closest to 'the *outside world*'.

This connects to the second factor, a desire for foreignness, especially Western culture. In most cases, this appeared to be merely a naïve, innocent curiosity about 'the West', 'the international', and the 'foreign' in their imagination, instead of being based on careful research about individual countries or universities. For example, Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) said that she really wanted to travel, to experience what was out there. She confessed that she did not have much

ambition about academic achievements or looking for the best university or the best job. She just wanted to travel more and experience more. She said: ‘Before the release of the *Gaokao* results, I’d already told my parents that even if I was ranked into the third batch (*sanben*), I wanted to *go out*’. Oliver (year 2, International Studies), Carol (year 4, International Communications Studies), and Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication) also shared this favourable impression of foreignness:

Oliver: Meanwhile, I feel this university is quite *internationalised*, which also interests me a lot.

Carol: I wanted to be more *international*.

Josh: I’ve always liked academic research, and I’ve been looking for an *open-minded*, Chinese–foreign cooperative university. [...] I mean, those universities that are included in the *Gaokao* system in China but are at the same time a bit *Westernised*. This is it.

Those who had clearer expectations of ‘Western’, ‘foreign’ culture tended to believe that the social rules operating there are very different from the ones they see in Chinese society, of which they strongly disapprove. For example, also based on the impression of prevailing academic malpractice in Chinese universities, like Oliver (year 2, International Studies), Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) perceived the encouragement of independent study and integrity in student–teacher relationships at UNNC as something that attracted him.

It was because of my father; he mentioned some virtues of UNNC. [...] For example, unlike other universities in China, there is no *zixi* (self-study), and the relationships between students and teachers are very *innocent* and *pure*.

It needs to be explained here that, although *zixi* is literally translated as self-study, it actually refers to a rigid course in which every student has to self-study in the same classroom during a certain amount of time, normally supervised by a tutor. It is a common form of Chinese spoon-feeding education, which effectively controls students’ self-study hours and location so that they cannot be lazy.

Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies), taking a different perspective, considered that the cultural atmosphere at UNNC was something Western and *liberal* in contrast to the dominant one in China, which would allow and even

encourage free speech and independent thinking, and that was what he had been longing for.

I came to know about UNNC when I was reading a magazine in a *zixi* (self-study) course in my third year of high school. I was surprised by the Nottingham Ducks¹⁰ and thought, oh, things can also be like this at a university. It said in the magazine that ‘UNNC is definitely not some place you can waste your time and leave with a degree’, that impressed me. [...] Then I did some research, I found UNNC fit my appetite. Because my ideal university ought to be very *liberal*, and very *open*. Eventually, I made up my mind to go to UNNC because of this picture.

(He showed me the picture on his phone, which depicted sixteen Chinese characters in white against a black background. I then started reading the words on the picture he showed me. Official English translation: Critical Thinking, Free Expression, Proactive Arguments, Truth Pursuit.)

Yeah. Then I felt that UNNC might be a place where I can refresh my world view.

It is worth noticing that it seemed to be a common pattern for the interviewees to perceive the mythological ‘West’ (Hall, 1992) and ‘the Chinese’ as binary, whereby the very production of knowledge is influenced. I have mentioned this in section 2.1.2, in the discussion about the discursive construction of ‘the West’ as the legitimate. In a similar vein, the discursive construction of ‘the West’ and ‘the Chinese’ as binary can be noticed in several interviews, with the former perceived as something necessarily positive and the latter as necessarily negative. In the discussions above, about pushing away from ‘the Chinese’ and pulling towards ‘the West’, it is particularly evident that students’ ways of understanding and acting have been shaped by their way of talking about and creating their imagined space. In depicting the promising images of ‘the West’ or ‘the UK’, it was very common for the students to use expressions such as ‘unlike China’, ‘different from Chinese universities’, etc., during which process they were also creating and affirming new imaginations of ‘the West’. Another good example of this discursive construction is how students attributed change at UNNC (Chapter 7), in which they were mainly only focusing on the materialist and utilitarian culture in contemporary China while

¹⁰ This is the nickname used by Chinese students for the swans at UNNC.

turning a blind eye to similar commercialist discourses in the West. This binary construction of ‘the West’, I argue, cannot alone be seen as an indicator of cosmopolitanism. In this section, I will only focus on their curiosity about the world, but in the next section I will pick up on this and explore whether this curiosity helped them to develop the cosmopolitan capacity to transcend their own national frame.

This makes the third point particularly important: the desire to explore foreignness and novelty. Later in his interview, Arian (year 1, International Communications Studies) shared one of his favourite quotes with me: ‘not to look at the world from the perspective of a nation, but to look at a nation from the perspective of the world.’ He told me that, ultimately, it was this kind of spirit that drove him to UNNC, after which he concluded that, ‘I really wanted to see *new* things, so here I am’. Some students did not have a clear idea about what they could avoid and what they could gain in a Western environment. They did not even think of ‘the West’ or ‘the foreign’ as something necessarily good as compared to ‘the Chinese’ and ‘the national’. Some of them just had this strong instinct to try something new, a rebellious desire to be different from their peers, and an adventurous heart to experience the unknown. This resonates more with the features of what I refer to as ‘cosmopolitan adventurers’. For example, Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) commented that UNNC did not have a long, glorious history, which could be an important consideration in choosing universities. However, ‘it’s young and unique’, and hence remained very attractive to her as someone who ‘really wanted to try something new’. New experiences may not necessarily be good, and in many cases they imply challenges and discomfort, but even this could be perceived as a valuable gain to some UNNC students. As Lexi (year 4, International Communications Studies) explained:

I wanted to jump out of my comfort zone and enter a *new* environment. I felt that I may be able to change myself at UNNC, for example, by interacting with people from *different* cultural backgrounds in small-sized classes.

In some cases, their parents also played an important role in pushing them towards the unfamiliar outer world; for example, the story of Peter (PhD, English Studies)

quoted above. Alice (year 2, International Business and Management) also shared her story:

My mum recommended it [UNNC] to me. I saw the promotion video when we were discussing it. The promotion video was really appealing, including the entire philosophy of education, or the way in which the university was run, very appealing. It made me feel, if I went to this university, one can have a life that is very *different* from that of the people who went to other Chinese universities. I happen to be someone who really enjoys exploring *new* things, so I wanted to try it out.

8.1.2 Strategic capital-seekers

In some cases, students' decisions to go to UNNC were also made on the basis of a careful calculation of costs and benefits in terms of Bourdieusian forms of capital. It is worth noting here that, in this section, what I mean by 'strategy' is not a Bourdieusian term, as the Bourdieusian 'strategy' does not operate on a conscious level but is informed by habitus in a dynamic relation to the field. Also, I would like to emphasise here that it is possible for students to be informed by both a capital-seeking strategy and cosmopolitan curiosity to different degrees; they are not mutually exclusive. The rationale behind this approach could be further broken down into three aspects: firstly, to maximise the acquisition of cosmopolitan cultural capital for future mobility in the global arena; secondly, to avoid losing capital already in their possession that would help them to excel in the domestic field in China; thirdly, to delay foreign adventures that were mainly related to their parent's dispositions.

Firstly, many students chose UNNC in order to accumulate various forms of capital for future global mobility. As noted in section 8.1.1, they had curiosity about the outer world, i.e. a willingness to be mobile, but sometimes did not have sufficient competence for immediate corporeal mobility. A TNE campus in their home country then became an ideal inter-space for them to acquire cosmopolitan competencies, such as mastering a world language, which is 'almost certainly English' (Meyer, 2007, p.266) and acquiring a Western degree as the 'ultimate symbolic capital necessary for global mobility' (Ong, 1999, p.90). For example, Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) and Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies) explicitly stated that to 'improve [their] English' was one

of the driving factors that pushed them to UNNC. Less strongly, Gabriel (year 2, Finance and Accounting) believed that English fluency could be an ‘added value’ to his main subject as compared to studying the same course in Chinese. When asked why she hadn’t opted for INE instead, Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) explained her concern to me:

Because I think, for most Chinese students who want to study overseas, they have to complete a pre-session first. Then I figured, my English competence was not good enough for me to be 100% sure that I could get into a good university after a year or six months of pre-session. So, I think UNNC is a buffer. A longer time of buffering will be better.

Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) had a similar strategy, but she was thinking more about the credentials (i.e. institutionalised cultural capital) rather than English competence when she prioritised UNNC over INE. It is worth noting here that TNE, instead of a destination, is strategically employed by many UNNC students and their families as an inter-space where they can acquire cosmopolitan competencies in preparation for future mobility in INE. Curiosity regarding foreignness was in many cases accompanied by fear of ‘the unknown’, ‘the risk’, and this led to the choice of TNE as a safer option with minimised risk and maximised benefit. Some of my interviewees, across year of study, explicitly admitted that they or their parents chose UNNC purely as a springboard for subsequent INE (e.g., Zoe year 1, Elio year 2, James year 3, Aldo year 4). Aldo (year 4, International Communications Studies), for instance, expressed in a direct way that:

I feel like this university is a useful springboard. For one thing, it’s been teaching you how to use English for four years, for another, there is the Western education system. So, if I didn’t go overseas for postgraduate study, it would be a waste.

For him, the value of UNNC education can only be realised when converted to a better opportunity for further education overseas. This was confirmed as ‘a common motivation’ among UNNC students by the Students’ Union president because ‘it’s easier to apply for postgraduate study in the UK after UNNC’. Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) implied this when she said:

My *Gaokao* score wasn’t very high... Probably I could go to a not very good 211 university. It wouldn’t be good. This university, at least it’s a branch campus of a British university.

Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies) put it more explicitly by saying:

I think if I had to go to an ordinary 211, I'd do better to choose UNNC. [With the degree from UNNC] I'll have a better chance to get admitted to an overseas university in the future.

Maximising the benefit simultaneously entails minimising the risk. A direct transition from domestic education to INE carries potential risks, as the interviewees have emphasised, such as learning difficulties in foreign HEIs, living difficulties in foreign countries, or even failure to acquire academic credentials. For example, Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies), who was very sceptical about Chinese education (section 8.1.1), did not choose INE due to her concern of 'ending up with nothing':

I thought about going overseas for study before the *Gaokao*. I also took the TOFEL test. [...] Then I got admitted by UNNC, and my mum said, you'd better stay.

(So you put UNNC before the option of going overseas?)

At that time, yes.

(Why?)

It was complicated. [If I wanted to go overseas] I had to do a pre-sessional course first. If I did, my only option would be a two-year college course in the US, then transfer to a university afterwards. I was negotiating with... I forgot the name. Something like some valley something college. There were many Chinese students and it was so highly competitive, meaning that I may not succeed in transferring. Then I was thinking, if I go to UNNC, at least I can secure a degree from a *yiben* university; while if I go overseas, what if I can't manage to transfer after two years of study? What could I do after that? I would end up with nothing.

Secondly, in addition to accumulating capital that is available in the global arena, the possible loss of capital already in their possession that would be essential in the domestic field of China was also taken into consideration. These forms of capital, in addition to the tuition fee in the form of economic capital, can also take the form of both cultural and social capital. In one respect, as a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University, UNNC also issues the degree accredited by the MoE. This is what James (year 3, Finance and Accounting)' father meant by 'preparing with both hands', which is a unique benefit of TNE. Flora (year 2, International Communications

Studies) likewise argued that TNE at UNNC could at least leave her with a degree from a *yiben* university. She recalled her mother's strategy:

My mum said 'even if you don't like it, we can transfer you to other universities, but at least we can secure a *yiben* degree.'

In another respect, UNNC students might also avoid losing social capital by choosing TNE over INE, although they did not spell this out in the interviews because they were mainly distancing themselves from Chinese social rules. Attending TNE meant staying embedded in Chinese social networks, which is essential for the valorisation of cultural capital. As mentioned in Chapter 7, *guanxi* remains crucial in the Chinese education and job markets. In Tsang's (2013, p.664) research, similar observations were also made about the backstop plans of the parents of Chinese INE students. Instead of hoping to explore the world or enter the global job market, these INE students agreed with their parents to go back to China to work before their parents' retirement, as '*guanxi* would no longer pay any dividends' afterwards. Acquiring cosmopolitan competencies in TNE domestically appears to be a better plan than INE in this sense, as they can do so without leaving the *guanxi* network of their parents. Even though it was not specified as their intention, this may result in increasing their competitiveness in the domestic job market.

In the analysis above, it can be noticed that the opinions of parents were frequently mentioned. This is what I would like to address as a third point, which is actually intertwined with both of the above aspects: the decision-making of students was informed by the dispositions of the previous generation, i.e. their parents. INE has only started to develop and become an individual choice in China since the reform and opening up of the 1980s, which means that, for their parents' generation, INE was not as common a choice in China as it has now become. Whether students can survive the radical transition from a domestic to a foreign environment was also one of the major concerns of their parents. Given that their parents were the main sponsors of their education and the students were probably the single child in the family, together with the collectivist values mentioned in Chapter 4, parents were influential in UNNC students' decision-making when choosing universities. Many students emphasised that the opinions of their parents had largely shaped their

decision-making, both in terms of supporting them to experience foreignness and constraining them to stay in China. For example, Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) said that his parents had concerns about his ‘adaptability to a foreign environment all of a sudden’ because he ‘lacked independent living experience’, and these concerns were intensified owing to him being the only child. James (year 3, Finance and Accounting), who wanted to use UNNC as a springboard to INE, was influenced by his father because many of his father’s friends had sent their children to study overseas. Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies)’s father played a more active role by introducing UNNC to him and persuading him to go there.

8.2 Acquisition of cosmopolitan cultural capital

Given these expectations about UNNC, what have the students actually achieved? This is the focus of this section, in which I explore UNNC students’ ability to be globally mobile through the lens of cosmopolitan cultural capital. I start with a discussion of their competence in coping with a cosmopolitan cultural environment, employing their newly endowed institutionalised, linguistic, and embodied cultural capital (sections 8.2.1, 8.2.2, 8.2.3 respectively), then I explore their interactions with foreign others in terms of the cosmopolitan social setting (section 8.2.4).

8.2.1 Credentials: Institutionalised cultural capital

In the job market, one convenient way to decide candidates’ cosmopolitan attributions is to look at their educational credentials. Educational systems institutionalise academic credentials as objective proxies for the qualities of their holders, and legitimise these credentials as essential to global position-taking (Breen and Jonsson, 2005; Igarashi and Saito, 2014). The amount of symbolic capital attached to academic credentials issued by different educational institutions is subject to their relative positions within the hierarchy of the global field of higher education; and access to it is also unevenly distributed among individuals, being largely dependent on the amount and kinds of capital they already have in their possession.

UNNC's legal status as a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University guarantees the most obvious function assumed by education institutions: conferring institutionalised cultural capital that legitimates the cosmopolitan cultural capital in all other formats to be convertible on the global job market. In order to guarantee the absolute equivalent value of a degree from UNNC and UNUK, UNNC actually does not issue its own certificate. Rather, it awards its graduates, with or without actual learning experience in the UK, exactly the *same* University of Nottingham degree certificate, as emphasised on its official website, with a sample picture. That is to say, on seeing the degree certificate, an observer would not know whether the degree was obtained in Nottingham or Ningbo. On its official website, there is a Q&A concerning the authenticity of this degree. It is in Chinese only, so I quote and translate it here:

Q: How many certificates can students get after graduation?

A: Graduates from UNNC will be awarded:

- 1) Bachelor's degree of the University of Nottingham (Verified by the Ministry of Education in China as identical to that of the home campus)
- 2) Bachelor's degree of the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (accredited by the Ministry of Education of China)
- 3) Certificate of Graduation from the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China (accredited by the Ministry of Education of China)

With all of these three certificates, graduates from UNNC do not need to be concerned about the validity of their degrees on either local or international job markets, which appears to be a strategically safe option compared to an international degree or a domestic degree alone. The discussion of cosmopolitan competence in non-Western contexts can easily be equated to capacity to deal with foreign contexts; however, the ability to excel in the domestic environment cannot be neglected. Integration into the domestic educational system is important for wide social recognition as well as secure convertibility, particularly in China, where the state plays the decisive role.

Accordingly, enrolment at the UNNC campus itself is an effective accumulation of cosmopolitan cultural capital within the institutionalised state. The certificate can

function as a proxy for their cosmopolitan attributions and competencies, or, more explicitly, as the ‘stepping stones’ to upward social mobility (Cambridge, 2002; Igarashi and Saito, 2014). It can then be converted into ‘officially recognised, guaranteed competence’ in the global educational and job markets (Bourdieu, 1986, p.249). This is actually one of the major motivations of students who choose UNNC in the first place. Instead of converting cultural capital directly into economic capital, they take a zigzag route, from cultural capital to advanced cultural capital, and eventually to a better deal in terms of economic capital.

8.2.2 English: Linguistic cultural capital

At UNNC, English is the only teaching language and is encouraged in personal communications (Chapter 4). In my fieldwork, it can also be seen on campus that an English-language environment has been promoted to a great extent (Chapter 6). As a result, UNNC operates as a small-scale English-speaking community conditioned by the Chinese-speaking macro-environment of China. In order to understand its influence on students in practice, I encouraged the interviewees to share their own stories, instead of collecting quantitative data to measure the objective value of their academic performance in English. As I have explained in Chapter 4, UNNC only recruits students with good English performance in the *Gaokao*. Given this baseline, I felt that it was better to invite the students to reflect upon their own improvements in relation to their individual experiences at UNNC.

Based on their responses, it appears that UNNC had a predominantly positive effect on the students’ English competence. For example, Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) said she had made ‘great progress’, ‘very obvious improvement’; Paul (year 2, Finance and Accounting) considered the improvement in his English competence as one of the major influences of British education on him, and he ‘also learned how to communicate (with foreigners) in English in daily life’, instead of only knowing how to answer exam questions. Alice (year 2, International Business and Management) said she was not used to English listening, speaking, reading, or writing when she first entered this university, but she was ‘getting much better’. Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies) compared his improvement over the past three years:

I was struggling with this in my first year. I ended up with an average grade of 61 or 62. Now I'm much better [...] When I was in high school, I only knew how to answer the exam questions... I still have some problems now, but I can say that I'm better than last year.

Even though some interviewees did not explicitly reflect on their own improvements, they implied this by addressing the obvious difference in English competence between foundation year students and senior students. Take Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication) as an example; when he explained why some student societies do not welcome international students, he referred to a friend of his:

It's about efficiency. There are obstacles in communication. I mean, my friend as a third-year student, in Business School, he has no problem at all speaking English. But he has to think about his subordinates. Most of them are first-year students. The first-year students, in language, to be honest, they're not communicating well with the international students. They experience confusion in communicating and coordinating with them. Great, great confusion.

However, in spite of general agreement on their improvement, the majority of interviewees remain concerned about their English competence as 'still problematic'. Compared to listening and writing, they worried most about speaking, second to which was reading.

Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies): I really suffer with spoken English. I'm unable to express what I have in my mind... For example, last time I was with my personal tutor, I was able to understand most of the things he said and asked, but I just couldn't respond. I mean, I know what I would like to say in Chinese, but I couldn't translate it into English, so I was stuck.

Paul (year 2, Finance and Accounting): I can't participate actively because of my oral English. If I want to answer a question, I have to spend a couple of minutes organising the language in English. By the time I finish, the tutor has already moved on to the next topic.

When the causes of this situation were further explored, the majority of students attributed their incompetence in oral English to lack of practice, as they believed that they did not have enough opportunities to communicate with foreign students. In addition to the problems of cultural integration between the Chinese and international students, Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) and Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) argued that the university's policy of

promoting English usage had been fundamentally flawed from the very beginning. Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) addressed the gap between the students' English competence in academic English, especially reading and writing, and problems with social interactions, such as speaking and listening, and offered his analysis:

The university assumes that students who can get more than 115 [out of 150] in the English test in the *Gaokao* must be good at English. So it's very hard to admit that the language barrier is one of the most important factors causing problems in cultural integration. Fundamentally, our curriculum design differs from other [Chinese–Foreign Cooperative] universities, such as Kean University Wenzhou, in that they have ESL [English as a Second Language], while we have EAP [English for Academic Purposes]. We focus more on academic English rather than everyday English. This is what we're missing. [...] For example, at this university, most of the students have no idea how to respond to 'How are you?'

Siena (year 4, International Business and Management) also commented on the university's policies on language use, while focusing more on the distinction between the informal/formal setting. As I have mentioned, the responsibility for making UNNC students speak English was mostly taken by the staff, who were required to speak English in classrooms and offices. Outside of these settings, while UNNC students were *encouraged* to speak English, there were no actual regulations binding them to do so. Siena expressed her concern over this, but also thought it was already too late to change it.

For example, in the use of English on campus, Shanghai–New York University has done a better job. They have strict rules on the compulsory use of English on campus. For example, in the teaching area of a certain building, the students have to speak English. I feel because they're even younger than us and they have been implementing this rule since day one, all the students cooperate well. But for us, if we start to apply strict rules from today, there will be a lot of resistance.

8.2.3 Taste: Embodied cosmopolitanism imagined and capitalised

My interviews included a group of questions designed to explore participants' cultural tastes, such as their preferred brands, music, books, art, etc. The results show no strong group preference for either Chinese or Western culture, apart from food, as discussed in an earlier chapter. Instead, they appreciated a wide range of foreign cultural genres and forms. In addition to the cultural environment at UNNC, this

could also be attributed to the overwhelming globalisation and communalisation process happening in China. Sometimes they experienced difficulties with English texts, but transcultural comprehension seemed to be a bigger obstacle. For example, two students expressed a strong preference for books written by Chinese authors over others and attributed this to their struggles and unfamiliarity with foreign modes of thinking rather than with the English language. I explored this with Seth:

(Why not English ones?)

I don't know. I didn't choose Chinese ones on purpose, you know, in the bookstore. Just Chinese ones, unconsciously. [...] I think, probably, the foreign writers; their thoughts jump too much, for me. Sometimes the foreign movies, for example, I watched them so many times and still ended up understanding nothing.

However, it is worth noticing that sometimes students were eager to make cultural choices that extended outside their comfort zone of cultural taste. Some of them showed strong curiosity about foreign culture beyond the actual competence of their appreciation. For example, in the case of Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies), cultural choice came before cultural taste. She has developed a strategy to purposefully familiarise herself with widely socially recognised artworks, in order to cultivate the corresponding ability of appreciation in the future. During our interview, she started with her interest in Dalí and Monet and told me that she went to art exhibitions of their works when she could. This surprised me because these two artists differ a lot in various senses. Then she told me that, instead of struggling to appreciate both, simply going to these exhibitions already made her 'feel good'. She also talked about the pop singers she liked, and about the Wuzhen Theatre Festival¹¹ she had recently been to, after which she told me:

The thing is, I may not know a lot, not yet, but I'm consciously looking for a wide range of things. The reason is that, only after you've looked through many, many things will you be able to establish a judgement of their values, to distinguish what's good from what's not good.

¹¹ An international cultural festival with a focus on contemporary Chinese theatre and performative arts.

It can be argued that, in this case, although not yet acquired sufficient cosmopolitan competence, Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies) had developed a cosmopolitan *consciousness* that was generative of her cultural choices. As an imaginative traveller, she had cultivated an imaginative proximity to the foreign and to cosmopolitan culture, while still at a relative distance from both the corporeal global mobility of cosmopolitan ‘frequent travellers’ (Calhoun, 2002, p. 869) and the cosmopolitan cultural taste in their embodied space. However, arguably, it is this inconsistency between mobilities, physical and imagined, and between cultural taste, embodied and desired, that drives imaginative travellers towards cosmopolitan orientations and, eventually, future corporeal mobility.

Another example that reflects UNNC students’ cosmopolitanised cultural tastes and choices is their ways of dressing. UNNC students seemed to stand out among Chinese university students in Ningbo by the way they looked. In Chapter 7, I addressed the mutual othering between UNNC and non-UNNC students, mainly focusing on the social dimension, including interpersonal communication and social rules. In fact, there was also a saying about another difference among UNNC students: when they come across other young people in Ningbo, it was said that there would be a very good chance for them to tell which ones are UNNC students just by looking. I confirmed this saying with the interviewees, and the majority said that they had either heard about it or had had this kind of experience themselves on different occasions.

Paul (year 2, Finance and Accounting): When I was in InCity [the closest shopping mall to Southern Higher Education Park in Ningbo], I had the feeling that some young people were from UNNC.

Oliver: I met someone during my internship, I just had the feeling that he might be from UNNC. Then it turned out I was right.

Josh: Yes, I think it’s true. Although we’re a similar age, you can tell the difference.

When I explored the reasoning behind this, the majority of interviewees considered that there was a different taste in clothing style. Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) made it clear that ‘the first impression is always about appearance’. Despite their general agreement on the style of UNNC students being

‘different’, explanations of how it was different varied. Some students perceived it as a mere difference in taste, with UNNC students showing a more internationalised taste than other Chinese students. For example, Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) thought that UNNC students dressed more fashionably and with a foreign vibe (*yangqi*, literally meaning ‘foreignness’, and in this case particularly Western-ness; in a Chinese context, the word is sometimes used as an informal way to make a compliment on the style of people or things). This saying coincides with my observations on campus, where I found a small boutique on the high street selling a variety of foreign brands such as Givenchy, Supreme, Furla, etc. James (year 3, Finance and Accounting) agreed by commenting that students from other universities looked more rustic (*cun’er*, usually a negative adjective in the Chinese context). In this case, Western style was perceived in a positive way as opposed to a more local style, especially from less developed, rural areas.

In addition to contrasting Chinese style against foreign/Western ones, as the students put it, I believe that in this case ‘foreign style’ also implied the legitimated culture of privileged groups, and therefore related to a classed way of dressing. This leads to the second explanation, attributing the difference between the dressing style of UNNC students and other Chinese students to price instead of taste. One student, Paul (year 2, Finance and Accounting), tried to explain the ‘foreign vibe (*yangqi*)’ in dressing by suggesting that UNNC students cared more about their appearances.

Another interviewee, Oliver (year 2, International Studies), disagreed, arguing that it was actually because they invested more:

Can I say something vulgar? I think, first, the dressing style. It’s not about so-called international education. It’s about money. There are many UNNC students, such as those studying engineering, who don’t care about their appearance at all and they can be as sloppy as those from other universities. The only difference is, they have a pair of expensive trainers on their feet.

Acknowledging the influence of family wealth, though, Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) suggested that it could be more than that:

It’s difficult to say. It’s just a feeling. Students from this university... well it’s not good to say this, but I have the feeling of high-end.

(Do you mean you feel that they wear more expensive clothes?)

No. Just feeling a higher standard. It's not *tuhao* [meaning new rich] ... With more personal features? I don't know how to phrase it.

Instead of contradicting each other, I believe that 'price' and 'taste' can be interrelated, and a 'foreign vibe' can be related to both cosmopolitan dispositions and class distinction. As I have explained in Chapter 3, although cosmopolitanism does not assume 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' cultures, its acquisition does presume distinction (Prieur and Savage, 2013, p.257). Having combined the various perceptions of many interviewees, it appears that their unique dressing style was a mutual effect of economic and cultural capital informed by their class habitus. Although valuable contributions have been made attempting to disrupt the connection between fashion and class hierarchies (e.g. Blumer, 1969), many sociological accounts of fashion still tend to agree with the traditional paradigm of Veblen (1961), Simmel (1981), and Bourdieu (1984), within which fashion is perceived as both the product of social distinction and the means to produce social distinction. In this case, it was not particular luxury brands, but generally dressing with 'a foreign vibe' that was perceived as distinct.

However, this alone cannot fully explain why Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade), together with several others, differentiated UNNC students' dressing style from the 'new rich'. It would not be distinguishable if it were the case, as Oliver (year 2, International Studies) said, that the only difference was 'a pair of expensive trainers'. What is also crucial here is what Prieur and Savage (2013) call 'a knowing mode of appropriation of culture'. In a study of French teenagers, Legon (2010) noticed class distinction not only in the choice of cultural objects, i.e. which piece of music to listen to, but also in the attention to the form of appreciation. The students in this study from more privileged groups tended to concentrate more on appreciating music and were more likely to buy an album, or even vinyl records. By contrast, pupils from less privilege groups tended to be doing other things while they listened to music, and valued the original album less if they could access the piece in other formats for free. As Prieur and Savage (2013, p.257) observe, 'the choice of objects may not correspond too well to the Kantian pure taste dissected by Bourdieu, but the somewhat distanced attitude towards them does'.

This seems to support Josh (year 3, International Business and Communication)'s analysis when he was reflecting on the style of UNNC students. According to him, UNNC students may wear luxury brands, but they make the choices based more on their taste alone and do not really pay much attention to whether they are wearing expensive brands or not. In fact, he argued, they would actually avoid widely recognisable luxury brands and pursue a unique personal style. By contrast, in many other universities, it was much more prevalent among students to compare family wealth with each other by competing in the fashion brands they could afford. Josh attributed this difference to the threshold of the tuition fee at UNNC, which meant that UNNC students shared similar family backgrounds so there was no point in using fashion brands as a way of showing off.

Nobody is really from a poor family. Nobody is talking about who's rich and who isn't. When the girls at our university buy designer bags, they don't want to talk about it. It doesn't matter if other people recognise it or not. Actually, they tend to avoid those overly popular luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton with big logos. At UNNC, if people see someone carrying a bag from a brand they don't recognise, they will wonder if it might be from a new designer brand they haven't heard of, instead of thinking it might be cheap.

According to his description, it seems that, students who were competing with luxury brands were using those brands as a 'cultural imitation' of a more privileged social class (Bourdieu, 1984), while this was not necessary for UNNC students, probably because they all came from similar, not disadvantaged, social groups.

Following the analysis above, it could be argued that UNNC students, given their choices and modes of appreciation, are showing a cosmopolitan orientation in terms of cultural taste. However, the extent to which this orientation can lead to the cultivation of 'global citizenship', as advertised by UNNC, remains questionable. This relates to one of the major critiques which has emerged in the discussion of cosmopolitanism: 'banal cosmopolitanism'. Borrowed from 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995), 'banal cosmopolitanism' refers to a superficial sense of an imagined global community, probably derived from basic consumerism or tourist 'experiences of the world' without attitudinal or behavioural reflections (Pichler, 2008): for example, as in this case, the consumption of global brands, artwork, literature, and multicultural food without 'an awareness of global issues such as world peace,

global warming, environmental destruction and global human rights' (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005, p.53). It could be argued that there were many international student organisations at UNNC, such as ACCA Club Eastern China (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, based in London), AIESEC (the world's largest youth-run organization, based in Canada) or Enactus (a not-for-profit organisation based in the US), through which members discussed and participated in global issues. However, only a small number of students participated, and probably some of them did so for capital accumulation rather than moral concerns about global issues. For example, Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies) told me that every year AIESEC ran programmes to send students overseas to underdeveloped countries as voluntary English teachers, but that most of them only chose to stay for a few weeks for the benefit of their own experiences and a new line in the CV, instead of six months or longer to really make a difference. This tendency was foreshadowed in their capital-seeking strategies in decision-making to go to UNNC. This 'banal cosmopolitanism' is not exclusive to TNE students, though, as similar findings have also emerged in a study of INE students, who were more concerned with their strategic global position-taking in the job market than building global solidarity in a moral sense (Rizvi, 2005).

8.2.4 Foreign encounters: Natural segregation and promoted integration

To close this section's examination of Chinese students' cosmopolitan cultural capital, I explore their foreign encounters at UNNC in terms of both the natural segregation between the Chinese and international students and a student-led Integration Project as an effort to improve this situation.

To start with, the international student group can be considered as both a minority and a majority at UNNC. On the one hand, they are ethnic minorities not only on campus but also in China. However, English remains dominant in the educational hierarchy, and particularly within teaching and learning at UNNC; and there is also a postcolonial consciousness and an awareness of the gap between advanced and developing economies, i.e., the West and China. Therefore, on the other hand, they

could also be seen to represent the cultural majority. As a result, UNNC students were both distanced from the international student group in general and attracted by the foreign culture and language it represented. Not all international students were necessarily from the West, or from English-speaking countries, and intersectionality also played a crucial role in determining the interpersonal dynamics between individuals. All of these contributed to a diverse cosmopolitan sociocultural environment at UNNC, rather than a clear-cut ‘the West’ versus ‘the Chinese’ situation.

Most of the promotional videos and advertisements for UNNC feature the university’s great cultural diversity, in most cases represented by images of a group of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds happily interacting with each other. But one interviewee, Alice (year 2, International Business and Management), reminded me that: ‘it’s nothing like what you see in the promotional videos’. Many interviewees echoed her feelings by referring to their own observations. For example:

Vera (Master, International Communications Studies): From what I’ve seen... most of the time, Chinese students stick with Chinese students.

Flora (year 2, International Communications Studies): It’s obvious. Normally, we [Chinese students and international students] don’t hang out together.

Elio (year 2, International Communications Studies): I do have some foreign friends, but [we’re] not very close. [...] I feel that at this university foreigners stay with foreigners.

What, then, could be the reasons behind these students’ perceptions of a natural segregation between Chinese and international students, in contrast to the promoted cultural integration? In what follows, I will explore four aspects of the factors influencing Chinese students’ foreign encounters, and their consequent implications: firstly, differentiated use of space; secondly, the imbalanced population; thirdly and fourthly, the perceptions of Chinese students and international students, respectively, that they are treated differently.

Firstly, the representations in UNNC promotional videos and what was experienced in practice by the Chinese students could both be real, but represent different facets

of campus life. Overall, the students were physically proximate to international students on academic occasions (e.g. in seminar groups), and a few of them with an interest in Western-style sports were also able to interact with international students in sports clubs (e.g., the university Frisbee club, as mentioned in Chapter 6). Yet, when it came to personal lives, the majority of Chinese students remained at a distance from the range of activities associated with international students (e.g., students' accommodation, pubs, etc.). Take Vera (Master, International Communications Studies) as an example:

I do have international students in my seminar group. We have group discussions together, but we don't hang out together after class. Outside of class, they will show up only when we have group assignments.

According to the interviews, the daily routines of local students and international students did not frequently overlap outside of class. Local students who wanted to meet international students must often begin by travelling to and making use of new spaces. For example, some students complained that if they did not appeal to international students by going to the pubs international students liked, it was less likely that they would encounter one another outside of class. The shared or separate use of space, together with the consequent physical proximity and distance, differentiated by time and location, are constitutive of their relations as being close and distant respectively.

Furthermore, the different functions assumed by different social spaces also influenced the 'quality' of these social encounters. Arguably, encounters on less formal occasions play a more important role in constructing intimate relationships and generating relational belongings; hence, these are the ones we should reflect upon when exploring the fact that most of the interviewees believed they were not very close to the international students. For example, Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies) said:

I have international friends, but we're not very close. They're not included in my closest circle, meaning those people who talk and have meals with you every day.

This split between academic and personal encounters also coincides with the previous finding that students have varying degrees of confidence in their academic

and everyday English. In general terms, reading and writing were mainly used for academic purposes while speaking and listening, especially improvisational oral communication, were mainly practised in personal everyday lives. Meagre abilities in spoken English and the lack of practice in daily life reinforced each other, which makes it no surprise when the interviewees attributed their distance from international students to 'language barriers'. Furthermore, many interviewees revealed that, in addition to language, the overall 'cultural differences' stopped them from being closer to the international students. These encompassed a wide range of differences, such as ways of thinking, ways of behaving, topics of interest, etc. It seems that the insufficiency of previously embodied cosmopolitan cultural capital, which sometimes operates at the level of habitus (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014), had constrained their capital accumulation. Having spent most of their pre-university time in different social spaces, the international and Chinese students arrived at this campus with different predispositions, and their durable habitus, transposed from the previous social spaces, continued to have an imperceptible influence on their spatial practices.

Secondly, it seems that quantity also matters, because the 10% of international students were greatly outnumbered. As one interviewee, Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies), stated, 'Above all, there are too few of them'. Many students echoed this opinion by pointing out that the limited number of international students reduced the necessity of communicating with them. For example, when asked why she did not spend more time with international students, Gaia (year 2, International Communications Studies) responded, 'why bother?' When a Chinese student studies overseas, as part of a minority group, he or she will be more likely to communicate with non-Chinese people, even if only to satisfy basic needs such as grocery shopping or ordering a delivery over the phone. But things are different when students live in their home country, supported by a local Chinese-speaking logistics team and surrounded by their Chinese peers. The power balance of different social groups plays an important role in deciding the 'rules of the game' in the hybrid social space, which is performed and affirmed through everyday spatial practices.

Thirdly, Chinese students complained about ‘being treated differently’ from their international peers. They felt that international students were treated differently and sometimes better at UNNC. As previously noted, UNNC has a separate building offering accommodation to international students. This dramatically reduces the possibility of international social encounters, which are already considered insufficient. Also, the university has different policies for international students and Chinese students: for example, there used to be a curfew for Chinese students to return to their accommodation by 11pm (now cancelled because of students’ organised complaints) and to attend a certain number of physical education activities, rules that did not apply to international students. Owing solely to their ‘bodily beings’ (Hopwood and Paulson, 2012) as Chinese or non-Chinese, the students’ spatial experiences were decided and mandatorily divided into two groups, including their living space, and temporal restrictions on their mobility, among many others. This had fundamental influences on their social relations and meant that the lack of communication between these two groups became almost inevitable.

Fourthly, however, the international students also felt that they were mistreated, which would potentially pull them away from the majority Chinese group. As my study is focused only on domestic students from China, I did not talk to international students directly. However, based on the information I have gathered indirectly, the Chinese students probably also played a role in widening the gap between themselves and the international students. It seemed to me that international students at UNNC were sometimes left out of the UNNC community. In a way, UNNC Chinese students are TNE participants, while international students at UNNC are INE participants and form ethnic minorities in a foreign country. As compared to the Chinese students, who were concerned about the differentiated living standards, the international students felt there was unfairness in their political rights. For example, ISSOC (International Student Society) complained that their rights were violated during the Students’ Union’s presidential election. On 13 April 2017, the WeChat public account of ISSOC published a complaint to the Students’ Union, in which they wrote:

Whilst we would like to show our respect for your preparation of the Students’ Union President Election, ISSOC members would like to formally present our complaint [...] The

first issue is that the regulation files attached to the official notice have no English version. Without English version, most of international students have difficulties in reading through all the files so that they might be able to vote as a member of UNNC. Furthermore, the international students do not even have a way to register for the Chinese iCloud site in order to access the regulation documents in the first place.

What is worth noticing here, yet is often overlooked by the Chinese students, is that, while they were complaining about insufficient foreign encounters, they may have also contributed to forming this gap between the Chinese/international groups. Although to a limited degree, UNNC has offered a cosmopolitan sociocultural environment to the students. However, in some cases it was the Chinese students' predispositions that limited their use of this environment.

There were, however, some students who noticed this gap between the Chinese and international students and made efforts to close it. Some of them have addressed the aforementioned differentiated treatment, such as separate accommodations. For example, the previous president of the Students' Union, Abdullah, had the idea of implementing a cultural integration project during the second half of 2015. It was officially approved in March 2016, to be implemented for a one-year period and funded under the Small Teaching & Learning Development Grant Scheme of UNNC. Its self-description is quoted from the Integration Project Final Report below:

The Integration Project is a student-led project that aims at enhancing integration and starting a multicultural dialog amongst students at the University of Nottingham Ningbo China. Both domestic and foreign students are seeking more integration, but need help doing this, as there are language and culture barriers to overcome. Through a series of activities and initiatives we want to increase the sense of belonging, strengthen a common UNNC identity, and give students the experience that matches their expectations. (Sadoux et al., 2017)

The project addressed four aspects: media, translation, activity, and research. The Media group had its own WeChat public account, aimed at raising public awareness of this issue and the project. The Translation group literally took care of translation and, for greater efficiency, the project members usually wrote articles and reports in Chinese first, then handed them to the translation group, producing a bilingual text that could be posted on the WeChat public account. The Activity group was responsible for organising events. They organised cultural events to introduce foreign culture to the Chinese, including the Mexican Day of the Dead (Mexican

culture), Russian Day (Russian culture), a Halloween Party (Western, particularly American, culture), Diwali (Indian culture), Japanese Day; and to introduce Chinese culture to the international students (for example, China Town); as well as other activities to encourage interactions between the Chinese and international students, such as *Xmas on Ice* and *Treasure Hunt*.

The Integration Project was a one-off project, but it represented the desire and effort made to create a cosmopolitan community by some Chinese UNNC students. However, not everybody perceived this effort of Chinese students to integrate with foreign students into a cosmopolitan community in a positive way; after all, UNNC students were the group of people who chose TNE with corporeal immobility. As Brook (year 3, Chemical Industry) commented:

Why should we promote the Integration Programme at a full-time higher education institution that is established in China, based in China, and located in China, only for a 10% population of international students? [...] Why should it be me who gives up my mother language to learn English, not the other way around?

Thus far, I have explored UNNC students' ability to be globally corporeally mobile through the lens of cosmopolitan cultural capital. Firstly, in the institutionalised state, the unique status of UNNC enabled them to acquire both the same degree certificate as their peers at the University of Nottingham, and the same higher-education credentials accredited by the MoE as their Chinese peers, hence granting them the widely applicable institutionalised cultural capital in both fields that is essential for cosmopolitan travellers. Secondly, the English-language teaching environment, plus their relatively good English foundation, made them competent in English, particularly compared to their domestic peers. However, there was a gap between their good academic English and their weaker everyday English, probably owing to the lack of real-life social encounters in a foreign country, which could possibly be an inherent weakness of imaginative travelling. Thirdly, within the embodied state, the inconsistency between their imaginative proximity to cosmopolitan culture and their physical distance from cosmopolitan social settings has driven them to make cosmopolitan cultural choices but also, to a certain extent, limited their modes of appreciation. Although their relatively privileged family backgrounds enabled them to consume cosmopolitan cultural products in a way that is distinctive from those

who were less privileged, the extent to which their cultural choices entail cultural taste needs careful examination against ‘banal cosmopolitanism’, which is more related to consumerism than cosmopolitanism. Fourthly, in social interactions with foreign others at UNNC, they tended to be naturally segregated, which could be attributed both to the students in terms of their dispositions and to the university in terms of campus planning and university regulations.

Altogether, it seems that, with a few exceptions, many UNNC students were focused on narrowly defined cosmopolitan cultural capital in an instrumental sense, such as academic English instead of international communication, ‘having’ an international degree instead of ‘being’ a global citizen (Molesworth et al., 2009, p.285), consuming foreign cultural products while retaining insufficient awareness of global issues. All these features indicate a deviation from ‘cosmopolitanism’ in the sense of global citizenship as promoted by UNNC, while resembling rather more what Matthews and Sidhu (2005, p.49) refer to as ‘a neo-liberal variant of global subjectivity’.

8.3 Future trajectories

In this section, I look at the implications of students’ TNE experiences at UNNC for their future trajectories. Firstly, in terms of cosmopolitan orientations, UNNC students showed an enhanced willingness to be open to foreignness and to communicate with foreign others where necessary. In spite of insufficient foreign encounters on campus, most of the students did not have concerns about living overseas, and were looking forward to real-life experiences overseas through exchange programmes or postgraduate INE. This confidence in communicating with foreign others was especially evident in senior students, who had spent a longer time at UNNC. For example, Oliver (year 2, International Studies) was a second-year student who had just finished a summer internship at a vacation village in a foreign country. He described his own experience in contrast to that of his co-workers who were studying at normal Chinese universities:

At that time, I had some co-workers also from China. When non-Chinese customers came, their first reaction was always to avoid them. We [UNNC students] are not like that, we tend to have conversations with them. For me, personally, my spoken English

sucks. But at least I'm willing to say hi to them. I also enjoy using my body language, making a gesture or something, as a compliment. Anyway, I enjoy it.

Secondly, UNNC students also showed enhanced cosmopolitan awareness. As I have discussed in section 7.3, many students expressed their increased cosmopolitan competencies by reflecting on their 'higher tolerance of difference' and an 'improved adaptability', with a simultaneous change to becoming 'less typically Chinese'. They have also become more 'cosmopolitanised', with a more welcoming attitude towards, and critical understanding of, foreignness. It appears that their shared spatial experiences with foreign others, together with their exposure to foreign cultures, has had a perhaps imperceptible but long-lasting trickle-down effect on their dispositions in terms of cosmopolitan consciousness.

Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies), for instance, shared her experience of an improved tolerance for the different and the unfamiliar, owing to the mere co-presence of foreign others at UNNC.

In our university, there are many foreign students, and the professors are also foreigners. I don't really interact with them much, but I see them around. I've found that I now have a higher tolerance for difference. When new things came up, if it were in the past I would probably be surprised and react like 'oh this is so wrong', but now most of the time I think it's just something I haven't seen before, it's OK.

Oliver (year 2, International Studies)'s story helps us to further understand how this improved tolerance to the new and the foreign can benefit performance in the global job market; for example, in dealing better with culture shock. He referred again to his personal experience of working in the vacation village where he regularly encountered foreigners:

I mean, of course we experienced the same problems as others [from other Chinese universities] did. But if we experienced the same culture shock at the same time, other Chinese students would probably freeze for a while and have no idea how to process it. But we would only behave like, OK, so things can go like this. We've already been exposed to the world, and so we're mentally prepared.

Because of this enhanced global awareness and tolerance of difference, UNNC students were able to understand foreign others as 'individuals' instead of labelling them collectively as 'foreigners'. This means that they were less likely to attribute

the behaviours of foreign others to stereotypes and more able to attribute them to the quirks of individual personalities. This can be illustrated with an example in which Oliver experienced conflicts with foreign others during his internship:

If they [other Chinese co-workers] have disagreements about ideas or conflicts with non-Chinese, they tend to say: “this black guy blah blah”, “this Turkish guy blah blah”. Of course, I’ve met difficult people myself, but I was always aware that it was about the particular person, not his country.

Bearing this in mind, I asked the students about their future plans with regard to global corporeal mobility. Although often in an implicit way, the cultural belongingness of many interviewees was firmly anchored to China. Many of them referred to China as the motherland (*zuguo*), regardless of the fact that in the questions I phrased it in a neutral way, as China (*zhongguo*). That being said, the majority of them also made it clear that their future destination in the long-term ‘may not necessarily be China’. When I further explored with them the specific destinations they had in mind, imaginative rather than physical geographies mattered more to most of the interviewees. A shared preference for a cosmopolitan setting emerged in most of the answers, although the actual locations of particular preferred countries varied across the globe.

For example, Grace (year 4, International Communications Studies) made it very clear that she preferred to work in China. However, she emphasised that it had to be with ‘foreign enterprises’ located in China. When asked for her reasons, noticeably, she used ‘something like our university’ to refer to the environment in which she is most comfortable. This indicates the influence of her experiences at UNNC on her preferences for future destinations. She said that she would like to enjoy British ways of doing things, while preferring to stay physically outside the UK.

Well, they may not technically be entirely foreign enterprises... Something international like our university would be good. [...] Because I feel comfortable with these British ways [of doing things], but I also want to live in China.

(Meaning if you move to the UK for good...)

I won’t survive.

This causal relation became clearer in the interview with Gabriel (year2, Finance and Accounting). He did not really mind where he would be physically based, be it in China or overseas, as long as he could enjoy a multicultural environment that offers similarities with ‘the current lifestyle at UNNC’.

[...] If I was working overseas, I would tend to choose one of those, for example, Chinese companies which expanded there. I mean if the place of work is overseas, be it a foreign or Chinese company, I would prefer those ones with connections to China.

(What about domestic jobs?)

Then I would want to have connections with the outside world. Because I’ve already got used to the current lifestyle at UNNC.

He then explained to me the ‘lifestyle’ he wanted, with reference to two favourite cities in China. On the one hand, he would like the cities to have the thickness of traditional Chinese culture. For example, Hangzhou and Shanghai, where there are famous ancient temples and historical sites which he could visit on a daily basis so that he could understand more about his cultural roots. On the other hand, he also wanted the cities to be able to offer diverse choices of bars and clubs, which only very internationalised cities can offer. As I explained earlier, bars and clubs are not part of Chinese tradition but the product of Westernisation. In brief, as he himself put it, he would love the status of ‘inclusivity’ and mixed cultures, embracing a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

This preference for mixed cultural environments can also be found in the answers where foreign countries were preferred. For example, Zoe (year 1, International Communications Studies) and Seth (year 2, Computer Science) both chose Australia because of the multicultural environment, whilst Zoe emphasised her preference for it as ‘a foreign country with large Chinese communities’. A relatively unique answer came from Ruby (year 2, International Communications Studies), who was longing for a sociocultural setting that was not only cosmopolitan but also constantly ‘on the move’.

Yeah. I like to spend some time in one place, like six months or a year, and that’s it. Then I’ll change to a new place to explore. That’s my dream.

It is worth noticing that, even behind the same choice, the rationales could differ. For example, Brian (year 3, International Economics and Trade) preferred to live in an internationalised city in China based on conservative considerations to avoid the potential risks of living overseas:

I would like to live in some city that is relatively inclusive, in China. I don't know very much about the world outside China. [...] I don't really know about particular things happening in life, such as housing...No clue. But here at Ningbo, also much internationalised, but the actual ways of living, and the future, are more visible and touchable.

This seems to coincide with the strategic calculations of some students to delay their participation in INE.

8.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have explored the third research question, '*How and to what extent does Chinese students' experience at UNNC affect their cosmopolitan outlook and competence?*'. In conclusion, Chinese students' experiences at UNNC have enhanced their cosmopolitan outlook and competence, which may facilitate their future socio-spatial mobilities to a certain extent. Firstly, in making the decision to go to UNNC, the majority of students had already demonstrated an orientation towards cosmopolitanism, while some of them were to a greater or lesser extent informed by a strategic calculation of cultural capital in terms of the preservation and improvement of their social positions in both the Chinese and global fields with minimised risk and losses. Secondly, it can be seen that their cosmopolitan orientation and competence have been improved at UNNC in that, to various extents, they have acquired institutionalised, linguistic, and embodied forms of cosmopolitan cultural capital. Nevertheless, the embodiment of cultural capital takes time, and fundamentally social actors' capacity for cultural capital accumulation is constrained by their durable, transposable habitus. It has also been evident in this case study that sometimes the informants intentionally or unintentionally avoided foreign encounters and distanced themselves from foreign cultures. Thirdly, in terms of the implications for their future trajectories, most of the students did not show a unified preference for a particular location, be it China, the UK, or other countries; however, most of them revealed a shared attraction towards multicultural settings with

transnational connections, indicating a strong cosmopolitan orientation. I would also like to note at the end of this chapter that UNNC students display great diversity, and the findings would differ according to the different individuals. It is this study's purpose to look for shared patterns and the opportunities that could be enabled through TNE experience; however, the distinct features of each individual should not be denied, and the conclusions should remain open, allowing for inconsistencies, which will be reflected upon in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I will begin by briefly recapping the key conclusions drawn in this study and describe the inspirations they have generated for my future research. Then I move on to highlight the main original contributions of this study to the relevant research fields. On that basis, I explain the implications of this study and make recommendations for future TNE researchers and practitioners.

9.1 Key research findings and inspirations for future research

The objective of this study was to explore the implications of students' in-situ TNE experience at IBCs for their future socio-spatial mobilities, and thus to contribute to the growing, but still relatively small, body of research into the potential of TNE to promote global educational inclusivity and equity. To this end, I have carried out a case study of Chinese students at UNNC, grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, in which mobility is understood in its plural form of mobilities and in relation to immobility. In addition to physical forms of movement, I have also uncovered imaginative forms of movement in student experiences of TNE, and have revealed the varied transnational mobilities that are moored at the emplaced campus. In light of this, I have pursued three lines of inquiry into the space, the community, and the students' acquisition of cosmopolitanism in the three findings chapters, 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

Firstly, I have demonstrated the case study's educational space as mobile, which enables spatial transnational imaginations that are mutually constitutive with the students' imaginative space in a multi-centred, on-going, rippling way, rather than as a linear, one-off process. In this way, the students have embodied mobilities and cosmopolitanism in-situ, transforming themselves into 'imaginative travellers' who never physically go abroad but whose identities and belongingness have been constantly informed and negotiated by their everyday experiences within a cosmopolitan space.

Secondly, I investigated the imaginative travellers' (imagined) community, which has been constantly reproduced in the dynamics between the students and the university. It seems that UNNC students share similarities in language, nationality,

and social class, and receive the same multicultural education. On the basis of existing categories, however, it is essential to notice that this (imagined) community is also open to 'human action' (Calhoun, 2003b, p.549), i.e. it is subject to their individual agency. It is therefore important to look at how they have been proactively approaching and/or distancing themselves from different social groups and cultural forms, and at different moments. UNNC students showed a strong preference for British education and tended to be more thoroughly convinced by it, despite the difficulties they experienced in adjusting to it. They have proactively distanced themselves from non-UNNC Chinese students owing to 'the lack of a common language' and 'different social rules', regardless of their shared ethnicity, mother tongue, and social context. As a result, they have manifested significant inconsistencies between physical and imaginative distances, becoming more cosmopolitan and less 'typically Chinese', which they attributed to both their own pre-dispositions and their TNE experience at UNNC. During this process, UNNC itself is also changing and adjusting to the Chinese context, and hence it becomes mutually constitutive of the UNNC students in an on-going spiral way, instead of a closed circle of reproduction.

Thirdly, I evaluated the students' openness and competence with respect to a culture of cosmopolitanism, in order to explore the potential for the valorisation of their imaginative mobilities. From the very beginning, they made the decision to go to UNNC, not only out of cosmopolitan curiosity but also informed by a capital-seeking strategy. During their time at UNNC, they have acquired cosmopolitan cultural capital in institutionalised, linguistic, and embodied states; but the different forms of capital acquired tend to manifest in a narrowly defined, instrumental sense that may be problematic in a real cosmopolitan setting (e.g., good academic English competence versus limited ability to interact with foreign others in everyday conversational mode). That being said, they have still manifested an enhanced cosmopolitan orientation, which was largely attributed to a familiarity with the multicultural UNNC environment.

In conclusion, this study shows that the experience of studying at UNNC has, to a certain extent, facilitated the Chinese students' socio-spatial mobilities. To begin with, UNNC has provided them with proximity to foreign materials (and the social

relations afforded by them), foreign others, and foreign culture in a local setting, while it has also enabled them to remain embedded within local social networks and immersed in a national macro-cultural environment. Bearing this in mind, and looking back to the main critiques of TNE (Chapter 2, section 3.1), it can be seen that UNNC has offered its students access to forms of capital that are emplaced overseas and which have a much higher symbolic value than those available at the majority of Chinese HEIs; it has facilitated their embodiment of mobility (feelings of being out-of-place and constantly adapting) in imaginative forms through their daily interactions with foreign materials, others, and culture; and it has implied a cosmopolitan orientation for their future trajectories. In terms of the forms of capital that are essential in the global educational and job markets (e.g., cosmopolitan cultural capital), UNNC students have acquired UK educational credentials with comparatively high symbolic value, embodied competence in English as ‘the world language’ and foreign social values and cultural norms, with an increased adaptability to foreign and multicultural environments. Therefore, it can be argued that in the particular case of UNNC, TNE has contributed to a certain extent to the alleviation of spatial inequalities by mobilising educational resources from the UK to China, and social inequalities by offering a cosmopolitan environment in a local setting, thereby facilitating cosmopolitan cultural capital acquisition for those who were left out of INE.

Nevertheless, the extent to which individual students can make use of these offered cosmopolitan resources, and in what ways, is still limited by and contingent upon their durable, transposable habitus. As can be found in the analysis, some students did not benefit from their UNNC education as much as their classmates. This leads to one reason why we should not be generally optimistic about the influence of TNE in facilitating socio-spatial mobilities simply based on this UNNC case, because UNNC students, although perhaps not as privileged as their INE peers, tend not to come from the most disadvantaged social groups, and in many cases had already shown cosmopolitan predispositions before they went to UNNC. As many of the interviewees explained, instead of being life-changing, the role played by UNNC in many cases was more about offering them a very accommodating and encouraging

environment in which to cultivate cosmopolitan attributes based on their pre-existing generative habitus.

In future research, this study could be extended to track students' corporeal mobility across space and time. Firstly, this research could have benefited from 'mobile methods', such as walking interviews, allowing the students to recall their campus experiences as they wander around campus, or to tell their stories as they reproduce their typical daily lines of movement from place to place. This approach was abandoned owing to ethical concerns related to this study, but it could be applicable in similar future studies. Secondly, it would be beneficial to track the future trajectories of the same group of participants. Informed by the conclusions drawn from this study, follow-up longitudinal research would offer more valuable insights into TNE students' socio-spatial mobilities, helping to make sense of their corporeal mobilities after graduation, and also probably after they have found their first job. In this way, the implications for their socio-spatial mobilities based on their self-perceptions of future plans could be tested out, and further suggestions could be made about the contribution of TNE in facilitating socio-spatial mobilities and its related potential to reduce socio-spatial inequalities. What could be neglected, however, although it is no less important, is that, during these years, UNNC and China will also be changing. As I have demonstrated in this research, during these students' years at UNNC they already felt that it had changed, even at this small scale of time and space. By the time I have finished this thesis, the situation may also have changed a little more. In terms of TNE in China (i.e. CFCS) in general, the perceptions of the Chinese public have been improving owing to the recent fruitful quality assurance policy; for UNNC in particular, the success stories of its previous graduates have increased both the university's reputation and the difficulty of entering. For the most recent 2019 entry, UNNC required the second highest *Gaokao* result among all the universities in Zhejiang Province. Correspondingly, those who will choose and be admitted by UNNC, as well as their rationales and attributes, will also change. Given more years at a larger scale, many greater changes will take place, such as the comparative symbolic value of the UK to Chinese HEIs, and of English to the Chinese language, among many other factors, which will have a decisive

influence on the research conclusions. All of these need to be taken into consideration if further research are carried out.

9.2 Original contributions in relation to existing literature

This research contributes a case study to the under-researched field of TNE (Leung and Waters, 2017), with a series of distinct features that offer original contributions to the field in diverse ways. Grounded in the new mobilities paradigm, it unpacks the transnational mobilities at an emplaced TNE campus, highlighting the importance of materiality in TNE research and bringing the mobilities at these immobile IBCs to the fore. Thus, it offers new perspectives on TNE students with a focus on their imaginative mobility, which is no replacement for corporeal mobility but has its own advantages specific to different social contexts. Altogether, this research offers fresh insights into a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University as a newly recognised form of international branch campus, with potential cross-contextual value for research on other IBCs taking the form of a joint venture.

Firstly, in terms of research approaches to TNE, this study takes both a mobile and a spatial perspective and offers an empirical approach to unpacking transnational mobilities in relation to the emplaced spatiality of IBCs. It has highlighted the materiality of the case study campus, which has been widely neglected in previous TNE research. I have depicted in detail the varied materials on campus, with an emphasis on the affordance and reproductivity of social relations, including the overall layout (the Academic Area vs. the Living Area divide, and the bridge in between); the buildings (e.g. classroom design in relation to pedagogies; sculptures and cultural belonging; food and material belonging); and the bodies (e.g., the very presence of international students and staff in different spaces, and the segregated use of spaces). In doing so, this study also distinguishes itself from other TNE research because it did not consider the emplaced materials as intrinsically immobile; rather, it has focused on the ‘mobilities’ offered and enabled by immobilities. Accordingly, TNE students are not represented as merely immobile and disadvantaged, but also as ‘imaginative travellers’ who proactively employ their TNE experience to enable future socio-cultural mobilities.

This study also brings the mobilities at the immobile IBCs to the fore. With elaborations upon the transnational imaginations enabled by the material place and the imaginative space the participants conceived of and travelled to in response, I demonstrate the importance of the immobility of IBCs as constitutive of mobilities. Educational spaces ‘may themselves be mobile, and not simply impacted by mobility’ (Waters, 2017, pp.283–284). Therefore, Brooks and Waters (2018) have called for academic attention to be paid to the convergence of materiality and movement in education, in various spaces such as travelling to school, as much as home-schooling. Coinciding with these arguments, this study presents a more extreme case in which materiality, mobilities, and imaginations intersect: the IBCs, in which massive movements of people, objects, information, and messages are mobilised by the immobilities emplaced within the case study campus, and are mutually constitutive of both the space and the participants. UNNC, as an educational space, resembles the features of what Urry describes as ‘inter-space’, such as mobile phones or airports. Instead of being merely ‘immobile’, UNNC enables imaginative mobilities across time and space, and prepares its participants in-situ for future corporeal mobilities. In a wider context, this study addresses ‘the mobilities turn’ and reveals the unprecedentedly diverse modes of mobilities as the prerequisite for TNE space against the sedentarist extreme. At the same time, it presents thorough discussions about the interrelations among and consequent impact upon them without falling into the nomadic extreme.

In terms of its second contribution, this study also brings fresh insights into TNE students, not focusing on their physical immobility but drawing attention to their imaginative mobility across transnational social fields, i.e. as imaginative travellers. Compared to INE students, TNE students are very under-researched within the sociology of education and their voices are much less audible. They are akin to ‘the missing middle’ in youth research (Roberts, 2014), as they are neither the most privileged group in terms socio-spatial mobilities nor the most disadvantaged, which has left them marginalised in research focusing on global educational (im-)mobilities. Particularly in the case of UNNC, the students were not considered to be ‘less successful’ (or ‘failing’) young people who found TNE to be ‘their only option’ (Waters, 2018, p.678), with the majority having aimed to gain entry to the most

prestigious ‘985 universities’, ending up at UNNC as their second choice. They were not internationally corporeally mobile, possibly owing to insufficient economic, cultural, and/or social capital, but only in a relative sense. UNNC was much cheaper than INE choices in the UK, while still extremely expensive compared to domestic education. The students had all passed English tests with high scores, while still feeling unsure about their English competence in daily communication. They behaved in certain ways that exhibited cosmopolitan dispositions due to their imaginative mobilities, and were sometimes perceived as ‘pretentious’ owing to their corporeal immobility. All of these privileges enjoyed by TNE students at UNNC, along with the difficulties they struggled with, are entangled together in their real-life TNE experience, necessitating academic attention.

Thirdly, this study also makes an original contribution to theory through the development of ‘imaginative travelling’ (Urry, 2000). In Urry’s original conceptualisation, ‘imaginative travelling’ was only inspired by *images* of mass media; hence, its influence on participants may be very limited. In the case of UNNC students, as I have presented, they have been informed by the multi-dimensional, interrelated transnational movements of objects, images, people, and information as well as local immobile materialities at the case study branch campus. Not only were the sources of influence expanded, but the ways in which they imaginatively travelled were also diversified and extended, with an increased level of agency. Instead of passively receiving media messages on the TV at home, they have touched, smelled, consumed, talked to, and interacted with various forms of transnational movements, and eventually embodied these mobilities in their everyday spatial practices, thereby becoming ‘imaginative travellers’. This, I argue, is the key to discovering the unique value of TNE for its participants.

Based on these research observations, I also admit that what ‘imaginative mobility’ can bring to TNE participants may still be limited and hence is no replacement for corporeal mobility, nor should it be. TNE students, if compared with INE students, might manifest disadvantages in certain ways, such as less competent oral English and insufficient spontaneous foreign encounters. However, I suggest that we should not neglect the possibility that they can also be advantaged against INE students in some other ways owing to their imaginative mobility combined together with their

corporeal *immobility*, as they can remain embedded in the local sociocultural environment. This is particularly crucial in my case study, and may also apply to many other East Asian countries where collectivist values such as *guanxi* are important. Although, owing to their imaginative distance from certain Chinese social rules and cultural norms, many of the students experienced and contributed to ‘othering’ from non-UNNC Chinese students, they did not have much problem in envisaging a future life in Chinese society as long as it could be within a multicultural environment. Essentially, ‘being cosmopolitan’ is different from ‘being foreign’ or ‘being Western’. This distinction has commonly been vague in INE research focusing on ESEA (East and South-East Asian) countries, because these countries tend to occupy a relatively lower position in the global hierarchy of education; hence, ‘being foreign’, and particularly ‘being Western’ usually indicates a more advanced competence of excelling in a cosmopolitanised world. However, with the rise of countries such as Japan and China on the global stage, domestic social and cultural capital has become increasingly important for students from those countries to be truly ‘cosmopolitan competent’, rather than ‘Western competent’.

This leads to the fourth major dimension to which this study contributes, i.e. an in-depth ethnographic case study of a Chinese–Foreign Cooperative University as a newly recognised form of international branch campus, where research is still ‘an emerging field in its infancy’ (Qin and Te, 2016, p.313). As I have demonstrated in this thesis, CFCRS is very different from the cases considered in existing TNE studies in terms of the social, cultural, and policy context; hence, it cannot be made sense of within an overarching conceptualisation generated from studies in other contexts. With a cooperative model that is aligned to the leadership of CPC, UNNC has navigated a distinctive and probably non-duplicatable way of localising British education through the obscure situation in China. Its educational philosophy was inspired by both British education and traditional Chinese social thought, and was implemented amidst power struggles between profit-making and nation-building from different interest groups. All of these issues have complicated the situation of UNNC in ways that can only be understood through a close-up individual case study, which may also offer us new perspectives to look at other CFCRS as a newly recognised type of IBC. Not only limited to the case of China, at this stage of TNE

research, I encourage ethnographic case studies, particularly in regions that have traditionally been disadvantaged in the global hierarchy of education, in addition to quantitative studies of typologies and trends which form the majority of existing research. In practice, I refer to those countries that do not use English as one of their official languages and do not have sufficient high-quality educational resources proportionate to the population. In this way, more situated knowledge can be generated outside of the Western discourse, and our understanding of TNE can be further developed.

9.3 Implications and recommendations

In essence, in a cosmopolitan world characterised by quickening mobilities, imaginative mobilities may not substitute for corporeal mobility, but may change the very nature of being co-present. Accordingly, our views about the emplacement of education, as *either* here (domestic education) *or* there (international education), also need to be extended to educational spaces that can be *both* here *and* there, i.e. *trans-national*. This change has had a profound influence on educational experiences and has brought fundamental changes to educational research. I have experienced this change throughout the design and modification of this study. At the very beginning of this study, I had assumed UNNC to be a bridge between China and the UK and tried to understand it with reference to a Britishness/Chineseness binary. Accordingly, I considered UNNC students to be ‘in-betweeners’ in relation to domestic education in China and international education in the UK. Nevertheless, as the case has unfolded to me during my fieldwork and as the research has developed accordingly, I started to see the unfitness of these notions to the reality. Instead of ‘a bridge’, i.e. an object with a static status, UNNC more closely resembled ‘a ship’, i.e. a vessel that was on the move, and enabled the mobilities of its passengers. When UNNC students revealed their feelings of being ‘stuck somewhere in-between’, as I quoted at the very beginning of this thesis, it was never a stasis. Instead, they have been constantly *attempting* to move towards this side or that side, always *struggling*, and being intermittently proximate to or distant from certain spaces in their being and imagining. Therefore, I changed my theoretical framework after my fieldwork and adopted a cosmopolitan perspective, because the problem was not about being ‘*either* here *or* there’, it was about being ‘*both* here *and* there’, about intermittent

presence and absence in both physical and imaginative forms in this unprecedentedly mobilised society.

Hence, I recommend that more academic attention be given to TNE research, particularly to the materiality of IBCs and their student participants, which is particularly under-researched. We need to adopt a mobilities perspective in order to discover the convergence of mobilities and materiality at IBCs. The research outcomes of this study can then have reference value for TNE practitioners, enabling them to be more aware of the potential influences on students when designing and planning a campus. In researching TNE students, we can extend the research scope to more diverse social groups in different social contexts and be more attentive to their mobile potential. We can keep pursuing the questions of whom TNE can benefit and how, exploring its wide potential to promote educational inclusivity and equity. For countries with strong centralised leadership, like China, the outlook is arguably more optimistic because TNE can be used as a tool to introduce high-quality foreign educational resources to certain underdeveloped areas through macro-control by the state. Thus, it benefits more, although not all, less-privileged groups and less-developed regions. At a personal level, I have also noticed in my fieldwork that the imaginative travellers, despite the undeniable gains from their TNE experiences, had experienced stress and pressure due to the inconsistencies between imagination and reality, and uncertainties about the future; therefore, their mental health also cries out for academic and social attention. At an institutional level, TNE institutions also need to be more aware of the narrow definition of different forms of capital in an instrumental sense, such as academic English performance and UK credentials, which were necessary for successful marketisation when students were perceived as mere consumers. Appealing to the 'having' mode (Molesworth et al., 2009, p.285) of the students in terms of obtaining a Western degree may be essential to the sustainability of TNE institutions during the early stages of their establishment; however, in the long run more focus on the 'being' mode of the students' cosmopolitan experiences on campus are no less crucial for fostering 'global citizenship' in a real sense, as UNNC has advertised.

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Appendices

A. List of semi-structured interviewees

a. Students

Pseudonyms	Major	Year of study (at time of interviewing)	Location (of students' choices)	Gender
Aldo	International Communications Studies	4	My office	Male
Alice	International Business and Management	2	My office	Female
Arian	International Communications Studies	1	Starbucks, no seat, rescheduled to my office	Male
Axton	Mechanical engineering	4	My office	Male
Brian	International Economics and Trade	3	Café Arabica	Male
Brook	Chemical Industry	3	Starbucks on campus	Male
Carol	International Communications	4	Starbucks	Female
Elio	International Communications	2	Starbucks	Male
Flora	International Communications Studies	2	Café Arabica	Female
Gabriel	Finance and Accounting	2	Café Arabica	Male
Gaia	International Communications Studies	2	Starbucks	Female

George	Mechanical Engineering	2	My office	Male
Grace	International Communications Studies	4	My office	Female
James	Finance and Accounting	3	Café Arabica	Male
Josh	International Business and Communication	3	Chinese style Café Flowertime	Male
Lexi	International Communications Studies	4	My office	Female
Lola	Mechanical Engineering	4	My office	Female
Neal	International Communications	4	My office	Male
Oliver	International Studies	2	Café Arabica	Male
Paul	Finance and Accounting	2	My office	Male
Peter	English Studies	PhD	My office	Male
Ruby	International Communications Studies	2	Fourth Canteen	Female
Seth	Computer Science	2	Study space at Student Service Building	Male
Siena	International Business and Management	4	My office	Female

Vera	International Communications Studies	Master	My office	Female
Zoe	International Communications Studies	1	Xinhua bookstore	Female
(Pilot)	International Business	Master	My office	Female

b. Staff

Pseudonyms	Department	Attribution	Place (of my choice)	Date	Gender
Ellen	Student Affairs Office	Administrati ve staff	My office	20 Dec	Female
Mateo	International Communications Studies	Teaching staff	My office	27 Dec	Male
Nancy	Centre for Research on Sino- foreign Universities	Research staff	My office	30 Dec	Female

B. Semi-structured interview guide (English translation)

a. For students

- Basic information about student life
 - Your major?
 - Do you like it? Any particular module, tutor you like?
 - Any difficulties? Are you used to listening, writing, reading and speaking in English?
 - How do you like the teaching style? Anything different from what you have experienced in Chinese school? Which one do you prefer?
- Life at UNNC
 - Do you enjoy your life at UNNC? Anything in particular?
 - Do you like UNNC campus? Anyplace in particular?
 - Do you have non-Chinese friends? From which country? Are you close?
- Habits & Hobbies
 - Favourite food on campus and off campus?
 - Any hobbies?
 - Favourite vestment brand/book/music/sports?
 - Frequently visited place in Ningbo?
- Choosing UNNC: reasons, before, and after
 - Why UNNC?
 - Your expectations before UNNC?
 - Your life now at UNNC, below or beyond expectations?

- Changes on you before and after entering UNNC?
- UNNC and other universities in China
 - Have you been to/ Have you heard of other universities in China? Differences and similarities?
 - Your best friend (s) at UNNC or not?
 - Have you ever heard the saying that, ‘UNNCers can identify themselves outside campus, even if they don’t know each other personally’? If you have, can you explain how do UNNCers manage to do so?
 - Do you like Chinese Cultural modules at UNNC? Necessary or not? How do you like it? Differences/similarities compared to that at other Chinese universities?
- Perspectives of UK culture and China culture
 - Do you have experience studying abroad? Which country (ies) and what are the experiences?
 - Have you been to main campus (UNUK)?
 - Differences between the foreign culture you experienced and Chinese culture? Which one do you prefer?
 - What do you think of British culture? Compared with Chinese culture, which one are you more comfortable with, or which parts of them are you more comfortable with?
- Future plans and belongingness
 - Where do you want to work in the future? Which country and what type of company (e.g. state-owned enterprise in China, private company overseas, Chinese-foreign cooperative companies, etc.)?

- If everything permits, which country do you want to settle for good?
Why
- What is your understanding of ‘typical Chinese’? Do you think you are typical Chinese?
- What is your understanding of ‘typical British’?
- Do you consider yourself to be more or less ‘typical Chinese’ before and at UNNC?
- Anything in particular that makes you feel belong to UNNC?

b. For staff

- When did start working at UNNC? For what reasons?
- Do you like working here, considering the administrative structure, interpersonal relationship, students, etc.? Have you considered other universities?
- Do you think UNNC is different from other universities in China? In what way?
- Do you think UNNC students are different from the students from other universities in China? In what way?
- How do you find the integration between the international and the domestic students at UNNC?
- How do you find the interplay between the foreign and the Chinese culture on campus? Do you find any one of them is more dominant?
- Do you think that UNNC has influenced you? In what way?
- Do you perceive UNNC as ‘China campus’ as presented in the UK website, or as ‘Chinese-Foreign Cooperative University’ as phrased in the China website as well as many regulations of the Chinese government? Or do you have your own opinions?
- Do you feel comfortable here at UNNC? What are the reasons?

C. Information sheet and informed consent form for participants

Participant Information Sheet

What is the title of the research?

The 'in-betweeners': a case study of transnational higher education in China

Who will conduct the research?

Jingran Yu, PhD in Sociology, University of Manchester.

What is the aim of the research?

To investigate how the participants in transnational higher education institution in China understand themselves.

Why have I been chosen?

Because you are a student or staff member in transnational higher education in China and you are aged 18 or over

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to participate in an interview for 0.5-1 hour long.

What happens to the data collected?

It will be transcribed, anonymised and stored on a password protected university computer system accessible by only the researcher. Anonymised quotes will be used in my PhD thesis.

How is confidentiality maintained?

Pseudonyms will be used throughout and I will ensure that for potential readers, a given response cannot be identified with a given respondent, neither by inferred identity nor by hidden identification.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw at any time.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No

What is the duration of the research?

The interviews will be undertaken over a period of six months.

Where will the research be conducted?

Mainly on campus (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China).

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

The research will be presented in a PhD thesis and also in public presentations and academic publications.

What benefit might this research be to me or other subjects of the research?

No direct benefit

Contact for further information

Jingran.yu@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong?

In the first instance, please contact me so we can solve problems together.

Alternatively, please contact one of my PhD supervisors:

sue.heath@manchester.ac.uk; penny.tinkler@manchester.ac.uk.

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please read the consent form and initial it:

**Please
Initial
Box**

I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded

I agree to the use of quotations that are anonymous/attribution (delete as appropriate)

I agree to take part in the above project

of participant

Date

Signature

of person taking consent

Date

Signature

D. Ethical Approval

a. By the University of Manchester

4th July 2016

Ms Jingran Yu
Sociology Discipline
The University of Manchester

Dear Jingran,

Re: ETHICAL PRACTICE IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH

Title of research: The 'in-betweeners': A case study of transnational higher education in China

Thank you for submitting your Ethical Declaration form in line with the Graduate School's guidelines. Your declaration has now been considered and approved by the School of Social Sciences' Ethics Panel.

Yours sincerely


Ann Cronley
Postgraduate Administrator
SoSS Postgraduate Office



b. By University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China

University of Nottingham Ningbo

Research Ethics Checklist for Staff and Research Students

[strongly informed by the ESRC (2012) *Framework for Research Ethics*]

A checklist should be completed for **every** research project or thesis where the research involves the **participation of people, the use of secondary datasets or archives relating to people and/or access to field sites or animals**. It will be used to identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

You must not begin data collection or approach potential research participants until you have completed this form, received ethical clearance, and submitted this form for retention with the appropriate administrative staff.

The principal investigator or, where the principal investigator is a student, the supervisor, is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

Completing the form includes providing brief details about yourself and the research in Sections 1 and 2 and ticking some boxes in Sections 3 and/or 4, 5, 6. **Ticking a shaded box in Sections 3, 4, 5 or 6 requires further action by the researcher.** Two things need to be stressed:

- Ticking one or more shaded boxes does **not** mean that you cannot conduct your research as currently anticipated; however, it does mean that further questions will need to be asked and addressed, further discussions will need to take place, and alternatives may need to be considered or additional actions undertaken.
- Avoiding the shaded boxes does **not** mean that ethical considerations can subsequently be 'forgotten'; on the contrary, research ethics - for everyone and in every project - should involve an ongoing process of reflection and debate.

The following checklist is a starting point for an ongoing process of reflection about the ethical issues concerning your study.

SECTION 1: THE RESEARCHER(S)

1.1: Name of principal researcher: Jingran YU

1.2: Status: Staff

Postgraduate research student

1.3: School/Division: School of Contemporary Chinese Studies

1.4: Email address: jingran.yu@nottingham

1.5: Names of other project members (if applicable):

1.6: Names of Supervisors (if applicable): Prof Sue Heath; Dr. Penny Tinkler (from the University of Manchester)

	Yes	No
1.7: I have read the University of Nottingham's <i>Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics</i> (2010) and agree to abide by it: http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/research/researchethics/ethics-approval-process.aspx	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.8: (If applicable) I have read the University of Nottingham's <i>e-Ethics@Nottingham: Ethical Issues in Digitally Based Research</i> (2012) and agree to abide by it. http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/research/documents/e-ethics-at-the-university-of-nottingham.pdf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.9: When conducting research on people (Section 5) I will prepare both a <i>participant consent form</i> as well as a <i>participant information sheet</i> . I am aware that the following templates are available on the Ethics webpage: http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/research/researchethics/ethics-approval-process.aspx <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant consent form 1 • Participant Information Sheet English and Chinese 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 2: THE RESEARCH

2.1: Title of project:

The 'in-betweeners': A case study of transnational higher education in China

Please provide brief details (50-150 words) about your proposed research, as indicated in each section

2.2: Research question(s) or aim(s)

Identity analysis of participants in a quasi-foreign social space created by transnational educational institution in a domestic macro-environment

- To examine the characteristics of the social space of UNNC with respect to the concept of transnational social space
- To analyse the 'ways of being' and 'the ways of belonging' of students in UNNC
- To understand the self-identification of students
- To investigate how such identities of students are formed and negotiated in their school life in UNNC,
- and to evaluate the role played by the very social space
- To explore the possibility of an alternative approach to transnational identity studies

2.3: Summary of method(s) of data collection

Primary data: Semi-Structured interviewing
Ethnographic participant observation
&Secondary data (not relating to people)

2.4: Proposed site(s) of data collection

UNNC

2.5: How will access to participants and/or sites be gained?

I'll make direct contact with people in UNNC. Also, I will ask staffs to send e-mails to their students on my behalf.

SECTION 3: RESEARCH INVOLVING USE OF SECONDARY DATASETS OR ARCHIVES RELATING TO PEOPLE

If your research involves use of secondary datasets or archives relating to people all questions in Section 3 **must** be answered. If it does not, please tick the 'not relevant' box and go to Section 4.

NOT RELEVANT

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box.

	Yes	No
3.1: Is the risk of disclosure of the identity of individuals low or non-existent in the use of this secondary data or archive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.2: Have you complied with the data access requirements of the supplier (where relevant), including any provisions relating to presumed consent and potential risk of disclosure of sensitive information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 4: RESEARCH INVOLVING ACCESS TO FIELD SITES AND ANIMALS

If your research involves access to field sites and/or animals all questions in Section 4 **must** be answered. If it does not, please tick the 'not relevant' box and go to Section 5.

NOT RELEVANT

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box.

	Yes	No
4.1: Has access been granted to the site?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2: Does the site have an official protective designation of any kind?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, have the user guidelines of the body managing the site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) been accessed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) been integrated into the research methodology?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.3: Will this research place the site, its associated wildlife and other people using the site at any greater physical risks than are experienced during normal site usage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.4: Will this research involve the collection of any materials from the site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.5: Will this research expose the researcher(s) to any significant risk of physical or emotional harm?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.6: Will the research involve vertebrate animals (fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals) or the common octopus (<i>Octopus vulgaris</i>) in any capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, will the research with vertebrates or octopi involve handling or interfering with the animal in any way or involve any activity that may cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm to the animal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 5: RESEARCH INVOLVING THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE

If your research involves the participation of people all questions in Section 4 **must** be answered.

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate box.

A. General Issues

	Yes	No
5.1: Does the study involve participants age 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. people with cognitive impairment, learning disabilities, mental health conditions, physical or sensory impairments?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.2: Does the research involve other vulnerable groups such as children (aged under 16) or those in unequal relationships with the researcher? (e.g. your own students)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.3: Will this research require the cooperation of a gatekeeper* for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.4: Will this research involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, physical or mental health)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.5: Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.6: Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

5.7: Will this research involve people taking part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.8: Does this research involve the internet or other visual/vocal methods where people may be identified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.9: Will this research involve access to personal information about identifiable individuals without their knowledge or consent?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.10: Does the research involve recruiting members of the public as researchers (participant research)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.11: Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.12: Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.13: Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

*Gatekeeper- a person who controls or facilitates access to the participants

B. Before starting data collection

	Yes	No
6.12: My full identity will be revealed to all research participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.13: All participants will be given accurate information about the nature of the research and the purposes to which the data will be put. (An example of a Participant Information Sheet is available for you to amend and use at xxxxx) http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/research/documents/participant-information-sheet-in-english-and-chinese.doc	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.14: All participants will freely consent to take part, and, where appropriate, this will be confirmed by use of a consent form. (An example of a Consent Form is available for you to amend and use at: http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/research/researchethics/ethics-approval-process.aspx)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.15: All participants will freely consent to take part, but due to the qualitative nature of the research a formal consent form is either not feasible or is undesirable and alternative means of recording consent are proposed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.16: A signed copy of the consent form or (where appropriate) an alternative record of evidence of consent will be held by the researcher.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.17: It will be made clear that declining to participate will have no negative consequences for the individual.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.18: Participants will be asked for permission for quotations (from data) to be used in research outputs where this is intended.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.19: I will inform participants how long the data collected from them will be kept.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.20: Incentives (other than basic expenses) will be offered to potential participants as an inducement to participate in the research. (Here any incentives include cash payments and non-cash items such as vouchers and book tokens.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

6.21: For research conducted within, or concerning, organisations (e.g. universities, schools, hospitals, care homes, etc) I will gain authorisation in advance from an appropriate committee or individual.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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C. During the process of data collection

	Yes	No
6.25: I will provide participants with my University contact details, and those of my supervisor (<i>where applicable</i>) so that they may get in touch about any aspect of the research if they wish to do so.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.26: Participants will be guaranteed anonymity only insofar as they do not disclose any illegal activities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.27: Anonymity will not be guaranteed where there is disclosure or evidence of significant harm, abuse, neglect or danger to participants or to others.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.28: All participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, including withdrawing data following its collection.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.29: Data collection will take place only in public and/or professional spaces (e.g. in a work setting)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.30: Research participants will be informed when observations and/or recording is taking place.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.31: Participants will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D. After collection of data

	Yes	No
6.32: Where anonymity has been agreed with the participant, data will be anonymised as soon as possible after collection.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.33: All data collected will be stored in accordance with the requirements of the University's Code of Research Conduct	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.34: Data will only be used for the purposes outlined within the participant information sheet and the agreed terms of consent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.35: Details which could identify individual participants will not be disclosed to anyone other than the researcher, their supervisor and (if necessary) the Research Ethics Panel and external examiners without participants' explicit consent.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

E. After completion of research

	Yes	No
6.37: Participants will be given the opportunity to know about the overall research findings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.38: All hard copies of data collection tools and data which enable the identification of individual participants will be destroyed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have **not** ticked any shaded boxes, please send the completed and signed form to the School's Research Ethics Officers, with any further required documents, for approval and record-keeping.

If you have ticked any shaded boxes you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your research. Issues to consider in preparing an ethics review are given below. Please send this completed form to the Research Ethics Officer who will decide whether your project requires further review by the UNNC Research Ethics Sub-Committee and/or whether further information needs to be provided. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's **Research Code of Conduct** and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. For guidance and UK regulations on the latter, please refer to the Data Protection Policy and Guidelines of the University of Nottingham:**

Policy - <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/%7Ebrzdpa/local/dp-policy.doc>

Guidelines - <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~brzdpa/local/dp-guidance.doc>

Any significant change in the project question(s), design or conduct over the course of the research should be notified to the School Research Ethics Officer and may require a new application for ethical approval.

Signature of Principal Investigator/Researcher:

Signature of Supervisor (where appropriate):

David O'Riain

Date 2016/9/28

Research Ethics Panel response

- the research can go ahead as planned
- further information is needed on the research protocol (see details below)
- amendments are requested to the research protocol (see details below)

David O'Riain
School REO..... Date 2016/9/28.....

A. LIST OF POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN SUBMITTING AN ETHICS REVIEW (taken from ESRC (2012) *Framework for Research Ethics*).

Please go to question 9

Risks

1. Have you considered risks to:
the research team?
the participants? *Eg harm, deception, impact of outcomes*
the data collected? *Eg storage, considerations of privacy, quality*
the research organisations, project partners and funders involved?
2. Might anyone else be put at risk as a consequence of this research?
3. What might these risks be?
4. How will you protect your data at the research site and away from the research site?
5. How can these risks be addressed?

Details and recruitment of participants

6. What types of people will be recruited? *Eg students, children, people with learning disabilities, elderly?*
7. How will the competence of participants to give informed consent be determined?
8. How, where, and by whom participants will be identified, approached, and recruited?

9. Will any unequal relationships exist between anyone involved in the recruitment and the potential participants?

The involvement of staffs as gatekeeper may raise concerns regarding this aspect, because staffs researching their students should be considered as unequal relationship. Therefore the researcher will write the invitation letter and ask staffs to forward e-mails on her behalf. There will be no pressure to do so, and as the information sheet stated, the students can opt out anytime.

10. Are there any benefits to participants?
11. Is there a need for participants to be de-briefed? By whom?

Research information

12. What information will participants be given about the research?
13. Who will benefit from this research?
14. Have you considered anonymity and confidentiality?
15. How will you store your collected data?
16. How will data be disposed of and after how long?
17. Are there any conflicts of interest in undertaking this research? *Eg financial reward for outcomes etc.*
18. Will you be collecting information through a third party?

Consent

19. Have you considered consent?
20. If using secondary data, does the consent from the primary data cover further analysis?
21. Can participants opt out?
22. Does your information sheet (or equivalent) contain all the information participants need?
23. If your research changes, how will consent be renegotiated?

Ethical procedures

24. Have you considered ethics within your plans for dissemination/impact?
25. Are there any additional issues that need to be considered ? *Eg local customs, local 'gatekeepers', political sensitivities*

26. Have you considered the time you need to gain ethics approval?
27. How will the ethics aspects of the project be monitored throughout its course?
28. Is there an approved research ethics protocol that would be appropriate to use?
29. How will unforeseen or adverse events in the course of research be managed?
Eg do you have procedures to deal with any disclosures from vulnerable participants?