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More Than a Family Reunion

An Ethnographic Study of Chinese Migrant Hosts in Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism

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Abstract in English

More Than a Family Reunion: An Ethnographic Study of Chinese Migrant Hosts in Visiting Friends and Relatives Tourism

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This thesis offers an ethnographic study of the co-present encounters between Chinese migrant hosts and the guests from their home country. It aims to contribute to the qualitative research on the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) phenomenon and to deliver insights to the tourism industry in terms of hosting strategies and the construction of a hospitable space.

Taking on the migrant hosts' perspective, this thesis investigates how hosts receive their guests, how kinship and host-guest relationship are played out simultaneously and how they (re)produce their identities during the co-presence through the constant negotiations between the self and other, the self and the place. Through illustrations of various hosting strategies, the construction of a hospitable space and ultimately the notion of home is articulated against a backdrop of hosts' transnational life experience.

This research demonstrates that, on the one hand, the gesture of hospitality is operated under the guise of the taken-for-granted kinship, while on the other, the role of being a host is enacted when the hospitable space is potentially threatened by the guests' failure to follow the rules of conduct of being a guest. Besides, it also shows that during the co-presence hosts' transnational identity is forcibly reflected and reiterated through the manifestation of hospitality and the adjustment of self-positioning in the negotiated kinship. The boundary of making a hospitable space within the hosts' homes thus becomes fluid and negotiable.

Keywords: Visiting friends and relatives tourism; hospitality; kinship; migrant hosts; Chinese; Southern Sweden.

Abstract in Swedish (Sammanfattning)

Mer än en Familjeträff: En Etnografisk Studie av Kinesiska Migranter som Värdar inom VFR-turism

Rui Liu

I fokus för denna mastersuppsats står den form av turism som går under benämningen VFR, Visiting Friends and Relatives. Syftet är att med etnografiska metoder undersöka hur kineser bosatta i Sverige fungerar som värdar vid besök av vänner och släktingar från hemlandet. Ett mål är att resultaten i form av nya kunskaper och insikter om värdskapsstrategier och skapandet av gästfria miljöer skall bidra till utveckling av besöksnäringen.

Uppsatsen utgår från värdarnas perspektiv och analyserar hur de tar emot och bemöter sina gäster, hur släktskap och relationen mellan värd och gäster påverkar varandra samt hur de skapar och återskapar sina identiteter genom förhandlingar mellan det egna jaget och andra liksom mellan jaget och den omgivande platsen. Med värdarnas transnationella livserfarenheter som bakgrund undersöks de olika strategier som de använder sig av. Utifrån detta problematiseras hur en gästvänlig omgivning byggs upp liksom synen på vad ett hem är och ska vara.

Studien visar hur det å ena sidan tas för givet att den besökande ska tas omhand och visas gästfrihet i och med släktskapet, å andra sidan att det är då gästen inte följer reglerna för hur en gäst ska uppföra sig som rollen som värd framhävs och synliggörs. Vidare belyses hur värdens transnationella identitet reflekteras och understryks under tiden tillsammans och hur värdens position i släktskapsrelationen förhandlas. Gästfrihetens gränser i hemmet blir i denna process flytande och förhandlingsbara.

Nyckelord: VFR-turism; värdskap; släktskap; kinesiska migranter; södra Sverige.

Abstract in Chinese (论文摘要)

不止为了家人团聚：在探亲访友类旅游中作为主人的中国移民的民族志研究

柳睿

本文采用民族志学的研究方法及文化人类学理论，深度探讨作为主人的中国移民如何接待来自家乡的亲友。借以此文，通过对探亲访友类旅游进行文化分析，希望对此类研究领域的定性研究上做出补充。同时，本文旨在帮助旅游行业拓宽此类旅游市场，并提供具有针对性的相关策略。

从主人的视角出发，本文考察主人如何接待客人，亲属关系及主客关系如何相互交错，以及主人在不断调整自我定位的过程中，如何确立并重新确立自身身份。以主人的跨国经历为背景，通过展示各种接待策略，本文试图阐明如何建立一个友好的空间，并进一步探讨“家”的概念。

本研究显示，在双方共处的过程中，一方面，主人表现出的热情好客建立在自然的亲属关系之上，而另一方面，当客人稍有越位表现，并导致双方营造出的友好空间有可能被破坏时，主人便会重新强调自己的身份。此外，在共处时，主人既要表现出热情好客，又要在不断变化的亲属关系中调正自身定位。这一过程使得主人的跨国身份被动地被反映出来。因此，在“家”中开辟一个友好的空间便成为了一个需要不断沟通、不断协调的过程。

关键词：探亲访友类旅游；主客关系；亲属关系；中国移民；瑞典南部。

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I would like to start by thanking all the informants who took their time and patience and shared with me those spectacular stories. This thesis would not have been completed without your trust and openness. It was truly pleasant to listen and learn so many interesting and surprising happenings during the family visits.

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Last but not least, I owe a big thank you to my husband, my parents and parents-in-law. Thank you for your support and understanding during the past two years. You give me the courage to pursue my dream. I love you!

Lund, 2015-05-23

Rui Liu

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

> It didn't feel much different after they left. It is like an interlude in my life. When it's over, it's over. We all go back to the normal life. I had loads of things to do and they didn't really talk much about the trip afterwards…like I said, it is an interlude.
>
> --- Rose (personal communication, March 11th, 2015)

This is how Rose described her family's visit to Sweden in the summer 2014. As the host, she chose to use the metaphor of "interlude" to summarize their one-month co-presence. Interlude is a temporary break between the acts of a play, a breathing space out of the routinized hours, and a momentary escape from the daily life. It indicates a process that begins with an ending of the previous chapter and ends with a beginning of the next one. On the one hand it stands independently in between the two chapters, while on the other, it connects them. This thesis is an investigation on such an "interlude", aiming to unfold how hosts receive the guests and the meaning of the temporary co-presence for the hosts. It also attempts to contribute to the current tourism research on the *visiting friends and relatives* (VFR) phenomenon.

In our highly mobile modern society, thanks to all kinds of advanced communication and transport technology, the barriers of moving and relocating are much lowered and travel is no longer privileged to the elite group. People move to other parts of the world, searching for love, for career, for peace, or even for a place where they can call "home". Along with these migration movements, the social network is stretched. Even though virtual communication via e-mails, phone calls, text messages, and video chats can be easily achieved, the desire to enjoy the "physical proximity" with loved ones has become ever stronger (Urry, 2002). "Meetingness" (Urry, 2003) that is central to our social life constitutes then the cultural meaning of many travels and makes travel necessary and anticipated, which leads to a life that involves "strange combinations of increasing distance and intermittent co-presence" (Urry, 2003, p. 156). When living apart becomes the norm, physical co-presence grows into an extraordinary event of our social life. In this sense, hosting or visiting friends and relatives can be viewed as a kind of mobility that is driven and formed by the sociality of the dispersed network; co-presence is thus a cultural process in which hosts and guests co-create the tourist

experiences and their social identities are established respectively through practicing the mixture of kinship, friendship and host-guest relationship.

This thesis takes on the migrant hosts' perspective in that they are the ones who initiate the movement within their network and strive to maintain the kinship and friendship at-a-distance. They look forward to being visited for multiple purposes, and their way of hosting beloved family and friends tells how they position both themselves and the guests in the multi-layered relationships. Through the manifestation of hospitality, kinship and friendship (although mainly kinship in this thesis) are negotiated. Yet this process is far from smooth, rather, it is charged with strong emotions, obligations and expectations. What's more, against a backdrop of the hosts' transnational background, a contested notion of home and the sense of belonging can thus be articulated.

1.1 Targeting Chinese migrant hosts

The study subject of this thesis is Chinese migrants living in Lund, a university town in Southern Sweden. Practical reasons for choosing this ethnic group are threefold. First, with China's rapid economic growth and relaxed outbound tourism policy, the barriers for Chinese citizens going abroad have been lifted. Along with the increase of the number of Chinese outbound tourists, there is a marketing demand to study this tourist segment (Tse, 2015). Second, this thesis is inspired and motivated by the internship I did with a Norwegian destination marketing organization (DMO) in the summer 2014, during which I assisted in a research project targeting Chinese tourists in Scandinavia and gained practical knowledge in studying this ethnic group. I want to continue the discussion and recycle some of the materials that were collected. Third, as a Chinese myself, I share the same ethnic identity and language with this target group, which gives me the "cultural" and linguistic advantage of relating to my informants.

VFR tourism is considered as migration-led, in that it is generated by the geographical extension of kinship and friendship network (Feng & Page, 2000). Migrants do not only passively wait to be visited by their family and friends, they actually attract visitors from their home country. While performing the role of hosts, the temporary or permanent nature of their migration status, the sense of attachment to a community and the social identities they possess will all affect their hosting experiences and the strategies they take while hosting (Griffin, 2014). In other words, this is a heterogeneous group and looking from this

perspective opens up the channel to see how hosts actively get involved in constructing the touristic experiences, how they take the opportunity of hosting to communicate messages to their visitors and how their identities are reflected on and negotiated by receiving visitors from the home country.

What is worth noting here is that for Chinese citizens, though travelling abroad, especially to Europe or the United States, is no longer an elite activity, the process of visa application can be rather elaborate and time-consuming. Take obtaining a Swedish visa as an example, applicants for the VFR visa are required to present various documents to prove financial statement and personal relationship with the hosts, plus, these documents have to be notarised and authenticated. The whole process can take up to two months. Therefore, the elaborate visa application process virtually distinguishes Chinese VFRs from those from the EU, in terms of the flexibility of mobility. And this has to a large extent affected both the hosts' and the guests' co-present experiences, which will be discussed later in the finding and analysis section.

1.2 Previous studies

Much relevant research on VFR travel is conducted from the marketing standpoint, because originally it is framed as a market term, independent from business travellers and leisure travellers. However, it has long been labelled as a marginalized segment in the tourism industry due to a list of misunderstandings, for example, that VFR tourists are not big spenders as they do not use as much commercialized accommodation service or participate in as much tourist activities as other types of tourists, which means this segment may have little contribution to local economy. Moreover, the lack of clear definition of this segment makes it difficult for local DMOs to track the flow and gather related information, and even more difficult in targeting and influencing this mobile group (Backer, 2007; Seaton & Palmer, 1997; Shani & Uriely, 2012). Therefore, the assumable low economic yield of this segment makes it not so attractive to the marketers. Nevertheless, as widely acknowledged by many researchers, since Jackson's (1990) pioneering article that highlighted the significance of VFR travel, this area has witnessed an increasing amount of academic attention during the past two decades.

In order to challenge such misunderstandings as listed above, much focus has been devoted by VFR researchers to revealing the economic value of this market and defining what VFR

travel is (Backer, 2007; Seaton & Palmer, 1997); quantitative methods were thus widely used (Griffin, 2014). While the economic significance of this segment has been gradually illustrated, in the recent decade, relatively more researchers have joined the "methodological turn" (Riley & Love, 2000) by employing qualitative methods to acquire first-hand material, and shifted the research focus to seek for the meanings behind individual narratives, arguing that VFR tourism is more than just an economic activity (Griffin, 2013).

When it comes to the research on VFR hosts, the number of literature is rather limited, and much emphasis is given to how hosts influence visitors' travel patterns and how they contribute to the local economy by spending additional expenditure while hosting (Backer, 2007; Young, Corsun, & Baloglu, 2007). Though these literatures illustrate the importance of hosts in the VFR market from the economic perspective well, they do not touch upon the patterns that are embedded in the hosting experiences and the meanings hosts attribute to the co-presence.

What distinguishes VFR tourism from other types of tourism is the personal relationship between the visiting and the visited. It requires the expression of non-commercial hospitality that is offered by the hosts to their guests. In the limited study on the hosts' hosting behaviour, Shani and Uriely (2012) proposed a fourfold typology based on an ethnographic research in a Southern Israeli town, a popular tourist destination in Israel. Their typology illustrated four hosting styles which were: "focusing on in-home hospitality; maintaining the normal course of daily life; serving as a local tourist guide, and becoming a tourist in one's own backyard" (Shani & Uriely, 2012, p. 435). They also pointed out that hosting friends and relatives had both a positive and negative impact on the hosts' well-being. For example, they might lose their privacy when having guests staying overnight but meanwhile could enjoy the family or friends reunion. Though this typology provides empirical support to prove the heterogeneity of the hosting group and sheds some light on the hosting patterns, it fails to capture the cultural aspect that underlies those behavioural patterns.

Another part of relevant research employs the tourism-migration nexus. This approach views VFR travel as a form of mobility that is generated by the escalating migration flow and the dispersed kinship and friendship network. Therefore, two insights are produced. First, VFR visits can be done in two directions: migrants being visited by their family and friends at the host country, and the return visits made by migrants to their home country. Second, these visits can be activated by both the "network characteristics" and the "particularities of place"

(Williams & Hall, 2002), which means the purpose of those visits can be very mixed. In articulating tourism-migration nexus, the sociality aspect of travelling and co-presence is introduced. For many people, border crossings, both geographical and cultural, become mobility projects that attempt to (re)connect with dispersed families and friends, to (re)produce and even (re)iterate transnational identities (Duval, 2014). What's more, it is worth noting Humbracht's (2012) thesis that tackles with the VFR phenomenon and presents how, as a form of mobility, VFR visits can be of importance and provide insight to the tourism industry. And to the best of my knowledge, this is the only article that employs ethnography and cultural analysis to discuss issues on VFR tourism.

1.3 Aims of study and research questions

The aim of the thesis is to look into the actual interaction between migrant hosts and guests, to unpack the co-present experiences from the hosts' perspective, and finally to uncover some of the cultural meanings that underlie migrants' hosting practices. Hopefully this thesis can also provide some insights for the tourism industry in terms of how working with migrants can be beneficial. In order to do so, the following questions will be answered:

1. How do the hosts receive their visitors?
2. How are personal relationships practiced in the host-guest dimension?
3. What impacts do the temporary co-presence have on hosts' transnational life?
4. What implications can be delivered to the tourism organizations?

1.4 Theoretical framework

This section works as an introduction of the theoretical framework in the thesis. It will be contextualized when the findings and analysis are presented in the proceeding chapters. Here I will briefly introduce some main analytical concepts that are used to sketch out the framework.

The first one is Goffman's (1956) "rules of conduct". It contains two aspects: obligations and expectations, both of which are morally bound. He argues that one person's obligation will often be another' expectation, and failure to perform those obligations may result in a feeling of shame (p. 474). This concept is particularly useful in relation to the analysis of hosting strategies that hosts consciously or subconsciously deploy in order to ensure the operation of

hospitality and maintain the image of "good hosting". Hosts feel obliged to take on certain responsibilities yet they also expect their guests to perform as good guests. A hospitable space is needed and produced, and the rules of hospitality are therefore coded.

Another analytical concept is Douglas' (1991) description of "home". She argues home is either here or not here, and the question about home is not "when", "how", or "what", instead, the proper way to ask is "where" home is. It is "always a localizable idea" (Douglas, p. 289). Taking this notion of home as a starting point, I will argue how the boundary and shape of home are contested during the co-presence between these migrant hosts and their guests.

And finally I will introduce a pair of concepts: "ways of being" and "ways of belonging" (Levitt & Schiller, 2004). When people engage in social relations and practices without consciously associating identity to their actions, they are practicing "ways of being". However, if they consciously enact an identity through certain practices, they are exercising "ways of belonging". These two relational concepts do not always go hand in hand, but it is hypothesized that people with an access to a transnational way of belonging would be likely to act upon it at some point in his/her life (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1011). When migrant hosts receive their guests, their transnational identity is forcibly reflected on, and the temporary co-presence can potentially become one of those moments in life where hosts have to act on their transnational ways of belonging.

It is important to note that more concepts will be invited to the discussion as the presentation of findings goes, but these three that are mentioned above illustrate a dimension where hosts' multiple identity-making processes take place. The negotiations between the hosts and the guests, the self and others, the ideal and the reality can thus be articulated, which serves the purpose of searching for meanings and patterns that are embedded in the temporary co-presence.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The following chapter will present the materials that are collected for this thesis and the ethnographic methods that have been used.

From the third to the sixth chapter, findings and analysis will be presented. Chapter three delineates the general profile of the research target, and a motivational continuum will be

introduced, as well as the pre-condition of the gesture of hospitality. Chapter four presents hosts' strategies in constructing a hospitable space for the guests. In this chapter, concepts such as "travel fever" (Löfgren, 2008), "invisibility" (O'Dell, 2010) and the packaging of the everydayness are used. Chapter five illustrates the discrepancies between the imagined co-presence and the reality. Here the concept of negotiated relationship (Miller, 2007) will be used for the analysis. Chapter six discusses the simultaneous existence of proximity and distance felt by the hosts by using home as the analytical lens. In this chapter, the starting point is Douglas's (1991) location of home as a space.

Finally, discussions and applicability will be delivered in the last chapter of the thesis.

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Materials

A small portion of the materials were collected while I was doing internship with Visit Southern Norway, a regional DMO in Norway. During the internship, one of my main research assignments was to map out the travel patterns of Chinese technical visitors who lived and worked in different regions in Scandinavia, including, but not exclusively, Southern Norway. Since I have lived in Lund, Sweden for a rather long period, apart from fieldwork and interviews conducted in Norway, I then partnered with another intern from the project and conducted one group interview with three informants and two individual interviews, in Lund, Sweden. The duration of interviews done in Lund was between one and a half hour and two hours. As the internship was project-based, with specific research interest and agenda, I did not have the opportunity to fully focus on issues regarding VFR, but during the interviews, relevant topics were raised up by informants in various degrees. Three of them mentioned their parents had visited and two said that their parents were planning to visit in the near future. Thus, "the flexibility of ethnographic methods" (Davies, 2002, p. 31) encouraged me to follow those threads, and this constantly mentioned, yet not explicitly outlined, sub-topic drew my attention, which helped forming my primary research interest for this thesis in studying VFR tourism. Though the interviews were not specifically designed for VFR tourism, I would argue the information, regarding their hosting experience and the co-presence with their visiting friends and family, given by those three informants whose family had visited were valid and useful for this thesis.

Later on when I finished the internship and decided to locate my research area within VFR tourism, it was obvious that more empirical material was needed, and that marked the second phase of material collection. I started by recruiting informants. Considering the time limit and financial situation, the target group was defined as Chinese migrants, living in Southern Sweden and having hosted their family or friends who were of Chinese origin. This second round recruitment started from interviews with two informants, and then continued with a "snowball sampling" (Morgan 2008, p. 816). This recruitment method appeared time-efficient, as a total of six informants were located in a rather short period; while on the other hand, the disadvantage of this method was acknowledged. In order to avoid the "risk of capturing a biased subset of the total population of potential participants" (Morgan 2008, p. 817), plus Williams and Hall (2000) point out the possibility of various situations of VFR visits, the first two informants were selected carefully because both their profiles and narratives could respectively represent different situations, which meant they were able to bring in new informants from relatively diverse backgrounds. Besides, I also invited one informant I made contact during the internship for an interview, specifically on her hosting experience while her family were visiting. Later, she introduced one more informant to take part. So during the second phase eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, which makes a total of 10 informants for this VFR research project.

All ten informants, from both phases, were approximately between 25 and 35 years old, three males and seven females, all having lived in Lund for at least 2 years and been visited by their parent(s) or close family and friends at least once. Most of them came to Sweden initially for study, and stayed after graduation due to career opportunities or relationships with their partners. Five of them have established a family with small children and others either married without children or remained single at the time of interviews. What's more, it is worth noting that three informants have Swedish partners, and this complicates even more the hosting experiences, as will be shown in the analysis. The diversity of the informant group also appears in the motivations of the visits. In half of the cases, hosts received their parents whose visits were mainly for helping out during childbirth and the confinement afterwards, and/or seeing grandchildren; while in four cases, family and friends came mainly for holidays, so together with the hosts, they toured around major European cities including part of Sweden within more or less a month. And in one case, the informant's parents came to visit from time to time during at least the past eight years, the length of each stay varying from three months to ten months.

For confidential issues, the informants' names are changed. Some of them are given English names while some are given Chinese names, depending on how they addressed themselves during the interviews.

2.2 Methods

Hosting experience is a hidden quality, which means it is not very likely to locate target group in daily encounters. Therefore, once the informants were secured and time and place of the meetings were agreed upon, unstructured interviews "which are often seen as just happening" (Davies 2002, p. 95) did not appear to be an option. Instead, Semi-structured interview was chosen as the main method during the fieldwork, because, unlike either unstructured or structured interview, it allowed me to follow a set of pre-arranged questions or themes while reserved the flexibility for wording and alteration of topics depending on the context. Besides, during semi-structured interviews, informants were encouraged by open-ended questions to lead the talk and to articulate their ideas, stories and feelings in their own words, without being "restricted to the preconceived notions of the ethnographer" (Davies 2002, p. 95). While trying to keep my voice and opinions to a minimum level, I also tried to interact with informants at times by sharing with them my personal background, as I noticed that the inequality caused by the unbalanced conversation, where it looked like one person investigating the other, might prohibit my informants from exposing much of their life to me.

Another strength of semi-structured interview lies in the possibility of building up an "interdependency" between the interviewer and interviewee that makes it possible that interviewing goes beyond individual level and leads to an access to the reality of the social world (Davies 2002, p. 98). Directed by my questions and their answers, we developed a conversation during which I was able to get closer to the social reality and they were able to reflect upon their stories, even identities that were reconceptualised during and after the hosting experience. Moreover, by inviting informants for a conversation, narratives are constructed. One may argue that narrative does not represent reality, however, what this thesis focuses on is the meaning and value behind the hosting experience, and experience is described and explained in context in the hosts' narratives. In this sense, semi-structured interview is considered as the main strategy for this research topic.

All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin. They were recorded and then transcribed and translated into English (except one informant who did not want his voice to be recorded, so I

took the notes and later wrote up in the form of field notes). Sharing the same ethnic identity and the same mother language with informants were beneficial, in that the cultural distance was shortened and I was able to grasp the linguistic subtleties without excessive explanations. However, these common features between us did not guarantee "a congruence of meanings", as warned by Davies (2002), so I intentionally pushed them to explain certain terms to clarify the ambiguities. For example, one phrase that was frequently used by informants was "you know", partly because they assumed we shared the same cultural background and I could get what they really meant automatically and easily. In fact, most of the time I could, but I still asked them to continue explaining what that was. I found this strategy useful as when they assumed I knew it, they virtually stopped the reflection process and quickly moved onto the next subject, but with my push, they were forced to explain and straighten out their narratives. Another issue that is worth mentioning is the transcribing and translating of the recordings. Neither transcription nor translation is simply transferring or converting the content from one form or language to another. Though I am proficient in both Chinese and English, I acknowledge that it is unavoidable that certain linguistic subtleties will get lost when translating into another language.

The second method that was employed during the fieldwork was direct observation (Czarniawska, 2007). It happened when I was invited to conduct interviews at the informants' residence. This method has several advantages: first, it gave me the opportunity to get a sensuous experience of the place where the informants hosted their guests, and, where the stories, or at least part of the hosting experiences, were produced. Second, compared to interviews conducted in public places, the fact that informants were put back to the environment where those narratives actually happened opened up another channel for discussions, as they did not simply tell stories, but also contextualized them. Third, being invited to someone else' home, I automatically took on the role of being a guest and the informants became the hosts. This added one more dimension of the interviews in the sense that I could document how they instructed me in finding their residence, as well as how they received me as a guest and showed hospitality. All in all, by observing the place, informants in situ, and the interaction between the two, I gained much first-hand material of the contextualized narratives.

A third method is auto-ethnography. It is defined as "one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence

on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist" (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 274). As a migrant myself, I have also hosted several friends of mine in Sweden during the past two years and have travelled to visit friends living in other European cities. This personal experience and the transnational identity are shared by both me and my informants, so we can somehow relate to each other and the interviews were conducted in a more relaxed and reflexive way. Plus, my hosting and guesting experiences were reflected upon regarding the manners how I received my guests and was received as a guest, to which extent hospitality was offered and accepted. However, I am aware of the possible traps of being "self-indulgent and narcissistic" (Davies, 2002, p. 179). So I intentionally avoided to be involved too much in discussions with informants on the researchers' life experience. The following analysis is grounded in the narratives produced by the informants instead of my own. In other words, auto-ethnography is here used as a tool to produce the knowledge of the topics mentioned by the informants and the layered accounts of narratives (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

2.3 Limitations

Three major limitations are acknowledged to this thesis. First, the gender imbalance among the informants. Three out of ten informants are males and the rest are females. In the analysis, most of the quotes come from female informants. I am fully aware that gender difference may cause relatively different experiences in hosting VFRs and generating VFR travels for different reasons, however, it is not within the interest of this thesis, therefore I will not conduct any discussion from the gender perspective. Second, the lack of the visiting guests' voice. In this thesis, findings are delivered based on the hosts' narratives. It could benefit if guests' perceptions are included and the comparisons between the two parties are made. However, the main focus of this thesis is on the negotiation of hosts' multiple identities, so guests' voice is not heard in the discussion. And finally, migrant hosts in this thesis are adult children who receive senior family members (mainly parents) and very close friends, which means discussions are limited within this type of VFR flow and other types, such as parents living abroad having their children visited, are not considered here.

3 Setting the scene

This chapter is intended to set the foundation of the subsequent chapters by illustrating the profile of Chinese migrant hosts in this thesis project and the background of the VFR visits. Motivations of visiting and hosting will be presented. Only by doing so is it possible to further the discussions on the ways hospitable spaces are opened, with which preconditions and opened to whom (O'Dell, 2010, p. 47).

3.1 The motivational continuum

It is necessary to look at the various motivations behind the visits, because it leads directly to different hosting strategies used by the hosts. Here I ask why the guests want to visit.

Informants listed various reasons why their family and friends visited, which included attending the hosts' graduation ceremony, taking the opportunity of travelling in Europe while hosts were living there, seeing grandchildren and taking care of the female hosts who were about to give birth. These visiting motivations were made quite clear prior to the guests' arrival, based on the hosts' account. Accordingly, hosts arranged different activities during the guests' stay. Basically, for hosts who were unmarried or married without children, they arranged more travelling activities that both the hosts and the guests were able to join. They were more mobile. While for hosts who were married with small children or were about to give birth, it did not sound very practical to travel far, and their guests were aware of hosts' situation, so they stayed with the hosts in Lund during most of their stay, but still hosts managed to take them on short daytrips to some nearby places like Copenhagen and Malmö. This is the less mobile type. These various motivations given by the hosts are in fact in line with Williams and Hall (2000)'s conclusion of the "motivational continuum" (p. 7), with one end being "family-friend-centred goals and activities" while the other end being "place-oriented activities" with hosts assisting during their travels (Williams & Hall, 2000, p. 7-8).

While this "motivational continuum" clearly distinguishes the two extreme patterns, it may be a little problematic if it is applied directly to the data collected. Initially, none of the visits can purely be categorised to either one of the extremes. Instead, they are driven by a mix of purposes. Two, all the hosts that I interviewed participated in their visitors' travel all along. Is kinship or friendship not practiced in those sightseeing? Lena's family visit can be used as a good example in this regard. The visit made by her uncle in Europe was rather purposeful;

besides sightseeing, he sought for some investing opportunities especially in Sweden, investigated the living environment as his daughter might study abroad in the future and also met Lena's boyfriend and his Swedish family to make sure she was living a good life. What makes her uncle's trip more "place-oriented" is perhaps the fact that he spent most of the time travelling or mobilising as a tourist.

Though various motivations are incorporated in different visits, they share one common, and salient, feature, and that is maintaining kinship or friendship between the guests and the hosts. In other words, these personal relationships make VFR travel possible.

What is interesting, nevertheless, is that hosting friends and hosting family are considered two different types. All the informants have the experiences of hosting their parents, while only a couple of them have been visited by friends. Therefore, most of the narratives, the comments, and the reflections told by the informants are based on family visits, with only a tiny fraction on friends. For those who have hosted both, they were quite aligned in asserting that hosting family and friends were different, at least in the length of the stay. Parents and close family members, normally stayed for at least one month, while friends just came for a few days. This difference makes hosting friends much easier than families, as reflected by the informants. The comparison between family visits and friend visits remain an interesting topic, however, it is not in the interest of this thesis. In the following discussions on hosting experiences, unless specifically pointed out, they will be discussed within the frame of family visits. Therefore, based on the collected data, one extreme of the motivational continuum can be narrowed down to "family-centred" (less mobile). While for the other end, "place-oriented" (more mobile), the scope of place should be enlarged to the Schengen area, because coming from another continent, guests want to take advantage of their Schengen visa to visit other parts of Europe besides hosts' current location in Sweden.

This altered "motivational continuum", with the less mobile "family-oriented" at one extreme and the more mobile "place (Europe)-oriented" at the other, as a backdrop, depicts the divergence of two types of VFR visits. In receiving the more mobile "place-oriented" guests, hosts arranged more travelling, normally in other European countries than Sweden; while receiving the less mobile "family-oriented" guests, hosts arranged less travelling activities, yet they worked more on introducing the guests into their everyday life. With different motivations and hosting strategies, the dimension of various co-present patterns and hosting experiences is thus established.

3.2 Desire of being visited

Even though hosts have prepared various activities according to guests' visiting motivations, it is worth examining how hosts conceive the co-presence. One positive attitude shared by all the informants is that they look forward to their family's visit. Therefore, here I ask why they want to be visited.

All the hosts keep regular and frequent contact with their family back in China, through communication technologies such as E-mails, SMS and Skype. They also make regular visits to their hometown, around once or twice a year. So their information about the family in China is updated. As one informant, Mary, said, "Anything that happened over there, I will know. And they know everything that happens to me as well" (personal communication, March 20th, 2015). Although the hosts and their families are well-informed of each other's life through virtual communication, the desire of being visited by family or friends from China is strong. Through hosts' return visits, cultural information and personal life stories can be brought to the family and shared with them, but it is hard for family back home to contextualize them. They can only imagine how hosts live in a country that is far away in another continent and the imagination is often limited by prior knowledge. Both positive and negative conceptions are constructed by those who can only learn through the hosts' narratives and maybe the internet. Misunderstandings, worries as well as rosy fantasies constitute the imagined life of Sweden. In order to link the actual and the imagined, to maintain a healthy kin network, to break down the barriers of communication, regular return visits made by the hosts are not enough, it has to be contributed partly by the visits made by the family that stay behind. In this respect, I argue that those visits mean more of "social functions" than simply family reunions (Duval, 2014).

Lena has lived in Sweden for four years. Though she visits her family every year and they talk over the phone frequently, and her family know about her life in Sweden and her Swedish boyfriend, they are a little unsure and worried about her anyway, because the family still holds the "general stereotype of western families" (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2015) that they do not have strong family values. During their visit to Sweden, through interactions with her boyfriend's family, Lena's mother and uncle were assuaged. As she said: "Before they were a little worried no matter how much I told them that I got along well with his family and how well his family treated me. Now, they saw it for themselves.

Seeing is believing. They were much relieved" (personal communication, March 5th, 2015). Given the geographical distance between migrant hosts and their family, visitors "put great stock in co-presence as a way of validating the status of the visited", checking up if they are "really OK" (Baldassar 2007, p. 403). Likewise, from the hosts' standpoint, being visited appears to be the best and powerful way of visually presenting their life to their family, to prove that they did not intentionally amplify the good, or hide the bad, part of their life abroad, to justify the lifestyle they have chosen, and to seek understandings from the family. Thus, the desire of being visited can to some extent be understood as the desire of an opportunity to unfold their transnational life in its context.

Another feature that characterises the desire of being visited can be found traces from Lilly's reflections. She does not think inviting parents over is only for fulfilling filial piety, which is a rather typical Chinese tradition, "more importantly it is for broadening our common interest, narrowing down the gap between us and of course tightening our relationship" (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015). Her comments are paralleled in some of the informants' interviews. These migrants leave their hometown for study or for career, and they are experienced in travelling and living in different countries and become more flexible with cultural encounters. Meanwhile, they realize that the gap between them and their family left in China becomes bigger and bigger, and it seems the best way to bridge the gap is:

> …to encourage parents to come out of their own *shell* and broaden their worldview. So that we can grow together and communicate more smoothly… it helps them to understand my ideas and my life better. On the other hand, I want them to know 'the world is much bigger than China'. (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

In order to achieve such an ambition, Lilly is forced to reflect on her transnational identity and experiences. In preparing her parents' visit, she has to conceptualize her life experiences and gets ready to package them and share with her parents.

One other, maybe the most salient and fundamental, aspect that comes up when hosts explain why they want to be visited is "being together". In order to understand the meaning of "being together", we should, first, acknowledge that it is a more demanding form of "staying in

touch", and, second, understand that physical proximity is felt "obligatory, appropriate or desirable" (Urry, 2002, p. 258) in the modern society, as will be explained below.

"Staying in touch" can be achieved quite easily with modern communication technologies, which facilitates a kind of virtual travel. While all informants report their regular contact with family and friends back home, one informant, Yong, who has lived in Sweden for over ten years, reminded me that these technologies actually came to our life not very long ago, when he described in a quite nostalgic tone the inconvenience to contact his family in China during the first few years of his stay in Sweden. It was very expensive to make international phone calls by dialling directly from the mobile phone, so he always bought a specific calling card, and then "you scratched off the covering to get the code, and then dialled to call. But now I can just grab my phone and call. It is much more convenient now" (March 9th, personal communication, 2015). Comparing to the almost effortless "staying in touch" over a distance, "being together" requires more effort in physically crossing continental borders, it, however, is desired and preferred. Yong invites his parents to Sweden every year and his only intention is to stay together as a family as much as possible. When another informant, Rose, interpreted her understanding of "being together", she said: "…face-to-face is different. I don't know why, but sometimes body language just says everything. I can express my ideas and feelings more freely and in full sense, I think. It is the best way of communication" (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015). During the "being-together" time, hosts and their beloved family can interact bodily; all the senses can be enacted to feel each other's existence and emotions in the same time-space frame (Urry, 2002), and this is the charm and magic of physical proximity because it offers a multi-sensuous bodily experience.

While the increased "capacity" (Baldassar, 2007) of communication makes "staying in touch" affordable and feasible, it also gives rise to the "renewed expectations and obligations in transnational family relationships" (Baldassar, 2007, p. 401). With much lowered travel barriers, families are *expected* to be there physically, especially on special occasions, such as graduation ceremonies and childbirth. Three of my informants had their parents come to visit either during their pregnancy or shortly after they gave birth. For example, Yan invited her mother to visit because she had experienced some physical discomfort during her pregnancy and wanted her mother to come and help. Yan's parents-in-law also came shortly after the childbirth, as they held the "traditional belief that the first month after childbirth was crucial for a woman" (Yan, personal communication, March 1st, 2015). Meanwhile, we also have to

bear in mind that it is not very practical to make short and frequent visits between these Chinese hosts and their visitors (families), which makes each "co-presence" an event that is anticipated and cherished.

Based on the above analysis, we can see "being together" does not only express a wish to spend quality time with family or friends who live apart, it also unveils the migrant hosts' anticipation of being visited, which makes VFR visits desirable and obligatory. Accordingly, the sense of obligation is also felt by the hosts themselves. They feel obliged to take *good* care of their guests, because they believe they are the reason or at least the impulsion of the guests' European trip. In this sense, I argue that the obligation of visiting, or being visited from the hosts' standpoint, and showing hospitality become the central part of the networked social life (Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007).

To summarise, the desire of being visited is a mixed and complicated feeling hosts have towards their family. Its social functions matter, because it keeps the kin network in balance as it is considered as the counterpart of hosts' return visits. Hosts want to take this opportunity to show the visitors their life in situ and bridge the gap that is caused due to their mobile and their visitors' immobile, or less mobile, life trajectories. Together with the "motivational continuum" that is described previously, these two parts set up the scene and stage where hosting and hospitality are performed. However, the hospitable space is not opened to every person in the hosts' social network, which will be shown in the next section.

3.3 Are we close enough?

As explained before, kinship and friendship are the prerequisite of VFR tourism. Here I will take one step further and argue that it is healthy and intimate kinship and friendship that make VFR travel possible. Hosts are well aware of the time, money and energy that are needed to host their guests. They are willing to invite and host their close relatives and friends, and ready to physically participate, financially and emotionally invest in the co-present experience, while for people who are not so close in their relationship network, they do not appear so keen.

Lin, an informant who has hosted a good friend of hers and the friend's mother, put it straightforwardly: "It all depends on the closeness and that is rule number one" (personal communication, March 3rd, 2015). When her friend and friend's mother visited, she showed

them around in Lund, invited them for dinner at a classic restaurant serving Swedish food, prepared gifts for them and accompanied them on a tour in Copenhagen. She described the relationship as,

> We grew up together, and her mother is always very nice to me. So I am happy to spend time with them. For those who are not very close to me, like some classmates from my old school, I wouldn't even step up to invite them. (Personal communication, March 3rd, 2015)

Another informant, Yan, shared similar opinion. Plus, she also mentioned the awkwardness in turning down visitors whom she did not feel like hosting:

> We [referring to her husband and herself] really, really want our best friends to come and visit. Every time we go to China, we invite them. But you know, there are always some kind of friends that I am not very close to, or friends' friends, want to visit and hope we can show them around…, and we are like, 'Umm…' [Shaking head], this is tricky. Probably the best we can do is to find a good local travel agency for them. We look forward to being visited by our close friends, time and money and whatever, none of them is a problem; while some acquaintances… we just couldn't afford the time. (Yan, personal communication, March 1st, 2015)

From the above quotes, one can see the willingness to host is not equally distributed towards every person in the hosts' network. Along with the migration flow, social networks are expanded, and are "less coherent with fewer overlapping multiple affiliations" (Urry, 2003, p. 159). This leads to a consequence that the cost in maintaining social relations increases. Therefore, people tend to spend much time sustaining contacts with a small proportion of their network while devoting less attention and effort for dispersed contacts (Urry, 2003).

Lilly presented me a scenario vividly, "Let's say, you want to visit me, then I have to write you an invitation letter and make room for you to stay [at my place]… if I am willing to do these, it means we must be very closely connected" (personal communication, February 24th, 2015). The decision to host is carefully made. It is a selective and weighing process during which the quality of the relationship is examined and reflected. Spending time on whom and whose visit is (not) anticipated are clearly defined by the hosts. Parents, close relatives and very close friends appear to be the most welcomed guests on the hosts' exclusive invitation

list. What's more, this is a reflexive moment for the hosts. They have to decide what kind of hosts they want to be and how much effort is needed to create a hospitable space within the homes. In welcoming the guests, the most obvious investment capital is time, as shown in the data collected.

For the hosts, time is of value and something that can be given, and more importantly it is already packed into the hospitality package. They are happy to *make* time, out of the ordinary life, for their loved ones, taking time to do things like writing invitation letters, arranging accommodations, planning activities, and engaging in the touristic experiences. All these actions require and consume time, but it is "worth it", and the reason is as simple as "we are very close" (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2015). This seems to be a well justified explanation, but the concept of gift by Mauss (2002) may deepen the argument. Gift is never pure and free; it is given, received and reciprocated (Mauss, 2002). Social relationships are continued and maintained through the completion of each round of gift exchange. The persistence in thinking gifts should be pure and free will lead to a failure in "recognizing our own grand cycles of exchanges, which categories get to be included and which get to be excluded from our hospitality" (p. xx), warned by Douglas (2002) in the foreword of Mauss' book '*The gift'*. Taking this warning in a reverse way, it is fair to say, if a line has been drawn in terms of who can receive the hospitality package and who cannot, then that package, as a gift, is definitely not free. So back to the discussion on time devotion by the hosts, time, as an element in the package, is not free either, on the contrary, it is attributed with value and given to the recipients (the guests) as a gift. Once the gift is received, exchanges are expected to happen. Then the question is, how will this round of gift exchange end? Or, what do hosts expect to receive in return? Ideally speaking, it should be the tightened family ties and intimate friendship that have carefully been maintained at a distance and over time. In this regard, "we are close" is more than just an explanation, it also separates visitors who are welcomed from those who are not. This makes it understandable why hosts are reluctant to spare time for "acquaintances" or friends at the edge of the network. They do not want to risk investing in an already weak relationship. At this point, the lack of time becomes a justifiable and polite excuse.

To sum up, VFR visits do not take place in a vacuum. They are the continuity of the relationships between hosts and guests that have been well established elsewhere. Hospitality is not manifested only within host-guest dimension, it is out of the respect to a close

relationship and the obligation of being a good family member or a true friend. Therefore, once the visits are officially settled, hospitality is expected to be enacted, as well as a formal display of relational identities within kinship and friendship.

4 Constructing a hospitable space

Showing hospitality is an art. Hosts are forced to be reflective on what they can offer, and at the same time, interpret what the guests need. In this section, I am going to focus on what kind of hospitable space the hosts have created for their guests, and how they take advantage of the "otherness" to turn the routinized everydayness into something extraordinary.

4.1 Soothing the "travel fever"

Based on the data derived from the field, there are two major practical obstacles that my informants' guests face: their limited English and the lack of international travelling experiences. This results in a rather distinctive contrast to those who are relatively more experienced, or at least feel comfortable, in travelling outside their mother language zone. Plus, at the moment, Chinese passport holders do not have much freedom in mobilising between the borders without being checked by the customs. For many Chinese travellers, especially older people who have come to Europe for the first time, those barriers lead directly to the sense of insecurity and nervousness, or "travel fever" (Löfgren, 2008). So for the Chinese migrant hosts, hosting family in this situation means much more than simply providing the accommodation and local tourism information during their stay; it is in fact a long-term project, which officially starts the moment hosts are informed of their guests' decision of coming, and that is normally two to three months ahead of the departure date.

Obtaining a visa is the first step. Besides preparing necessary documents for the hosts' part, such as the invitation letter and certain identity statement from the tax office, hosts also volunteered in helping with most paper work for the guests' part to the best of their ability. Lilly, who was visited by her parents in the summer 2010 and will be visited in the summer 2015, said,

> Filling in all the forms, getting them scanned and then sending them back. They just signed and then submitted. But recently, it seems the visa [referring to the Swedish VFR visa] application gets even more complicated. The family relationship has to be

> verified by a certain organization, but I haven't figured out how to get it done in my hometown. (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

Lilly explained that Swedish VFR visa had to be submitted in person, and the nearest embassy her parents could choose was in Guangzhou, and that meant three hours' travel from her hometown by the high speed train, or a whole night on a regular train. "No one will like that process…it's not easy to go to an unfamiliar city just for the visa anyway" (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015).

The discontent with the elaborate visa application was echoed by nearly all the informants, especially those whose hometown is not Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou where the Swedish embassies are located. Advanced transport can to some extent relieve the inconvenience, but it is the unfairness between different geographical locations in China in this context that causes much dissatisfaction. It is beyond the argument of this thesis to discuss the visa policy, but it is worth noting that not everyone enjoys the same privilege of getting a visa without travelling thousands of miles away.

Visa application is time-consuming, it is however manageable with hosts' distant assistance. When everything is settled, visas being issued, tickets being booked, it finally is time to start the trip. Making sure their guests have a smooth journey to the destination becomes the primary, and more challenging, task. Jenny, who hosted her parents in the summer 2014, said:

> That was their first time travelling abroad. I did a lot of preparation, such as, I told them *every* detail of their travel route, every detail… I think I did everything I could... For people like my parents, they do not speak any foreign languages, travelling abroad on their own is actually not very easy. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

Even though she considered it "more of a psychological fear than actual problem" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015), in order to ease her parents' "travel fever" (Löfgren, 2008), she wrote a letter in English for them, stating the purpose of the trip and the length of the stay, in case they were checked by the customs at the border. She also gave them detailed instructions on what to do in different scenarios and asked them to note down all her contact information in case of emergencies. It turned out those preparation work

served its purpose, although the letter for customs was not really used. The journey to Sweden was smooth and her mother even claimed she could visit on her own next time. According to her parents, another pair of parents they met at the transit airport, who were on the way to visit their daughter in Finland, felt rather stressed because they did not even know where to catch the next flight.

Other informants shared the same concerns for their guests' first inter-continental flights. In order to avoid such potential troubles, hosts took various other strategies, such as trying to book direct flights if possible, and asking parents to immediately switch their mobile phones on when they landed. A couple of informants even decided to fetch their parents in China and then travelled back to Sweden together.

All these strategies and adequate preparation can be considered as a way to soothe the travel fever that is shared by both the hosts and the guests, those who stay and those who are on the actual move. On the one hand, this nervousness is considered as an obstacle to overcome; on the other hand, as Löfgren (2008) points out, it indicates a "split between body and mind" (Löfgren, 2008, p. 90). Long before hosts and guests meet in person, both sides have already entered the hosting and guesting mode. Hosts are forced to think how to facilitate guests in the journey to minimize their nervousness and guests learn to control that emotion by practicing on their own. By the hosts' reflecting and sharing, the guests' learning and practicing, some kind of mutual understanding is formed and the foundation of hospitality is laid, as guests have shown great courage in overcoming those hurdles, while the hosts have manifested the anticipation to welcome their family guests.

4.2 Staging tourist experiences

Besides providing assistance as illustrated above, hosts were heavily relied on with another important task: planning activities. Based on guests' requests and hosts' practical situation, the more mobile "place-oriented" visitors and their hosts chose to tour around some major European cities, such as Paris, Berlin and Rome, whereas the less mobile "family-oriented" guests and their hosts decided to keep their travelling within Southern Sweden. A finding from the data is that, in either type, hosts are rather active in assisting their guests in fitting in the "legitimate" tourist image, by encouraging them to participate in tourist activities. In this section, the strategies hosts employ in achieving such an aim will be illustrated. Before I move on, however, it is necessary to ask what an experience is and if it can be staged.

This question is revisited again and again by ethnologist Löfgren in his book "*On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*" (1999). Linguistic approaches suggest that "there is a common emphasis on movement" that is associated with "experience", and the focus of an experience is on "personal participation" (Löfgren 1999, p. 95), which means it has to be made in a very personal way and it is not something that can be given. No one can give or receive an experience, because "we have to be both physically and mentally *there*" (Löfgren 1999, p. 95) in order to have it, or more specifically, to make it our own. In this regard, hosts cannot simply pack an experience as material stuff, such as guide books and travel itineraries, and give it directly to the guests. Guests can only get their own experiences by being there. However, experiences can be shared, "through representations and expressions" (Löfgren 1999, p.95). This makes it achievable and manageable for the hosts to stage a desired tourist experience.

4.2.1 In becoming a tourist

What contributes to the legitimate tourist image? Or put it more specifically, how should it be for Chinese tourists' first travel in Europe? According to my informants, Paris and its Eiffel Tower obviously possess an irreplaceable position in their guests' idea of Europe. "It is a must-go", as repeated by several informants. Mary, whose parents came for her graduation in the summer 2014, told me that her parents wanted to take this opportunity to see as much Europe as possible. So she arranged a two-week tour including Barcelona, Paris and Stockholm besides Malmö and Copenhagen. When asked about the intentions behind this combination of cities, she explained,

> For Barcelona, I have been there, so I know what to expect. I like the relaxing atmosphere there… Paris… you know, travelling in Europe, you just can't skip Paris; and Stockholm, it is the capital city of Sweden, and we are in Sweden… as for Copenhagen, it is close to Lund but in another country after all. (Mary, personal communication, March 20th, 2015)

In these four cities, the choice of Paris appears of some interest; this "you just can't skip it" explains it all. As a matter of fact, this explanation was paralleled in other informants' experiences. One good example is from Lilly who has hosted different guests in the past few years. Each time she tried to arrange different travel itineraries as she also wanted to take the chance to explore new places, but there was always a stop reserved for Paris. Until now, she

has been up to the Eiffel Tower and visited Louvre three times and not a single time did she go there alone. On the one hand, she thought it was funny that she brought different guests to Paris as if she were the tour guide, yet on the other she explained: "Guests did not talk much about their desire of visiting any specific places, as they haven't been to Europe before, but you know, in their mind, there is a picture about Europe, and Paris is obviously on it" (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015). What makes Paris so desirable is not the focus of this thesis, the point here is that hosts are actually facilitating to create a tourist landscape for the guests in order to fit them in the legitimate image of being a tourist. At this point, guests are no longer just people who come and visit the hosts, whether willingly or not, they are given one more identity by the hosts: tourists. And hosts, on the other hand, turn themselves into mediators in the tourism market, by bringing the hottest tourism product to the guests. Rose illustrated this well in her narrative. When her parents and younger brother came, they visited Italy, Germany and Paris of course. Even though she has been to most of those places herself, she felt *obliged* to just accompany them and let them be tourists, because:

> That was their first time in Europe and I wanted them to be a tourist and to visit those popular attractions. As for less significant tourist attractions, they can wait till next time. Otherwise when you travel back home, and people ask if you have been here or there, yet you haven't… that is a bit embarrassing. They were tourists after all, if they haven't been to those famous attractions, it feels like they didn't finish the task. (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015)

From this quote, two points can be drawn. First, certain tourist attractions have been prioritized over others by the hosts. Second, once family guests are given the tourist identity, they are expected to fulfil some obligations including visiting tourist attractions. To further the analysis, the concept of "rules of conduct" (Goffman, 1956) can shed some light. "When an individual becomes involved in the maintenance of a rule, he tends also to become committed to a particular image of self" (Goffman, 1956, p. 474). In this situation, obligations to contribute to their guests' tourist experiences are felt by the hosts, because it is both a gesture of hospitality and a way to assert the status as hosts as opposed to guests. At this point, the operation of rules of hospitality becomes an act of making a hospitable space, where hosts can meet the obligations of being hosts. Moreover, the image of hosts is also constructed by the perception of the guests, in other words, hosts become "dependent upon

the assumption" (Goffman, 1956, p. 474) that guests follow the rules of conduct as well. In this sense, one can say if the transformation of guests into tourists is out of the obligation of the rules of hospitability, then the expectations on guests fulfilling the obligations of being a tourist is out of the maintenance of hosts' self-image, so that hosts can continue being hosts and offer hospitability.

4.2.2 The invisibility

In addition to facilitating the guests in becoming tourists, there is another strategy of equal importance that hosts use: turning part of themselves into tourists while reserving the other part as hosts. Lena, who hosted a group of eight persons consisting of her relatives and some family friends in the summer 2014, considered herself as a tourist when they travelled together, but sometimes, she had to step up as a host. It is clearly shown in the following example:

> One day we were in Paris, they wanted to visit Champs Elyse, just a street, but quite famous… I led the group to a café for some rest. When I just finished ordering food for everyone, the kids suddenly wanted more ice-cream, and some adults wanted to take a walk along the street, and my aunt wanted to visit that LV store across the street… it was very hot that day and we had walked a lot, but who would go with her except me? It must be me, right? (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2015)

In this case, Lena would not feel comfortable if she continued holding onto her tourist card. Ordering food and accompanying to shop are felt as obligations for her as a host. The identity shift among hosts, translators and caretakers that is shown from the above example will be discussed in the following chapter. Here the point is that it becomes an art for the hosts to decide when he/she is a tourist and when is not. By hiding the self's hosting identity and becoming one of *them*, hosts learn to diminish the influence of their personal preferences on the guests' travel experiences and let them be the legitimate tourists. However, in order to ensure a pleasant and smooth travel, hosts have to take the initiative and offer necessary assistance that goes beyond the responsibility of being a tourist. In other words, this quasi-tourist identity makes the hosts a special "one of them", almost invisible but always ready to help. Invisibility has long been seen as an "ideal" quality to possess for servants (O'Dell 2010, p. 119). Hosts in this context are the ones who provide assistance and protection to their guests, and therefore can be said, to some extent, to function as a service provider.

However, the tricky part is that in a host-guest relationship, hosts have the advantage to decide how and what to offer and to whom, so in this regard, invisibility is not a prerequisite to be a host. Rather, it is a skill that tells good hosting apart from bad hosting. It is this invisibility that is tactically practiced by the hosts that turns the hosts into quasi-guests, and that ensures the smooth interaction between the proximity of kinship and the hospitality of host-guest relationship.

4.2.3 In exploring the unknown

All the strategies that have been illustrated above are used to promise a positive tourist experience for the guests. In this regard, experiences take on the form of the "processes that we find ourselves in or realize that we have been in", which are "made up of multiple beginnings, endings and border crossings" (O'Dell 2005, p. 132). From the preparation for the arrival to the hospitality that is offered during the co-presence, hosts accompany their guests to go through different experiences at different stages. However, there is another form of experiences that are usually viewed as something "we enter and exit" (Löfgren 1999, p. 95), and that is the "peak experience". It happened to Lilly once when she was travelling with her aunt in Seville, Spain, as she illustrated:

> One evening, we were looking for bars in those small alleys, as she wanted to drink some beer. We went into a really small bar and told the bartender we wanted beer, but he did not understand English and we did not speak Spanish. So we were served two shots instead [Laugh]… The funny thing is, in a random local bar, in the dim light, two Chinese women, a confused bartender, the whole scene was just so dramatic. And we, cheered, bottomed up and then left. (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015)

Maybe this is the "peak experience" that many travellers are constantly looking for and longing for. It is "dramatic" and "random", but has to happen in a specific place and time. Given the spontaneity and highly subjective quality of such experiences, there is not much one can do in effect except keeping all the senses open and waiting to get lucky. Apparently Lilly did not prepare for such an experience, in fact, it cannot be prepared. On the contrary, it would probably never happen if she closely followed a detailed pre-arranged travel itinerary. This is the fun, however risky, part of travelling to the unknown. Lilly let herself be a complete tourist together with her aunt at that moment and was not afraid to throw

themselves in a sea of strange signs. When the line between hosting and guesting is blurred, the predictable becomes somehow unpredictable, and all of a sudden, the safe family trip is turned into an adventure, and the peak experiences might just be knocking on the door without giving out a single clue. At this point, the surprising unknown disturbs and contrasts the routinized known journey. What triggers the magic here is not "the known and unknown as entities in and of themselves" (Jensen, 2005, p. 159), but the tension and interplay between the two that make the moment distinguishable and distinctive.

It is hard to say if Lilly got inspired from that peak experience, but she decided to let her parents travel on their own for their upcoming visit to Europe this summer. One of the main reasons she gave was interesting. "If I accompany them all the time, they will never feel the adventurous part of the journey" (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015). She said she would still give them necessary help such as downloading a digital map and recommending some travel routes. Yet what she is trying to do is to gradually remove the scaffolding and hopefully her parents can travel in an adventurous way as she enjoys rather than simply consuming the pre-packed service offered by the host. What underlies this arrangement is perhaps Lilly's own understanding of the meaning of travelling and her hope of passing it on to her parents. If experiences in the form of a "process" can be staged, then "peak experiences" as an event are hardly prepared. Leave the guests completely alone does not guarantee peak experiences, but at least it opens up some possibilities. In this sense, who says this is not a good hosting strategy?

4.2.4 Packaging and consuming the everydayness

Another finding is that, comparing to hosts' active participation in planning and travelling with the guests around Europe, they became rather inactive during the guests' stay in Lund. Hosts did not feel very motivated to show them around in Lund or nearby places. They listed various practical reasons such as guests were too tired to walk anymore, they had seen enough churches and cathedrals in Italy or France, or they felt "Europe was more or less the same" (Lilly, personal communication, February 24th, 2015), but they also admitted that the decisive one was that they themselves felt too familiar with Lund to see any attractions that were worth visiting.

Instead of continuing being a tourist, both hosts and guests were happy to live a rather "mundane" life, doing grocery shopping together, mothers preparing the meal, children

(hosts) watching TV on the sofa and the whole family taking a walk in nearby parks after dinner to wrap up the day. No tourist activities are planned, because "it is like living at home, there's no need to introduce or plan anything", said Mary (personal communication, March 20th, 2015). However, there is one activity that has been arranged by several hosts who graduated from Lund University: the university campus tour. This is where most of my informants spent two years of their life and probably how their family started to realize "Sweden and Switzerland are two different countries" (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015). For the hosts, Lund has already become their dwelling place. They have been living in this small city long enough to notice anything new. Nonetheless, for the guests, taking off their tourists' layer, they learn to stand from a different angle to reposition themselves in this seemingly familiar city that they have heard of and seen photos many times from the hosts, via virtual communication before they come in person. Walking around the university itself turns out to be an embodied attraction for the guests, and what is packaged and consumed is the familiar strangeness and the strange familiarity. Through hosts' narratives, the landscape and the mindscape merge into one full picture in the guests' sensuous experiences; guests' imagination is finally contextualized in all the materiality. At this point, the hosts' everyday life becomes part of the guests' extraordinary.

Another aspect of the transformation of the everydayness lies in the search for "authenticity". Tourists devote much energy in consuming "otherness" (Löfgren, 1999) and in experiencing something different from their ordinary life. However, "tourists never just travel *to* places: their mind-sets, routines and social relations travel with them" (Larsen, 2008, p. 27).

When Lena took her large VFR group to visit Sweden, her guests liked it a lot. They did self-driving and drove around Southern Sweden to visit some natural reserves.

> Though it wasn't like France or Germany… much to do and see as a tourist, Lund was rather quiet in the summer when all the students were gone… and in those natural parks they could just sit down and relax. They enjoyed themselves the most while in Sweden, because they thought it was *authentic*. (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2015)

Löfgren (1999) reminds us that how people dream about their vacation depends on the kind of everyday existence they are leaving (p. 269). According to Lena, her guests have been travelling very often worldwide for business reasons, and they were rather tired of visiting

historical and cultural attractions, so when they came to Sweden, they fell in love with the natural beauty immediately. When travel is part of their entrepreneurial life for Lena's guests, being on the move becomes a routine. Visiting cultural heritages and museums is no longer an explorative experience; people are trapped in its repetitiveness and habitualness of being a legitimate tourist. Consequently, the originally extraordinary travelling experiences fall flat into an ordinary, even boring, gazing task. On the contrary, Southern Sweden, an area with far less tourist signs than those glamorous European metropolises, evokes visitors' original pursuit that is rooted in their constant mobility: authenticity and even a little nostalgia towards the much slower rhythm of life than that in contemporary China.

Based on the above example, one can ask how the perception of authenticity is directed and why it only echoes in certain places over other places. When Lena was planning the travel for her guests, she had a hunch that they might like Sweden the best. "It turned out I was right", said Lena (personal communication, March 5th, 2015) quite complacently, "…because I know them very well". In this context, when hosts become the mediator between the guests/tourists and the product on the tourism market, they learn to interpret the guests beforehand according to their previous travel experiences, their likes and dislikes and how much they know about the destination, in order to identify what can be packaged into an attraction. Lena's guests do not know much about Sweden, but each time she visits her hometown, she tells them what her Swedish life is like. "Tourists notice what they expect and what they already know" (Ooi, 2005, p. 63). It is not to say that the knowledge tourists have about the destination country is fully correct, in fact, they are highly likely to be biased, but what matters here is that the knowledge is enough to produce an imagination that people use to judge a tourism product. In other words, when what tourists physically experience fits in their perception of the destination, it is authentic; otherwise it is not. In Lena's case, her guests have got some ideas about Lund and Sweden from the host, and what they saw and experienced echoed what they have imagined, so evoked the sense of authenticity. What is packaged and consumed here, once again, is the hosts' taken-for-granted everydayness. And the magic is guests' imaginary perceptions of the place.

To summarise, the line between hosting and guesting is not always clear-cut. Hosts strategically align themselves with guests in order to ensure a seamlessly positive experience. The manifestation of hospitality is adjusted according to guests' ever changing demands during the co-presence, but it can only take place when hosts are hosts and guests are guests.

5 The imagined and the negotiated

The preparation stage is always full of fun, anticipation and other positive emotions, though it requires the hosts to devote much time and energy in elaborate tasks such as helping with the visa application, designing detailed travel routes which try to satisfy every visitor's need, and thinking about where the guests can stay, eat, go and see.

When Rose had her family visited, she surfed the Internet to check up travel blogs and collected "sufficient travel information" (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015) which was as detailed as the location of hotels, how to get there, how long it would take to get there and if any restaurants were in the neighbourhood, so in the end she printed out all the practical information "this thick!" as she showed me with her thumb and index finger vividly. Lena's preparation was similar, but as her visiting pack consisted of 8 people, she decided to find a Europe-based Chinese travel agency to handle the travelling outside Sweden and she just took care of the travelling when they were back to Sweden. She described her role as a mediator between her guests and the travel agency and jokingly said she was the "coolie" hired by her "bosses" (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2014). Even hosts described the preparation period as complicated and time-consuming, they also admitted that was enjoyable. When they thought about their upcoming visitors, excitement filled their bodies, and a perfect family get-together picture was drawn.

Nonetheless, it is not until the actual intimate co-presence starts that hosts realize that the negotiation process has moved onto the next, more complicated, emotional and challenging, phase, for both the more mobile "place-oriented" and the less mobile "family-oriented" visit types, however, they are experienced differently. In this chapter, I am going to discuss and analyse different roles the hosts perform simultaneously and strategies they have developed in coping with unexpected situations.

5.1 Taking on functional roles

For the more mobile visitors, hosts take on different functional roles. The most obvious one is to be a translator. As the only person in the group who does not have problems communicating in English, hosts are needed almost anywhere and anytime during the trip. A second role is to coordinate. Lena's stories are the most typical.

As mentioned, she led a group of 8 people on a tour in Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria and finally Sweden. She speculated about the language issue, but what was beyond her expectation was the coordination work. She said:

> I thought it would be easy, just to translate, but in fact it wasn't! Take ordering food as an example. When we sat in the restaurant, I translated every dish on the menu and was ready to take orders from each of them. It sounds easy, right? But it actually was like this: after I read through the menu, they would ask, like, 'what did you just say?' that was annoying. And sometimes, they didn't order the dish, say, fish, but they thought they did, and when all the dishes were served, they asked me where the fish was. (Lena, personal communication, March 5th, 2014)

She went on listing other similar situations mainly regarding dining, such as she did not want to let her guests queue for the restaurants during the peak hours, so she suggested to eat at Max (a fast food eatery like Burger King), but it turned out it was even more difficult to remember those personalized orders. However, gradually she developed a strategy. Before reading through the menu, she first asked them what kind of dish they wanted to eat, chicken, fish, beef or anything else, and then matched those requests with the menu. "It made my life much easier since then", said she. Here, it makes obvious that a power shift is performed. The decision-making process is changed from guest-led to host-led. Besides the pre-condition that hospitality is not equally distributed to every person in the hosts' social network in the first place, as argued in the third chapter, here another pre-condition to enact the gesture of hospitality is that it can only be performed when the hosts feel at home (Molz & Gibson, 2007). Even Lena showed great tolerance, patience and respect to her guests, when she senses the loss of control over the situation, her hosting position enables her to be the rule-maker. Only by doing so can the gesture of hospitality be made continuously. Therefore, the feeling of at home is framed by hospitality as "a domain of power where the host polices the conditions by which the front door remains open or closed" (Molz & Gibson, 2007, p. 12). Through a series of exchanges and interactions between hosts and guests, the boundaries and limits of hospitality are constantly contested and negotiated (O'Dell, 2010, p. 35), in order to secure the delivering of hospitableness.

Another functional role the hosts perform is tour guiding. Having some background knowledge about the travelling destinations is considered necessary by the hosts, especially for guests coming from a Chinese cultural background and not so familiar with European

history. Therefore in order to better engage guests in the tour, one of the strategies is to prepare their guests for the cultural border crossing. With better English and more experiences in travelling, hosts are expected, feel obligated and also willing to guide their guests into experiencing different cultures along the trip. Nonetheless, this task requires capability in not only knowledge about the history and culture, it also tests the hosts' ability in absorbing, translating and transferring those information to their guests.

Mary experienced some difficulties in doing so, when her parents and she were visiting Paris. That was the first time in Paris for all three of them, and Mary felt she was not able to guide her parents. She said: "when we all experience some places for the first time, I am in the process of digesting those knowledge myself, which means I wouldn't be able to transfer to them" (Mary, personal communication, March 20th, 2015). She went on with an example: they rented an audio guide in Louvre, but no Chinese language was available, so she had to listen first and translate to her parents. However, since she was also new to the information and could not interpret it well, her parents did not seem to be able to enjoy or appreciate those art pieces as she did.

Louvre is famous for its extensive collection of art pieces, but the lack of knowledge about the culture that is intensively collected and represented in the museum results in the exclusion of her parents from Mary's experiential world. The critical meaning of co-presence lies in the precondition that everyone should be included in order to co-create the experiences. What matters is the commitment and the mutual attentiveness (Urry, 2002). In other words, it is not what they do or where they go that makes much difference to the quality of co-presence, it is how hosts and guests interact with each other and how the co-presence is experienced that count. Yet, this does not mean objects within time and space are of little importance, on the contrary, I argue that materiality matters in establishing the connections between hosts and guests. Showing commitment and being attentive are expressed in how hosts translate his/her knowledge of the surroundings to the guests and how hosts help guests remove the innate otherness by familiarising guests with the objects. In Mary's case, no matter how great those art pieces were, they were merely signs that her parents could not recognize, which left them in no position to appreciate, reflect, or, not to mention, start a conversation about them. Plus, Mary did not finish her own "digesting" process and therefore was unable to interpret the meanings or make those signs readable for them. So the consequence was that her parents were virtually excluded from the co-creation. Their failure to bodily participate made Mary

feel frustrated, because what was interpreted here was the failure to meet the obligation (Goffman, 1956) of being a good host, especially when she believed it was because of her insufficient knowledge that hindered her parents' participation. Reflecting upon this experience, she concluded a more suitable hosting model: "it should be like this: I learn it first, digest the knowledge, and then transfer to them, so that they can understand and get involved" (Mary, personal communication, March 20th, 2015). Interestingly, her parents have located Italy as the travel destination for their next European trip, a country Mary has never been to either, so she told me she could only try even harder to learn before the visit and it seemed she was quite confident for the next "co-exploration".

Different from Mary who took on most of the responsibility herself, Rose, took a different, or maybe more efficient, approach. She gave her parents and younger brother some travel articles that she found from the internet to read before they headed to each tourist attraction, because "they could also learn something" (Mary, personal communication, March 11th, 2015). In doing so, not only the responsibility of tour guiding is shared by every participant, it also ensures a more balanced conversation during the trip.

While these more mobile hosts are jumping from various functional roles, the hosts who are with less mobile visitors are also practicing their multitasking skills and even struggling with coping with several equally demanding familial identities. The following section is centred on the less mobile hosts and their guests.

5.2 Shifting among familial identities

Due to some practical issues such as physical inconvenience or time constraints, some female hosts, who were with small children or not fully recovered from childbirth, decided to host their guests (parents) in a less mobile manner. Parents were very clear about the hosts' situations and the main motivation that was agreed on and made clear by both parties was to babysit and help with housework. Therefore, these hosts did not plan many travel activities for the parents, instead, their main task was to introduce their parents into the daily life and get them familiarized with the environment so that parents could help.

In this more "family-centred" setting, hosts' familial roles appear more prominent comparing to those hosts who are on family trips. Nearly all the interactions and negotiations were made inside the hosts' residence. They are mothers, daughters and wives, besides hosts. When

kinship is taken for granted over host-guest relationship, family routines are challenged by guests' curiosity, two sets of cultural practice clash, frictions unavoidably take place. Plus, what even complicates the situation is the hosts' transnational background.

As we have discussed above, corporeal co-presence is desired and obligatory, especially on special occasions. Based on data collected, it is particularly shown in the case of childbirth or babysitting. As migrants, hosts miss out the hands-on support from their extended family in China, nor do they have an extensive network in Sweden whom they can rely on in terms of childbirth and childcare, so their parents are expected to be *there* to help at such critical moments. However, when parents did come and try to help out, all my three informants, who were in the same situation, to my surprise, described the visit of their parents at that time as "they helped, but they were *a burden* at the same time".

5.2.1 Routines

Jenny, a mother of two young children, one was just about the age for day-care and the other still needed breastfeeding, hosted her parents in the summer 2014. She looked forward to their visit very much because finally there would be someone who could help her out with babysitting. She described her past two years as "merely surviving" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015) because of the exhausting childcare. However, she encountered a big difficulty in incorporating her parents into her daily life, because, she said,

> They were not familiar with the environment and didn't know what to put where or when to prepare dinner. I have two small children, so I am very strict with the time schedule. If you don't follow that, your day will be ruined. But my parents didn't know any of these. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

With all the explaining and talking, she felt very tired and got easily irritated, so the reality was just the opposite to her imagined life, "besides two children, I had to take care of two more adults!" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

Another difficulty that stood out was when they did grocery shopping together. She would like her parents to look after the children, so they could finish the shopping as fast as possible and move on with other daily chores. However, her mother showed great curiosity in the supermarket, asking questions about vegetables she had never seen before, and comparing

prices for the best deal. All those comments and comparisons resulted in a lengthy grocery shopping, "which meant my day was totally messed up" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015).

What was messed up was in fact Jenny's daily routine. Routine is the "auto-pilot mode" (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010, p. 81) that either supports people throughout the day to finish different tasks without much effort, or traps people in monotonous activities that could result in an inflexible daily life (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). With small children at home, Jenny has developed her routines and follows them strictly as when to feed the children and when to do grocery shopping. Her time is accurately calculated and allotted to each piece of daily housework. Her life is basically taking care of itself with those routines. While routines save her from the already exhaustive mothering, they, at the same time, trap her in endless repetitions. By constantly repeating the same practice for a long time, they become invisible and "naturalized as something given" (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010, p. 82). However, when her parents came to help, she was forced to self-examine her life, pick out the routines that were already internalized in her body, and put them in words, in order to explain to her parents. This process can be difficult because individuals are more used to practicing the routines than talking about them (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). Her parents, on the other hand, as visitors in an new environment, naturally showed interest in things they had never seen, as that was their way to learn and approach new things and new lifestyles. Furthermore, whereas the regular grocery shopping was only part of Jenny's daily life, for her parents, it was more of an escape from the *unfamiliar* environment. Supermarket as a place is not a new concept and buying food is a skill they already have. Comparing products for the best deal speaks for itself. While they were struggling getting used to their life in Sweden, supermarket afforded an opportunity to shake off the strangeness a bit in that they could perform some tasks without much thinking. However, these natural reactions or "gazes" are true intruders in Jenny's opinion, as they are powerful enough to destroy, or "mess up" in her words, those routines which are the only prop in her survival.

5.2.2 Being a mediator

Parents' visits in some cases are mainly motivated by their desire to spend time with grandchildren. Hosts welcome the visits partly because childcare could be shared. Paradoxically, many conflicts between hosts and guests are ignited on the issue of childcare. Those conflicts tend to be more intensive when the host lives in a multi-national family.

Lin's mother insisted coming to take care of Lin when the baby was due, because she did not feel at ease about her daughter giving birth in a foreign country. They lived rather harmoniously since her arrival, until the baby was born. "Childcare nowadays is rather different from 20 or 30 years ago, such as diapers and those new kind of milk bottles, so both my mother and I just learn gradually" (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015). The difference between Lin and her mother was Lin was obviously less experienced in raising a child, but she learnt much knowledge from her Swedish midwife, while her mother treated the baby more or less the same way she raised up Lin, so they argued on childcare quite often. The story about the "honey water" is typical. The baby had constipation problems for a while, so her mother wanted to feed her some honey water to help digest. But Lin and her Swedish husband learned from the doctor that infants under 6 months should not be fed water, thus she did not let her mother do so. The argument about honey water lasted for several days, and finally Lin's family members in China got involved because her mother wished they could convince her and her husband. Looking at the crying baby, Lin felt helpless as she could not decide whom to listen to. That was just one of many arguments that happened almost all the time during her mother's stay. Stuck between her Chinese family and her Swedish husband, with two opposite ways of childcare, Lin felt helpless, depressed and frustrated. Moreover, as she was the only person who could speak both Chinese and Swedish, she was unavoidably involved in each conversation. All these happenings just made her feel drained, as she said:

> I really appreciated my mother could come and help, she took care of all the housework, but I have to say, her visit also put some burdens on me… not just language translation, I also had to take care of both sides' feelings and mediated in between. It is fine to translate just for one day, but for 3 months? It is very tiring! Everyday those two languages bumped into each other in my mind, all the time. Plus, I got a baby… such misunderstandings, arguments centred on the baby just went on for 3 months. (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015)

Two languages, two opinions, two childcare theories, and two families, these dualities were all concentrated during her mother's visit, which was "almost unbearable" (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015), and she was certainly not prepared for it. As the only communication channel, Lin later learned to filter the information before passing it to the other side. It could at least save her some energy in translating. Meanwhile, this filtering was

also used as a strategy to carefully protect each side of her family from feeling hurt. She remembered once her mother came to her bedroom without knocking the door when her husband was asleep. This action was understood by her husband as lack of respect for privacy. Lin got the complaints but did not mention even a word to her mother, because she believed that was due to the unpassable cultural differences and telling mother not to come to her bedroom any more would definitely hurt mother's feelings, she said,

> You know, in Chinese culture, son-in-law is considered and treated as son, so my mother obviously didn't think that much when she came to our bedroom. Plus, she came in because she heard the baby crying. She was just showing her care. But, yes, I also understand my husband's protection of his privacy. (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015).

The "privacy" issue could probably happen in an all-Chinese family too, but what is of interest here is Lin's cultural explanation. Her transnational identity was made obvious through the way she explained and coped with that situation. Her understanding and knowledge about two cultures lend her the judgement in terms of which information should, or do not have to, be translated and transferred. Here, I would like to borrow the metaphor of "gauge" (Levitt & Schiller, 2004) to further the analysis. Levitt and Schiller (2004) suggests thinking the migrant experience as "a kind of gauge, which, while anchored, pivots between a new land and a transnational incorporation" (p. 1011). Rather than moving in a linear way from home country to the host country, or shifting the attachment from one culture to another, migrants move back and forth between different locations and may identify themselves with more than one culture. Therefore, "the median point on the gauge is not full incorporation but rather simultaneity of connection" (Levitt &Schiller, 2004, p. 1011). Migrant hosts' way of positioning themselves in the gauge has to be appropriated constantly, because this positioning needs be contextualized. In Lin's situation, jumping between two sets of family relationships, as a daughter to a Chinese mother and a wife to a Swedish husband, it is clear that she feels connected to both sides, but it also makes obvious that her equally strong attachment leaves her, many times, in a dilemma when the two cultural sets conflict.

5.3 Made into a host

In this part, I want to show how the taken-for-granted kinship is played out and confronted by guests in the family visits. Towards the end of most interviews, I would ask my informants if they considered themselves as hosts. This must be a so abrupt and absurd question, because the informants' facial expression just answered me that "I thought we just spent a whole hour talking about my hosting experience." However, they did manage to give it some thought and then told me whether they were or not. Most of them thought they were hosts, because their familiarity with Sweden and Europe in general made them into a host; while my key informant, Jenny, firmly told me she was not a host but her mother made her into one, which surprised me a little. I would not argue here that her personal experiences could represent other informants, but I contend that at least traces of her positioning in the hosting could be paralleled in other hosts' experiences.

As introduced earlier in this chapter, Jenny is the mother to two young children. She felt she had never talked that much during a day when she had to introduce her parents to the new environment. However, while her mother was learning and adapting, she also gave suggestions. Jenny said:

> She would suggest, like, I think you should put this here and that there, things like that. For me, in that [exhausted] situation, I didn't care at all, just let her… but she wanted to confirm with me on everything and get her suggestions approved by me, as she thought this was my home and I should know how things were organized. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

When her mother's suggestions were met with her "I-don't-care" attitude, and she just got more irritated by her mother's constant approvals, a big quarrel finally broke out. It was "probably the biggest one I have ever had with my parents since I was born" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015), and the main argument was of course pointed to Jenny's attitude. She did not elaborate the details on the quarrel, but she said, during the argument, her mother told her bluntly that "I don't even know where to put my hands and feet in your home", quoted from her mother by Jenny. Until then, she realized that,

> The home in China is their home, and here, though they are my parents, they are just *guests* after all. I was a little shocked… the first time I realized they actually felt that

> way… I wasn't aware at all of the drastic changes in their identity… now looking back, I guess, before they came, they thought this was their daughter's home, so was theirs, but when they were here, things were just different. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

Her mother's dissatisfaction, constant approval and finally uneasiness that was made clear during the fight, all of them taught Jenny a lesson and forced her to face the reality that she was the host. Besides kinship, they are also in a host-guest relationship. Her failure of taking on host's responsibility made her guest parents feel not welcomed and distressed. Actually both Jenny and her parents suffer from their multi-layered relationship. When kinship is taken for granted by Jenny, the host-guest relationship is ignored or discarded. The way she perceived herself was not able to enact her identity as a host, therefore, she did not perform any acts that carried any "ceremonial messages" (Goffman, 1956) as a host welcoming her guests. Nevertheless, for her parents who spent a total of over 20 hours on the way from China to Sweden, though their mission was to help with babysit, they expected some basic etiquette reserved for the guests, more specifically, they needed some level of hospitality from the host to position their liminal identity between being a tourist and a local. Yet Jenny did not realize all these until her mother said it out loud during the quarrel.

Relationships are not fluid, either are they flexible in coping with the "changing conditions of modernity, which have a tendency to reinforce rather than diminish the discrepancy between the normative and the experienced" (Miller, 2007, p. 544). Following this thread of thought, in either kinship or host-guest relationship, there are expectations of each role, may it be a family member, a host or a guest, that should be performed. Take hosts for example, being a host means a whole series of responsibility and "idealisations" of what the person in that role should do and behave towards his guests. Jenny positioned herself as a daughter to her parents in the kinship scope, instead of a host to two guests, while her parents thought they were guests besides being parents. This mismatching of each other's roles underlies the disappointment of not being treated properly. It also leads to the biggest ever quarrel between Jenny and her parents. Luckily after the fight, both sides learnt to reposition themselves in hosting and guesting.

As mentioned above, her stories are highly personal, but the point here is the art of positioning oneself properly in a relationship. Keeping the balance between the actual and the imagined, or the "normative" in Miller's (2007) word, relationships is necessary in

maintaining any relationships, not exclusive to kinship or friendship. Another aspect that comes up from Jenny's narrative can be analysed through the notion of "home". This will be discussed in the following chapter.

To summarise, hosting takes on various forms. The more mobile and the less mobile types may have developed different strategies in dealing with the host-guest relationship and negotiating the boundaries of the self and other. What they have in common, however, is that hosts have realized the discrepancies between the conceived and the experienced, and they forcibly take up the challenge of "controlling, limiting and managing" (Jensen, 2005, p. 152) them through continuous negotiations.

6 The contested home

Rose came to Sweden almost three years ago for study, and now she is a PhD candidate. Speaking of her life in Lund, she said:

> I've been living in Lund for over two years. I know Lund very well, but I wouldn't call it home. I don't know, it is just…not home. Home is such a place that you will miss if staying away from it for too long and you want to go back all the time. This is just a place I live, not my home. (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015)

This chapter is a discussion on home, but it is not intended to give a definite answer on what home is. In fact, each informant has their own interpretation and understanding about home, and none of them is identical to another. The opening narrative given by Rose is exclusive to herself. There are some informants who identify Lund as their home, while some think they are in between China and Sweden. What this chapter aims to present is how these transnational hosts' notion of home was challenged, reinforced, renewed and reiterated while they were hosting their beloved families from home country. In doing so, home is used as an analytical lens through which the process of locating one's home, defending one's home, shifting the orientation of home and reconstructing one's home can be articulated. In the following, I will conduct the analysis through a series of snapshots retrieved from the informants' narratives.

6.1 Jenny's escape

Now I shall return to Jenny's story from the previous chapter. After that biggest ever fight between Jenny and her mother, they lived rather harmoniously for a while. But Jenny did a strange thing in the middle of one night.

> I ran to a friend's home and stayed there for a few hours, in the midnight. That was the only time of the day I could leave freely, to change a mood, to grumble, to have some me-time, or whatever that was. I just didn't want to stay at home. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

She could not explain exactly why she chose to run away for a few hours that day, but she said to her mother, when she went home at dawn, "Maybe you should go home" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015).

When Jenny described her escape to me, she actually could not help but laughing at herself and she kept saying that was a strange move. Based on her description, the last straw was her parents' spoiling their grandchildren, which was unacceptable to her. It seems she escaped from home because she could not stand her parents anymore. However, with a closer look, I argue that it is an escape to reclaim the control of home. Douglas (1991) once asks in her essay what kind of space home is, she approaches home as an "embryonic community" (Douglas, 1991, p. 288), and then argues that home, first of all, is a space that is not fixed, but there must be space because "home starts by bringing some space under control" (Douglas, 1991, p. 289). And then home need to have some structure in time, to ensure some kind of regular doings. And lastly home has its "aesthetic and moral dimensions" because people live in that time and space (p. 289). All in all, in her argument, home is "a web of routines, silent agreements, and ingrained reflexes", as Ehn & Löfgren (2010) commented (p.82-83), which requires almost seamless coordination among all the participants and runs with rhythms and rules. Everyone in that community knows what to do and what to say without excessive instructions. In Jenny's case, when her parents came, set routines were challenged, silent agreements were turned into arguments, ingrained reflexes were forced to be clarified, thus, home did not function anymore. When all the essential elements that are used to protect and preserve the space are confronted, it requires too much energy to maintain the co-ordination among each person living in it. In this sense, that space was no longer under Jenny's control,

so she chose to escape. In order to pull everything back into a whole, it seems the easiest, yet harshest and rather irrational, solution is to let her parents leave.

> The connection between my parents and I was there. We are family. This relationship is too strong to be described in any language… With such close connections and so many problems between us, I couldn't find a solution… Maybe mutual understandings we need… even now, is still something I am working on. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015).

This is sad, when one has to defend one's home against one's beloved parents. There was not much either Jenny or her parents could do in that situation, because in that space, Jenny has installed her way of doing things and developed strategies to let life take care of itself. Home "is not authoritarian, but it has authority. It is hierarchical, but it is not centralized" (Douglas, 1991, p. 306). It is not up to Jenny to decide the inclusion of her parents into her home, it is the rules that are inscribed in the space which she calls "home" that makes it so difficult for her parents to enter.

"Maybe you should go home" cannot be taken as a suggestion, or an emotionless statement anymore. Rather, it is a way to claim back the territory of home, an assertion that clarifies the line between host and guest, and a difficult decision of choosing losing the precious co-presence with parents over losing one's home. On the other hand, in that situation, her parents' social role as non-commercial guests also indicates some kind of inferiority in the power play, in that guests feel obliged to show respect to the house rules set by the hosts (Uriely, 2010). Jenny later had a serious conversation with her parents, telling them how she felt those days and what she expected them to do. After that conversation, she found that the tension was eased off a little as her parents "learned to reposition themselves" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015).

6.2 Rose's "illusion"

Back to Rose's narrative in the opening paragraph, Lund is obviously not the place that she will miss after being away for too long. But when her family were visiting, all of a sudden her feeling of home was retrieved. "Where there's family, there's home", said she (personal communication, March 11th, 2015). To problematize, how is the sense of homecoming generated by family visits? Can one be *at home* while not home? This is a tricky feeling,

Rose recognized the trickiness herself. She was living with a homestay and could not accommodate her family at her residence when they were visiting, so she borrowed an apartment from a friend who was away during her family's stay in Lund. She said:

> When my mother was cooking in the kitchen, I felt that was as it should be like. It is *strange*, I know. We were in a foreign country, someone else's apartment, a place far from the home in China, but I just felt it all came naturally, at home. (Rose, personal communication, March 11th, 2015)

From Rose's reflection, I argue the notion of "home" points to different directions. It can refer to the concrete buildings where people live; it can also be just a feeling, an emotion. In order to deepen the analysis, I would like to borrow the concept of "emotional geography" (Williams & McIntyre, 2001). In the ever more mobilised society, defining "home" becomes more and more difficult. For these migrant hosts, it is "not simply a matter of residential geography… (But) also a matter of emotional geography. Where does one's heart, one's identity, reside? Where is one's emotional home?" (Williams & McIntyre, 2001, p. 392). When Rose is lying on the sofa, chatting with her younger brother, and playing iPad, when she sees her mother cooking and father helping in the kitchen, all the memories about home are brought back by linking what she is experiencing at the moment to what she remembers from the past. However, the different decorations on the wall, the Swedish voice coming from the TV, the floor plan of the apartment and all other objects remind her she is not in that specific place, where she is familiar with every object in every corner. But the magic happens: every scene feels so real and familiar, the random talk with younger brother, the co-operation between parents, even the waiting time for family dinner. All of these body movements and engagements are strong enough to trigger a feeling of home and turn a strange place into a home space, which is just like the one they have in China. Till then Rose's emotional home is successfully constructed, in an unfamiliar apartment in a non-home country.

Rose thought that the feeling was "strange", because she was sure her home was not in Lund, but somewhere in China, so that feeling of home must be an illusion. However, I would argue, she was indeed at home at that specific time-space frame. Lefebvre's "spatial triad" can here provide some insight, by which he argues space can be understood in three forms: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. (Lefebvre, 1992, p.39). In this triad, the perceived space has "physical material attributes that are produced through social activity and that can

be measured, quantified, observed and described" (O'Dell, 2005, p. 18); the conceived space is the dominant one, and can be created in a system of verbal signs; whereas the lived space is the dominated space "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 1992, p. 39). Among the three forms, the lived space is experienced passively through symbols and images of "inhabitants" and "users" (Lefebvre, 1992, p. 39). Back to Rose's "illusion", she associates home with the geographical location of her family's house in China. In that space not only her relationship with her family, but also that with all the objects around is developed. Thus home is conceived as a combination of that specific house and relationships that are produced in that house. However, home, as a kind of space, can also be understood as the lived space in the triad, in that, besides its fixed geographical site, it "has an affective kernel or centre… and is fluid and dynamic" (Lefebvre 1992, p. 42), which makes home an emotional and unfixed space. Therefore, when Rose felt home with her family in Lund, engaging in familiar family activities, she was home, in her emotional home.

Back to the question that if one can be home when he/she is not home. Rose's "strange" yet magical experience shows that the answer is positive. "The past leaves its traces; time has its own script" (Lefebvre, 1992, p.37). When family is around, the emotional home is enacted, drifts away from the specific, fixed geographical site and reconstructed through representations and memories.

6.3 Mary's "keeping dusk"

One frequently mentioned highlight during the co-presence is shared among these migrant hosts, especially those who travel around with their guests. That is, to my surprise, the evening time. They explained to me, that during the day, they were looking for hotels, taking pictures, visiting tourist attractions and discussing where to eat the next meal, all these actions and conversations made them tourists. However, when the daylight was vanishing, their sightseeing mission of the day almost came to an end, they would find a restaurant, in most cases a carefully selected one, for dinner and relax their tiring feet.

> At the restaurant, we sat down, eating and chatting, reviewing those interesting happenings and sharing photos taken during the day. They also asked about my life in Sweden. That was nice… We didn't talk much family stuff during the day, but in the evening, we could have some quality time. That was the only time of the day we were

> back into a family, and that was nice. (Mary, personal communication, March 5th, 2015)

The reflection above reminds me of the "keeping dusk" story told in the book '*The secret world of doing nothing'* (2010, p.162-164). It was a waning everyday tradition practiced in Scandinavia. After a whole day's hard work, people sat quietly in the approaching darkness. They did not talk to each other, and children learned to be quiet. In the absolute silence, people let their thoughts wander freely (p. 162). Soon the darkness would occupy the room. When the lights were turned on, the magic disappeared (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010). Being a moment of daydreaming, it was also a tradition that was practiced as "a way of rest between day and evening" (p. 163).

Mary and her parents obviously do not practice this kind of meditation in that they do talk to each other, but the dinner time serves the function as the "keeping dusk", which marks the end of the day as a group of tourists and brings back the sense of belonging as a family. Eating, chatting and sharing thoughts and photos, in the approaching darkness, no distractions any more by any tourist signs, the whole family can finally devote full attention to each other, co-creating an experience that is exclusively situated in that specific time-space frame. Their mind-sets are surprisingly synchronized and the existence of the bodies do not only contribute to each other's experiences, but become part of them.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, hosts look forward to being visited, one of the reasons being that they tend to take this opportunity to reconnect with their family through proximate physical co-presence, which makes those co-present moments more than a family reunion. In a family dinner, it is neither the eating nor the chatting per se that makes a difference, it is the reflections and interactions, through eating and chatting, that make the dinner meaningful and memorable. Mary did not elaborate on what they talked in detail, in fact, she told me she could not recall what those conversations were exactly about. "Just felt nice", said she. Nonetheless, it does not matter anymore, what matters is that the past has been carried onto the present and, together with the present, will be projected on the future. At that moment, what she sees and what she thinks are probably two different sets. Imagination takes control of her thoughts, so she can be anywhere in the space, back to the past and back to the future. This is the charm of the dinner time; it satisfies "emotional longings" (Ehn & Löfgren, 2010, p. 165) for the stillness of the time, the embodied

imaginations and the peaceful and relaxed ambience that forms a sense of home, or rather, a sense of homecoming.

Eating and chatting, the most routinized daily activities are thus given new meanings in that specific time and space during the holiday, and those everyday moments are once again turned into something extraordinary, which highlights the whole trip for Mary. Following this thread, the paradoxical pair of the everydayness and the extraordinary can be said, in a way, to complement each other and equally contribute to the touristic experiences.

6.4 Lin's favourite snack

When these transnational hosts learned that they would have guests from home country, they were very happy, one practical reason being that visitors could bring some "stuff" (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015) from home, most requested items being food, normally dried food such as Chinese shiitake and red jujube. Among all the various kinds of food, Lin's mother brought her something rather special.

> Her luggage was full of stuff. All kinds of ingredients and spices for me, and gifts for my husband, my baby and my parents-in-law… she also brought me my favourite snacks: the spicy lotus root… it is vacuum packed and must be consumed within 24 hours. She took the nine-hour direct flight, so she bought them before going to the airport, and I ate them immediately after she arrived. (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015)

Due to the short shelf life, her mother brought only one package, but Lin already felt very satisfied, as I could read from her face that it must be a very enjoyable moment even by thinking of it. That is the taste of home, the recognition of a sense of familiarity. Being transported across borders from *there* to *here*, what is satisfied by that package of lotus root is not only the host's craving, but also a longing to reconnect with something that is left behind but always somewhere in the host's memory. The familiar taste of the food becomes a facilitator in the enactment.

What is also important to note is that, all the "stuff", not necessarily food, varying from books in Chinese to portable electrical appliances, all of which are transported to the hosts, rather than emphasising the distance between here and there, signifies the continuity and

connection between the two homes or even two families. In Lin's mother's luggage, besides food, there was quilt that was handmade by Lin's aunt for the baby, which is still in use, and Chinese handicrafts for Lin's parents-in-law, which are adored by them. And food from the Chinese home, in this context, serves even more practical purposes although it can be understood as a symbolic nostalgia or an "ethnic marker" (Povrzanovic Frykman & Humbracht, 2013, p. 64). They are consumed and embodied in the everyday eating and cooking in the kitchen of a transnational family. They might be used in making a traditional Chinese dish, or in a Swedish one, if used creatively, with a Chinese twist. The border between here and there is blurred and the distance between two homes is shortened. The craving and carrying are "done in multiple directions, for different reasons and for the sake of different people embedded in this migrant's transnational space" (Povrzanovic Frykman & Humbracht, 2013, p. 65).

That package of lotus root is an exception because of practical transport issues; not all the migrant hosts have the opportunity to enjoy such luxury. However, the visitors' luggage is still an interesting object to look into. When we talk about trafficking objects in this context, we have to bear in mind that long-haul flights and baggage restrictions have forced people to think carefully what they can bring with them. Guests come and go, and their luggage is never empty. What to pack turns out to be a negotiation between the visiting and the visited. As mentioned above, when they come, the luggage is full of items that are brought to the hosts and their family in Sweden; when they leave, the luggage is again filled with various kinds of gifts, but to the relatives and friends at home, ranging from European food to clothes. The interesting part is that, not only guests, but hosts also willingly and physically join the packing process. Lin bought different kinds of chocolate and cheese, and even packed a couple of avocados in her mother's luggage, because "they are not available in Chinese supermarket" (Lin, personal communication, March 3rd, 2015); Rose bought her family their favourite Spanish ham; and Mary accompanied her mother the whole time to pick clothes for almost all her relatives back in China. It is considered as a kind of "courtesy" to bring something back to the family at home after travelling, "especially travelling to such a faraway place" (Yan, personal communication, March 1st, 2015). At this stage, one can say, in the transnational space, not only the migrants themselves, but all their "immobile" family left behind are included and get mobilized through the hosting and visiting, and the circulation of objects. Space between here and there is bridged.

Furthermore, when hosts engage themselves in gift shopping and packing, their regards to the rest of the family is also packed and will be transported along with the guests' return trip. By doing so, migrants' inclusion in their broad kinship network is materialized, what is more important is that one can officially inhabit transnationally (Povrzanovic Frykman & Humbracht, 2013).

6.5 Waving good-bye

An old Chinese proverb says, there is no banquet in the world that never ends. When the temporary co-presence comes to an end, it is time to say goodbye. When hosts recalled that moment, all kinds of emotions came flooding back.

> The first time I left home to study abroad, I didn't feel any attached, instead, I was happy because I could go see the world; but the second time… that was distressing. But gradually I got used to those goodbye moments, still painful, but not so much. This time, when they left, it was very hard… I thought I would be fine, but the moment they entered the security at the airport… that was unbearable… Maybe the difference is who is the one leaving and who is the one staying, me or them. It is definitely much easier for the one who leaves… leaving the one who stays in great pain. (Mary, personal communication, March 20th, 2015)

When Mary was saying all those words, she became very emotional. Her voice was almost trembling and her eyes were looking away from me, as if she travelled back in the time when she was standing outside the security point watching her parents enter and finally disappear into the crowd on the other side. That was not her first time waving goodbye to her family, but that was indeed the first time she was the one that was left behind, in a place where she would not recognize as home, even after more than two years' living in Sweden.

Comparing to Mary's seeing-off, Jenny's was even more dramatic. As mentioned above, her co-presence with her parents was rather difficult, so the moment they entered the security, Jenny felt,

> …so much relieved. My mother cried hard before she entered the security, of course I comforted her, but when she left, I was really glad. Part of me felt guilty and shamed on my happy feeling… mom cried so hard just now, not only because we would

> separate again, but also those unhappy moments, it was very mixed. But at the same time, the other half of me was so happy that I wanted to celebrate immediately. (Jenny, personal communication, February 26th, 2015)

Two settings, totally opposite feelings, but equally emotionally charged. One was almost drowned in tears, while the other could not help but feeling happily free. Both endings are justifiable in their own way. Mary felt at home when parents were around; the co-presence strengthened her belief that home was not *here*. Whereas for Jenny, home was here, but nearly malfunctioned because of her parents' intrusion, so their leaving was seen as a solution to save her home.

Here I have no intention of comparing the two cases. In fact they are not comparable from any angles. Mary has not established her own nuclear family and feels like she is "still drifting in the air" (Mary, personal communication, March 20th, 2015). Her part-time employment status gives her great insecurity and her poor Swedish blocks her, at least in her opinion, from being integrated into the society. Situations for Jenny is different. She speaks good level of Swedish, is married to a half-Swedish-half-American husband, and has two young children and a relatively stable job, all of which can be said, to some extent, to have secured her life in a certain position within the Swedish social system, or at least her social life is expanded through her husband, his family and her children. Putting the two cases together, the point, however, is to argue migrants experience their transnational life differently depending on the life cycles and social contexts they are at, the meanings and impact of being visited by family thus vary accordingly. To further the analysis, I would like to use the concepts of "ways of being" and "ways of belonging" (Levitt &Schiller, 2004, p. 1010). In the transnational social field, ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in; while ways of belonging refers to the practices that enact identities and through which individuals make "conscious connections" to a particular group (Levitt & Schiller, 2004, p. 1010). The two practices do not always go hand in hand, and the development from ways of being to ways of belonging is highly contextual. Being visited and hosting family from home country is one of the moments where such a development is reinforced. The orientation of home is carved out during the co-presence, and the ways of belonging are practiced in the hosts' continual attempts of making and remaking a homely space with their guests.

To summarise, through a montage of snapshots from the informants' narratives, the notion of home gets even more complicated. When host-guest relationship is mixed with kinship, the innate otherness of being a guest is confronted and interrogated by the intimate family relationships. There is a fine line between being a grown-up child to parents who are visitors and being a host at home to guests who are away from home. Home becomes a fluid space where negotiations between self and other, memories and realities take place. It involves encounters between those who stay, those who leave and those who just arrive (Ahmed, 1999). In a sense, home is not a place of pure familiarities, neither a bounded space against the strangeness, rather, there is "movement and dislocation" within the forming of a home as "a complex and contingent space of inhabitance" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 340). Furthermore, it would be problematic to position home and away as two opposing experiences. In the transnational social field, both roots and routes are "constitutive of what will count as cultural experience" (Clifford, 1997, p. 24). The fluidity of home transgresses the rooted nativeness and blurs the border between travelling and dwelling. For migrant hosts, home can be understood as both a place where they physically dwell and an emotional space where they form a transnational identity. Based on the narratives given in this chapter, one can say that the temporary co-presence with family from home country both puts these migrants into a homeless situation and, simultaneously, encourages them to continue the pursuit of home.

7 Conclusion

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is a summary of the findings and analysis, and the second is a discussion centred on applicability.

7.1 Summarising the findings

This thesis is an investigation on some aspects of the VFR phenomenon. Hosts' transnational life trajectories have stretched their kinship and friendship network. With the advanced technology, communications with family and friends who are left at home can virtually take place at all levels, yet corporeal proximity remains the most desired.

Hospitality seems to be a natural gesture offered by the hosts to the guests, but, as it has been shown in the findings, from the very beginning, the hospitable space is not unconditionally open to every person in the hosts' network. Only a selected group of people are welcomed. While this selection keeps the door closed to those who are at the edge of the hosts' network,

it also indicates that hosts are emotionally and physically ready to make space within their homes to the welcomed guests. A series of hosting strategies are therefore manipulated.

Co-presence takes on different forms according to hosts' life situations and guests' requests. Two types are therefore identified: the more mobile "place-oriented" and the less mobile "family-oriented". In either type, hosts strive to construct a hospitable space by showing the guests around, travelling with them and being the coordinator, translator and tour guide during the trips. On the one hand, this is part and parcel of showing hospitality and respect to the guests, while on the other, the asymmetrical relationship between hosts and guests turns out unavoidable "in which the host presumes, or is presumed, to rule" (O'Dell, 2010, p. 32). The various hosting strategies both ensure the offering of hospitality and constantly reinforce hosts' hosting status. What's more, the non-commercialized feature of hospitality complicates the situation, because hosts and guests simultaneously possess related familial roles, especially in the case of my informants whose family visitors are mainly parents or relatives of the older generation. Nevertheless, the rules of hospitality are not always compatible with the treatment of the relationship between adult children and their visiting parents.

Hospitality can be understood in two levels. On one level it can be associated with the offering of friendliness and warmth, shelter and food, and on the other it indicates the boundary of home (O'Dell 2010, p. 29). It is the distance between guests and hosts that makes possible the offering and accepting of hospitality, in other words, hospitality features otherness. When it comes to VFR visits, however, it is an act aiming to eliminate the otherness caused by the separation. Kinship or friendship is the key motivation, and the strong determination of "being together" underlies those bounder crossings in both geographical and cultural forms. When kinship and host-guest relationship become intertwined in the same time-space frame, it is hard to say which one is more dominating, but it is safe to say that kinship is performed in a taken-for-granted way while hospitality is manifested in a more covert and strategic manner. This partly accounts for the power shifts subconsciously enacted by the hosts.

Moreover, the intertwinement of hospitality and kinship brings about the endless negotiations between proximity and distance. First, hosts are forced to move around different positions accordingly to observe their guests in order to adjust the hosting strategies, being invisible but always ready to help, as hospitable space has to be continuously made and remade (O'Dell, 2010). Second, under the guise of the taken-for-granted kinship, hosts are *made* into

hosts and guests instead become the hosts of the hosts. At this point, the notion of home comes into play. The co-presence with beloved family enacts a sense of familiarity, merges the past, the present and the future, and links *here* and *there*. Home as a space is either reconstructed, redefined or reclaimed. Therefore, it leads to different reactions from the hosts in questioning and protecting the boundary and the shape of homes.

What is trying to stress throughout the thesis is that VFR visits are not simply joyful-only family reunions. They are charged with mixed feelings of anticipation, happiness and disappointment, full of tensions between hosting and guesting, dilemmas between being a host and being an adult child, and decisions of moving closer and keeping a distance. For the migrant hosts, home as a space becomes highly fluid and stretched, where transnational identities are reiterated and renegotiated.

7.2 Applicability

Based on the findings, this thesis can provide some insight for the DMOs in terms of handling VFR tourism by examining these migrant hosts.

First, it is important to know how hospitality is understood within a certain cultural frame. Feelings of being at home and being away from everyday life are equally pursued by VFR visitors. Hosts on the one hand actively encourage their guests to participate in tourist activities and collect tourism products to the guests, they, on the other hand, are able to interpret the guests' needs, identify what can be packaged as attractions, and keeping an eye on guests' reactions. In this way, hospitality is no longer a gesture, but a making of space in which guests can move between the familiar and the strange, the everyday and the extraordinary.

Second, in receiving and pampering the guests, hosts become the mediators of the tourism market. As shown previously, hosts make the rules, not only house rules, but also travelling itineraries. Guests highly rely on the hosts' rich travelling experiences and familiarity with the local/European culture, due to the trust in the personal relationship. Therefore it makes sense that local DMOs may need to start considering to work with migrants and provide them necessary assistance in mobilising their guests and offering shortcuts to consume a place (Ooi, 2015).

Third, it is about the rhythm of travelling. Experiences are composed of many interlocking moments, but they do not draw equal attention from the tourists. Some moments may appear more memorable than others, in a good or a bad way. Tourists take this opportunity as an escape from everyday life and want to experience as much as possible, but in the end of a 15-day grand tour, they just feel Europe is more or less the same. When they finally return to Lund, the hosts' residence, everyday life is unexpectedly revived and bodily experienced through mundane activities such as grocery shopping and homemade cooking. This is the rhythm of travelling, a mixture of being relaxed and being in a hurry, a series of interlocking experiences of the everydayness and the extraordinary. Short summers, relatively high prices, and lack of established tourist attractions, Scandinavia has not grown into a marked destination yet for many Chinese tourists. However, in the segment of VFR tourism, the Scandinavian lifestyle can be packaged and consumed as a soothing experience by tapping into the rhythm of visitors' travel agenda.

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