

The Journey of Third Culture Kids in the Search of Home

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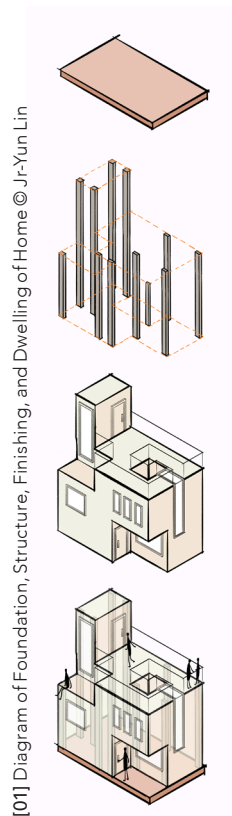
ABSTRACTS

The definition of home is varied when third culture kids (TCKs) have multiple places they called "home". The domestic space of a home is nothing but a temporary dwelling to TCKs; instead, spaces full of memories and experiences are the one they called "home". Globalization accelerates the numbers of TCKs like me, which self-identity and rootlessness become our "unresolved grief". In this research, the meaning of home is specified into four phases: the BEGINNING, the IN-BETWEENS, the ENCOUNTER, and the RETURNS. The acknowledgement of home might change during each phase which either TCKs find a temporary sense of belonging or rejected by surrounding. The process of dealing such changes becomes elements that TCKs used to construct "home", like how they weave their experiences and backgrounds into their own unique story to share. Each phase portraits different meanings of homes to TCKs in their life stages and their journey in the search of the home.

KEYWORDS

- Third culture kids (TCKs)
Cross-culture
Temporary dwellings
Adaptation
In-between spaces
Multi-languages
Flexibility
Psychological space
Change
- Memories
Experiences
Rootlessness
Restlessness
Transitional life
Liminal space
Cultural bridge

CONTENTS



006 / Prologue - Who are Third Culture Kids?

010 / Introduction

014 / Foundation of Home "THE BEGINNING"

Space Typology: International Schools

Case Study: Griggs International Academy / Kunshan American School

022 / Structure of Home "THE IN-BETWEENS"

Space Typology: Airports

Case Study: Haneda Airport

030 / Finishing of Home "THE ENCOUNTER"

Space Typology: Student Accommodations

Case Study: Komazawa Student Accommodation

038 / Dwelling of Home "THE RETURNS"

Space Typology: Hometown

Case Study: Taipei

046 / Conclusion

050 / Image List

054 / Bibliography



[02] JFK Runway 31R Arrivals (Meadowmere) © Mike Kelley

You are a third culture kid if:^{01 02}

- ☒ "Where are you from?" has more than one reasonable answer.
- ☒ You get nervous whenever a form needs you to enter a "permanent address".
- ☒ You flew before you could walk.
- ☒ You speak more than two languages.
- ☐ You feel odd being in the ethnic majority.
- ☐ You have three passports.
- ☒ You have a passport but no driver's license.
- ☐ You go into culture shock upon returning to your "home" country.
- ☐ Your life story uses the phrase "Then we moved to..." three (or four, or five...) times.
- ☒ You think VISA is a document that's stamped in your passport, not a plastic card you carry in your wallet.
- ☒ Half of your phone calls are unintelligible to those around you.
- ☒ You cruise the Internet looking for fonts that can support foreign alphabets.
- ☒ Your minor is a foreign language you already speak.
- ☒ When asked a question in a certain language, you've absentmindedly respond in a different one.
- ☐ You miss the subtitles when you see the latest movie.
- ☒ You know that McDonald's tastes drastically different from country to country.
- ☒ You convert any price to two different currencies before making significant purchases.
- ☐ You speak with authority on the subject of airline travel.
- ☒ You have frequent flyer accounts on multiple airlines.
- ☒ You constantly want to use said frequent flyer accounts to travel to new places.
- ☒ You know how to pack.
- ☒ You have the urge to move to a new country every couple of years.
- ☒ The thought of sending your (hypothetical) kids to public school scares you, while the thought of letting them fly alone doesn't at all.
- ☒ You think that high school reunions are all but impossible.
- ☒ You have friends from 29 different countries.
- ☐ You sort your friends by continent.
- ☒ You have a time zone map next to your telephone.
- ☒ You realize what a small world it is, after all.

01.
Rega Jha (2013). *31 Signs You're A Third Culture Kid*. [online] BuzzFeed. Available at: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/regajha/31-signs-youre-a-third-culture-> [Accessed: 19 November 2020].

02.
TCKidNow (2020). *TCKidNow*. [online] Tckidnow.com. Available at: <https://www.tckidnow.com/what-is-a-tck-or-cck/what-is-a-tck/> [Accessed: 19 November 2020].

third culture kids *noun*

\ thərd kəl-chər kid \

Definition

individuals who are (or were as children) raised in a culture other than their parents’ or the culture of their country of nationality, and also live in a different environment during a significant part of their child development years⁰³

Abbreviation

TCKs

Extension

adult third culture kids, aka ATCKs

03.
Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 13. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

cross-culture kids *noun*

\ kròs kəl-chər kid \

Definition

a person who is living/has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during the first eighteen years of life⁰⁴

Abbreviation

CCKs

04.
Globally Grounded. (2015). *Cross Cultural Kids*. [online] Available at: <https://globally-grounded.com/third-culture-kids/> [Accessed 10 November 2020].

INTRODUCTION

05.
Unseen, R. H.. (1993).
'Third Culture Kids:
Focus of Major Study –
TCK "mother" pens his-
tory of field', *NewsLinks*,
Princeton, January Vol.
XII, No. 3. Available at:
<http://www.tckworld.com/useem/art1.html#>.
[Accessed 29 October
2020].

*In summarizing that which we had observed in our cross-cultural encounters, we began to use the term "third culture" as a generic term to cover the styles of life created, shared, and learned by persons who are in the process of relating their societies, or sections thereof, to each other. The term "Third Culture Kids" or TCKs was coined to refer to the children who accompany their parents into another society.*⁰⁵

—Ruth Hill Useem, *TCK World: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids*

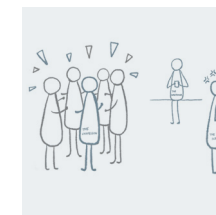
The term Third Culture Kids (TCKs) was first used by the sociologists John and Ruth Unseem in the 1950s describing "the children of American citizens working internationally". This is the word the Unseems developed when they found out American missionary families were blending in a multi-cultural life in India. The lifestyle of missionary families was not what the Unseems pictured before they visited: the families were different from people in India nor the United States, even immigrants were distinguished from them – that was the very first time when people realized there is such a thing called "third-culture identity".

Before the 21st century, TCK families were considered the "privilege" groups who worked in international business, military, foreign service, or missionary work for its mobility across continents. However, while the technology in both mobility and communication are outstretched, TCKs have grown into an increasingly large number by the globalization phenomenon. Fewer communities remain culturally homogeneous today. Therefore, the definition of TCKs is later portrayed as "a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture." by David Pollock in 2001.

3 types of TCKs react to the environment of continuously changing: the Chameleons, the Screamers, and the Wallflowers^[1]. No doubt that TCKs are used to blending cultures and adapt faster than those who grow up in monoculture. However,



it is a double edge sword that TCKs suffer from the situation in which they had no choice. All the reactions that TCKs took are the response to protect themselves. No matter what reaction is, it has the



[1]
The Chameleon chooses to change colours each time they move to other countries because they do not want to feel like an outsider when people already knows each other and they do not care more or less about you; the Screamer reacts aggressively to prevent the "harmless" questions and closes firmly from the surroundings; the Wallflower has chosen a way that disconnected with the others, therefore, no needs to force themselves to expose their complicated past and has just about right distance with the surroundings.

same similarities of fostering identity acknowledgement from the surroundings – where all we need is our self-identification which most TCKs do not realize until they grew up meeting the same kinds.

The challenges TCKs face are rarely talked by the others because the life of travelling from place to place seems glamorous and the problems are barely noticed unless TCKs mention themselves. A situation like having to say goodbye whenever you began to accustom the new place and friends; the unknowledge to the birth country which people are expecting where you represent for; the disconnection to any countries creates the rootlessness in self-identity. TCKs live in a paradox world^[ii] that their experiences are conflicting with their emotions. Ironically the privileged experiences in multi-cultural environments are what makes them suffer. The cultural balance that all TCKs learn throughout their developmental years becomes the key to cope with the stress of unstopping movements. This specific skill ends up into a powerful weapon as a member of society to be related to all kinds of people at the same time the weakness of lack of self-identity will always be the unsolved grief in TCKs' hearts.

In this writing portfolio, I metaphor the different life stages of TCKs as constructing a home, from the foundation to the dwelling. The search for self-identity throughout the years will be portrayed along with the analysis of space typology in each phase. Although the physical spaces are not always mattered the most to TCKs but people and memories made within the spaces built up what TCKs called "home".

[ii]

One of those is the conflict between engaging multi-cultures in a breath and difficulties to find their belongings.



[04] Uncaged © Natacha Einat

FOUNDATION OF HOME "THE BEGINNING"

*Most Third Culture Kids made their first move before the age of nine.*⁰⁶

—Kate Mayberry, *Third Culture Kids: Citizens of everywhere and nowhere*

*These intercultural and linguistic skills are the markings of the cultural chameleon – the young participant-observer who takes note of verbal and non-verbal cues and readjusts accordingly, taking on enough of the colouration of the social surroundings to gain acceptance while maintaining some vestige of identity as a different animal, an "other".*⁰⁷

—Norma M. McCaig, *Strangers at Home*

During the formation years of TCKs, they started on the mobility life between countries earlier than people who never travel before 18. TCKs spend most of their development years in countries they do not speak the language. As they realize that the host country is the place they have to grow up in, they have no choice but to fit in. Telling their parents that "I want to go back" was not an option. It was being forced. However, the ability that TCKs learn through the process of moving is the adaptation – the skill that TCKs have but monoculture kids do not. The skill of observing and absorbing is simply a habit benefiting from the constant moves which to TCKs that functions the same as people eat – to survive.

As they develop the adaptation skill, the environment plays an important role in shaping their adaptability. Most TCKs have chosen to go to international schools instead of the locals due to the reason of meeting their kinds. Students in international schools have the same or similar experience as TCKs so no words needed when entering the school in the middle of the year or semester. The educational backgrounds might be a greater influence than the host culture in shaping their personality despite moving to foreign countries while young. From what TCKs can recall, they've known people from countries like Korea, Germany, India, etc.; their best friend might come from a country that across the continents in another half of the Earth; they end up speaking the same language that is both their second or third language when they couldn't communicate in their mother tongue. The normal life of TCKs is abnormal to the one who bred in their birth country. The communication between these kids is the miniature of society portraying adults working with people around the world. It's a rehearsal. While the benefits that adaptation brought to TCKs are incalculable, the downsides are silently bleeding. "You dive in, but you're ready to dive out,"⁰⁸ said Ruth E. Van Reken. It's a simple self-guarding mechanism^[iii] of prevention that tearing their hearts apart every time they leave. The mechanism brings two sides: the careful observation skill and the impossibility of relating to someone deep from your heart.

[iii]
After all, the desire of relating to the same kinds is human nature. But it seems like TCKs have lost the ability to do so.

08.
Modak, S. (2017). *For Third Culture Kids, Travel Is Home*. [online] Condé Nast Traveler. Available at: <https://www.cntraveler.com/story/for-third-culture-kids-travel-is-home> [Accessed 20 October 2020].

06.
Mayberry, K. (2016). *Third Culture Kids: Citizens of everywhere and nowhere*. [online] Bbc.com. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20161117-third-culture-kids-citizens-of-everywhere-and-nowhere> [Accessed 20 October 2020].

07.
McCaig, N. M. (1996). *Strangers at Home*, p. 101. New York: Aletheia Press.



[05] A Short Moment Connected © Liliana Schwitter

Home to them, is “everywhere and nowhere”, which they find a sense of rootlessness and restlessness growing up.

The temporality of staying in one place causes TCKs to prevent themselves from thinking “this is my home”. In the temporary dwelling life that TCKs have, they want to believe that the birth country is their home but they feel more like a tourist in the revisit in the summer; they do not want to admit that the host culture is their home because appearance might vary. There are so many contradictions in TCKs’ mind thinking “where is my home”, “where do I come from”, “do I belong to here” and trying to search for a place to fit in their identities at the same time rejecting every culture and ultimately denied by their birth culture for the experience of TCKs. The temporary dwelling eventually shaped TCKs’ habitation in finding a new home. It’s kind of minimizing the lowest standard of what home is^[iv]. Therefore, the home is not a home, it’s nothing but a dwelling in TCKs’ mind. At extreme cases, TCKs can find hotels “equally” to home for its temporality. Minimal and transitional living is the daily task to TCKs – they develop into a way of thinking that the interior space of their childhood is NOT their home since they are going to leave anytime. Nevertheless, when adult TCKs (ATCKs) look back in their life, they must admit that the place was used to be their “home” – a home that they can never return, a home that only exists in memories.

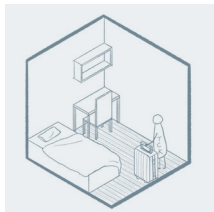
SPACE TYPOLOGY: International Schools

While most of the TCKs spent significant years in their development years outside their parents’ birth culture, this restriction does not limit the

one who went aboard but also to those who stay in the birth culture. International School is a typical space typology for most TCKs – both overseas and internal. The misconception of whom TCKs are usually is that they must live overseas. While you stay in your passport country, there is also a way to get in touch with the third culture – international school. Perhaps in more detailed research, this group of people will be rather called Educational Cross Culture Kids (CCKs) instead of traditional TCKs⁰⁹. But no doubt that both experiencing the cultural change in their formative years.

The international school acts as the miniature space of the United Nations. TCKs meet friends with culturally different backgrounds but relatable in educational experiences. They develop the skill of identifying a person at the first sight with whom they are instead of cultural backgrounds assuming whom they are supposed to be. “They [TCKs] are truly colourblind when it comes to race”¹⁰ written Trey Morrison. They are opened to new ideas and people which adaptation seems naturally come along with their personalities. TCKs understand that judging people by their covers could turn into a wrong perspective like what others seem of them so they prefer to make connections by stories instead of physical appearances^[v]. Therefore, international schools become the only space that supports this activity of meeting the same kinds, exchanging stories, feeling belonging for TCKs when they weren’t given as many choices. The space of 6 by 10 meters was their whole world as TCKs.

Of course, friends are not the only TCK connection they made in international schools. As many ATCKs stories been told, a lot of TCKs grew up being teachers of international schools which they could relate a lot with the children with their memories of being TCKs themselves. International schools do not only welcome those children who move around the world, but also adults. Because of the high mobility life of TCKs (see “IN-BETWEENS”), most ATCKs result in a restless life of moving back and forth which they enjoyed and “inevitable”. The international school offers opportunities to those who

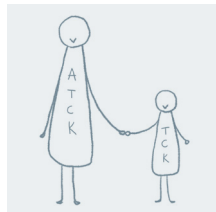


[iv] It doesn't have to be huge but comfortable enough, best to have furniture left behind from the previous owners because we will never move furniture from countries to countries; any personalization such as redoing the wallpaper is not allowed because recovering the interior when leaving will cause extra troubles.

09. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 32. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

10. Morrison, T. (2018). ‘Reflections from a Father and His TCK Daughter’ in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 1.6, para 16. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].

[v] Especially when TCKs are experts of culture chameleon they could easily “fake” their identities as long as their appearance looks like.



[vi]
On the other way of saying this is that the only person who can relate to TCKs is the same kind as them, so ATCKs play an important role in supporting TCKs in international schools.

wish to extend TCKs life as grown adults. Since ATCKs are now better at coping with transitional life, they can easily advise TCKs with their experiences and help to deal with the stress^[vi]. The mentality of TCKs is another key focus when analyzing the habitation of TCKs, where most of them resulted in depression and detachment entering their 20's. This formed an unbreakable bond between TCKs (student) and ATCKs (teacher) even when they keep on moving every several years. The connection could last for the rest of their life that they occasionally talk to each other through the internet perhaps 20 years later and still feel as connected as before.

International schools provide everything we needed: the relationship, the environment – the beginning of our life as a third culture kid. No matter what influences it has made us better or worse later in our life, there is no doubt that international schools help to expand our world vision and connection. It's the foundation of our relationship with other people. TCKs look back in their life and realize how diverse their friends and teachers were comparing to kids growing up in a complete homogeny environment. We've heard so many different stories from our kinds, and international school seems to be the first chapter of our TCK stories.

CASE STUDY: Griggs International Academy / Kunshan American School

Having German classmates, Vietnamese juniors, Singaporean seniors looks nothing odd to Kunshan American school (KAS) which belongs to Griggs International Academy where I graduated from. It's even more natural to have our faculties changed every single year that are from India, the United Kingdom, and Russia. I believe that this is the same for every other international school, where people come and go every year, or even every semester.

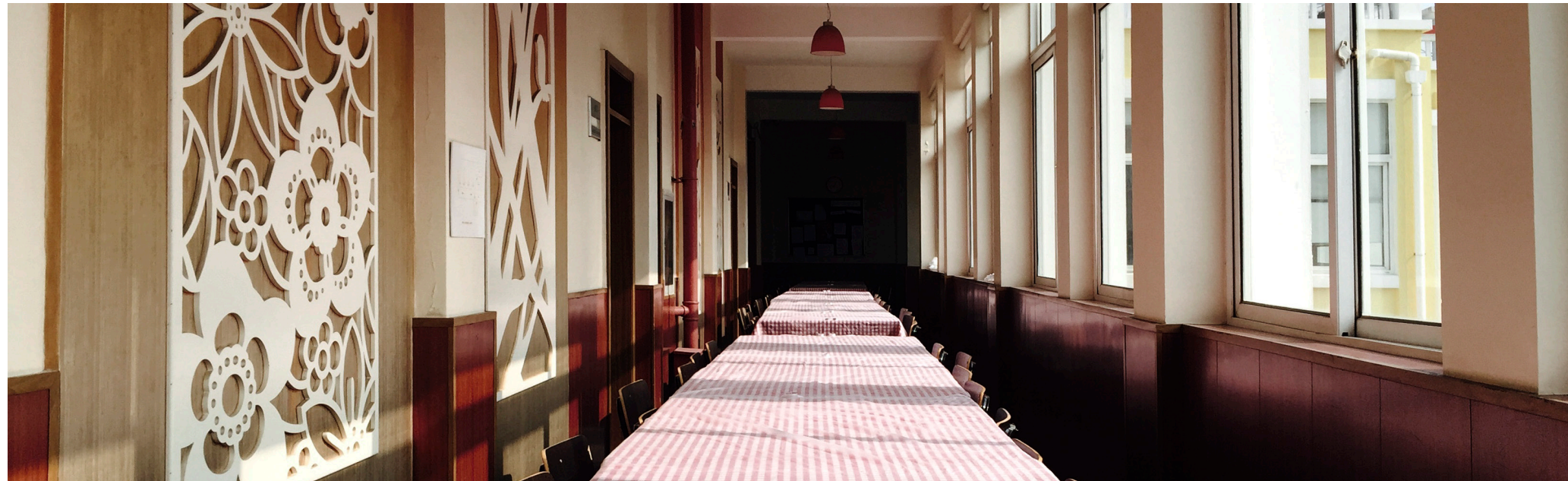
However, the oddest part of all these experiences is perhaps the interior space of KAS, which I'm almost positive that this is the only American school that is programmed like this. Kunshan American School is built with-



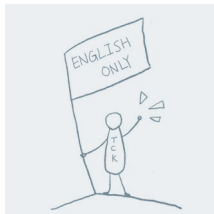
[06] Diversity Illustration © Hope McConnell

in another international school named Kunshan International School (KSIS) where we were only given one floor at the beginning with 3 classrooms for grade 7 and grade 10. Even after all these years of developing students and programs, there are still only two floors in one of the campus buildings that could be called Kunshan American School. The world of 3 classrooms of 6 by 10 meters had altered my life as TCK.

The systematic of KAS is different from KSIS alongside the rules, which I believe most of us were at an arrogant attitude that we were having better education than the others in the same building. But in fact, I'm not so sure of



[07] KAS Hallway in Thanksgiving © Jr-Yun Lin



that now because the restriction of using campus facilities and the despicable emotions that other students had on us were all very clear at the time – which, ultimately formed a stronger bond between TCKs that we considered us as a big family. Due to the limitation of space, we know everyone in the school. The interior did not only impact on our relationship by being limited but also cultural shocks. It was not a big deal if you experienced an American style of learning but for me, what students own for their personal spaces was only approximately 40 by 70 centimetres of locker instead of the entire classroom was novel. The interior space of the classroom belonged to teachers, which we had no control over decorating. However, I soon adopt this understanding of space since I do not get to choose decors for my room anyway as TCK. It was just another space that I had no choice of. This choice-less and limited space shaped my vulnerable TCK mentality that “If you don’t hope, then you can’t be disappointed”, “If you don’t try, you can’t fall”¹¹.

Space also affects the mental state of language. The strict restriction of the “English Only” rule applied to the whole campus. The thing is that we all came from different countries so that English turns out to be our only language to communicate. Here we studied American Literature, the U.S. Government, World History, basically treated as Americans. This interior space of

the school building shaped us into different cultural identities. “Suddenly it occurred to me for the first time that I probably live a very different lifestyle than most of my friends. At school, they seem American but do not realize that every day when I leave, I become Chinese, neither my grandmother, who lies with us nor my mother speak English. Inside the walls of my home is an all-Chinese world” said Kenny, the children of many immigrants to the states¹². I felt the similarities to Kenny, but in my case is vice versa that everyone in different cultural identities is now American within the wall of the school. Whenever I entered the rooms, I turned American. I speak in English, I think in English, I act American. However, once I leave the space, I turned Taiwanese. The interior of the red carpet, brunet wood floor, ivory walls is the mental autosuggestion^[vii] to “be American” which could even change my personality. Because of the speciality of changing cultural worlds daily in TCKs childhood, space simply is functioning “world” to TCKs. At international school, they are TCKs; at home, they are children from the passport country. Crossing the borders of interior space has more significant impacts on TCKs as we supposed. It’s more than just a school, it’s a country of TCKs where the residents are their kinds.

12. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 58. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

[vii] The autosuggestion of the interior is rarely talked about in TCKs world, however, it is also a kind of mental influence that I feel like we should focus on when analyzing TCKs.

11. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, pp. 107-108. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

STRUCTURE OF HOME "THE IN-BETWEENS"

*The warp of my life was the fact of moving on.*¹³

— Sara Mansfield Tabor, *Of Many Lands: Journal of a Traveling Childhood*

*I realized early in life that airports and airplanes were perfect places of belonging [...] literally between worlds as I sat in airports or sitting in the airplane, row 33D, buckling and unbuckling while settling into a long flight.*¹⁴

— Marilyn Gardner, *A Third Culture Kid Talks About Raising Third Culture Kids*

TCKs are not a new phenomenon. They've been around since the beginning of time, but, until now, they have been largely invisible. The increasing members of TCKs result from the highly developed technology of transporting. The high mobility brought the key to the game alongside globalization. Culturally homogeneous communities are less commonly seen than the international one. While the high mobility of crossing national borders becomes normal life of people, TCKs also benefit from the phenomenon.

However, mobility does not act as a travelling tool every five years but as the main structure of TCKs life. High mobility is one of the factors building up the TCK world. Most TCKs have a chance to go back to their birth country once or twice a year during their vacations. Missionary family perhaps can get away from host culture longer than usual TCKs by having a year out every two to four years of cross-culture life. However, no matter which types of revisiting birth country are, annually of greetings and farewells would cause more adjustments in the mental state of TCKs. The transitional life of TCKs appears glamorous on the outside whereas it causes lack of self-identities and cultural identities of on-going. Paul Seaman describes this pattern of mobility: "Like nomads, we moved with the seasons. Four times a year we packed up and moved to, or back to, another temporary home, as with the seasons, each move offered something to look forward to while something had to be given up... We learned early that "home" was an ambiguous concept, and wherever we lived, some essential part of our lives was always someplace else. So, we were always of two minds. We learned to be independent and [accept] that things were out of our control... We had the security and the consolation that whenever we left one place we were returning to another, already familiar one."¹⁵

The transitional life of TCKs brings restless and rootless. The sense of in-betweenness is what allows ATCKs to go beyond culture nationalist notions of place, belonging and origin¹⁶. However, this also creates a sense of escapism. Bernie confessed: "I loved growing up with high mobility. Every

13.
Tabor, S. M. (1997). *Of Many Lands: Journal of a Traveling Childhood*, p.1. Washington D.C.: Foreign Service Youth Foundation.

14.
Gardner, M. (2018). 'A Third Culture Kid Talks About Raising Third Culture Kids' in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 2.1, para 3. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].

15.
Seaman, P. (1997). *Paper Airplanes in the Himalayas: The Unfinished Path Home*, pp. 7-8. Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications.

16.
Colomer, L. (2020). 'Feeling like at home in airports: Experiences, memories and affects of placeness among Third Culture Kids', *Applied Mobilities*, 5(2) [online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23800127.2018.1436636> [Accessed: 12 October 2020].



time there was a problem, all I had to do was wait, and either the people causing the problem left or I left. I have handled all of my life's conflicts the same way"¹⁷. The escapism through leaving might affect the healing process (discuss in "THE RETURNS") delayed or simply never resolved. Indeed, high mobility brings encounters available with easier alternatives for leaving unresolved problems behind. Problems looked solved in which TCKs know that there's no way out of it because they could never return.

After several international relocations, most TCKs do not have a tangible and clear sense of home and culture identities. Unlike growing up in the homogenous culture, the detachment to surrounding culture and spaces makes TCKs have a vague impression of the home. It's a complicated question whenever be asked "what is home" to TCKs. To be exact, TCKs have a lot of homes in definition; however, most of ATCKs thought that between worlds are perhaps best described their feelings. Every time they've been through a move from country to country, the process of moving turns out to be the space TCKs spent the most time within their childhood, is defined into in-between spaces that linked to every move TCKs made in their life. It's not just the passing point like what other defined, but the place to begin and end every chapter of TCKs life. Therefore, TCKs could relate the most to the in-between spaces rather than a specific location. The repetition of passing through the in-between spaces made between worlds rather important. It's the "culture of mobility"¹⁸. The movement becomes the space because in the movement TCKs is "not moving". They take a rest in the movement, in the in-between world, like at home.



[08] no permanent address © Cynthia Tedy

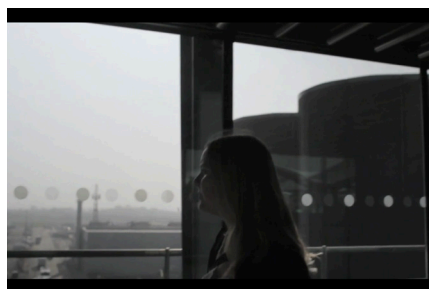
SPACE TYPOLOGY: Airports

The airport is the constant architecture that involves hellos and good-byes so often that people do not realize that it could be more than just terminal. The high mobility across countries results in spending extra time in airports. Imagine 7-year-old talks about how to check-in the flight and get through the immigration to the elderly when revisiting hometown. TCKs are trained to be familiar with the airport from the beginning of their TCK life. In the TCK World, the airport becomes the essential and only place that TCKs kept repeatedly been to. Whenever TCKs packed their bags and heading airports for their next chapter of the journey, they've always stood in front of the gate when unloading their baggies and thought "I'm back here, again, after all". The relief of being in the airport is nothing similar to the excitement and loneliness that others had for the departure. It feels like a place "where I'm supposed to be".

Some many of my childhood memories I am intertwined with airports. Some much time of my life has spent random in terminal airports. The moment I enter an airport, I put on the autopilot and embrace the sense of familiarity, safety. Airports

17. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 128. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

18. Hear, N. V. (2007). *New Europeans on the move: A preliminary review of the onward migration of refugees within the European Union*. [online] Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237272931_New_Europeans_on_the_move_a_preliminary_review_of_the_onward_migration_of_refugees_within_the_European_Union [Accessed: 6 November 2020].



[09] I Am Home © Anastasia Kirillova

*prepare the outmost of my next chapter of life. And in that motion, I find comfort. In the transaction, I find a home.*¹⁹
— Anastasia Kirillova, *I Am Home: Thoughts of a Nomad* (2012) 12'37"

After living in several houses or apartments, no particular place might be identified as a family home; after living in several cities or villages, no particular base-home is identified as particularly relevant; after living in several countries, no homeland is recognized as exclusive²⁰. The permanency of airports acts as a fixed knot in between past and current realities and memories. Airport turns to the reset, recharging, reorganize, restart of space that people often do daily when they go home at night and leave in the morning. The only difference is that the routine only occurs twice a year or once four years in the TCK World.

The airport acts as the link be-

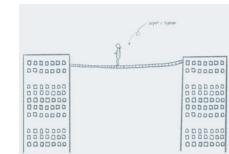
tween countries of arrival and departure. We are the tightrope walker. Challenging ourselves from taking the walk from one to the other that we did not have a choice to reject. Every time we stand on the tightrope, looking at the views of the streets, cities, countries, we know that that's the land we lived, then continuing the search of next land. Countries are the terminals and airports are homes to TCKs because countries kept changing whereas airports do not. Cultural identities do not matter in the space of airports which TCKs can find the sense of home even at the one they've never been to. It's the space of circulation, consumption, and communication which "cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned by identity"²¹. The fact that the unrooted image of airports portrays no specific personality or culture backgrounds needed. It's the ideal place that TCKs feel connected within their mental estate for rootlessness. As high mobility plays a significant part in formative years of TCKs, the recognition of home becomes airports are commonly told between stories of ATCKs.

*It was strange, I thought. As I roamed the Arrivals area, that the airport was the place I thought of as my home from home, the site of some of my most resonant childhood memories; for many of the people around me, especially the one's who just displayed, it was a zone of uncertainty and excitement. All the alien tingling that attend any entry into a new life and a new world.*²²

— Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul* (2000, p67)

CASE STUDY: Haneda Airport

From my 15 years of travelling, Haneda Airport is not the one I used the most but the most recent airport I've started to use often. It's not as famous as Narita Airport of Tokyo, not as architectural characteristics as Kansai Airport of Osaka, not as small as Songshan Airport of Taipei. However, it's the place I would rather call home after graduating from TCK and being an ATCK

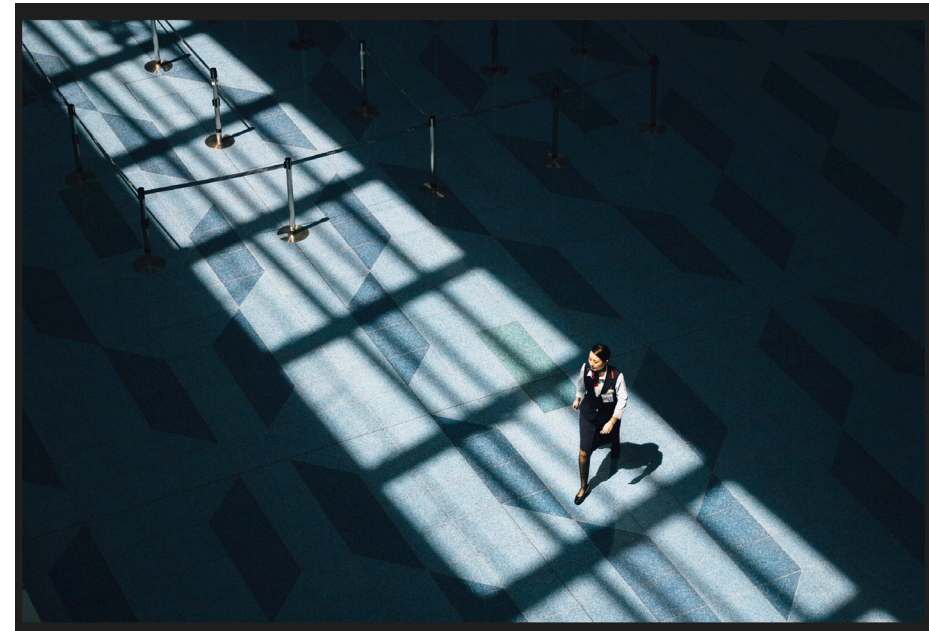


19. *I Am Home: Thoughts of Nomad*. (2012). [Online]. Directed by Anastasia Kirillova, England: Independence Film. [View: 6 November 2020]. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/39100216>

20. Colomer, L. (2020). 'Feeling like at home in airports: Experiences, memories and affects of placeness among Third Culture Kids', *Applied Mobilities*, 5(2) [online]. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23800127.2018.1436636> [Accessed: 12 October 2020].

21. Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction of an anthropology of supermodernity*, pp. 77-78. London: Verso.

22. Iyer, P. (2000). *The Global Soul: Jet ag, shopping malls, and the search for home*, p. 67. New York: Vintage Books.



[10] Haneda Airport © Yoshiro Ishii

now.

The time I realize that everything in the airport looks familiar is when I tried on my first flight individually at 12. I'm constantly in the airport going back and forth from the host and passport country twice a year since the age of 7. Sometimes four or five times a year if you count travelling to other countries on holidays. The familiarity of the airport system gives me an illusion of home even when I go to an unfamiliar country. The shared similarities of airports make me feel like I know the place. My parents trained me to get familiar with by asking me to check-in for tickets, exchange currency when travelling to a new place, how to read the monitor screen to get our baggage. They knew one day I'll have to do all by myself as TCK, and they want me to be prepared. All the training accelerates the feeling of home at the airport. It's like a mother teaching kid how to use the knife in the kitchen, father teaching kid how to fix tire of a bicycle in the backyard. The Departure is my front yard, the Immigration is my living room, the Hall is my bedroom, the Arrival is my backyard. Everything here in airport looks nothing different from a domestic place, especially when I am in the sense of rootlessness.

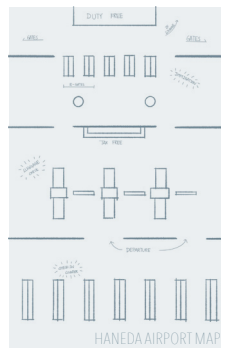
By the time I'm ATCK, I have a stronger feeling of at-home at Haneda Airport than before when I was been through other airports that I use more often in my life. As ATCK, I started to realize that I do not have a permanent home, I do not want to have a permanent home. Unlike the choice-less experience in my TCK life, I have begun to have the opportunities to choose do I want to continue the transitional life as ATCK.

*Then we moved again, and again. When I grew up, I just carried moving: it, sort of, became part of the system. Like this train moving, the sound of the tracks, echoing the indispensable of your heart.*²³

— Anastasia Kirillova, *I Am Home: Thoughts of a Nomad* (2012) 5'37"

The restless moving between countries is like a drug that I couldn't stop

anymore, although I have to admit it brings downsides in my mentality. But like I said, it's a drug, you know it harms but you can't resist. Within all the experiences of moving on and on, airports become the oasis. A place you can take a breath, a place you can relax, a place you can call it home. People found it strange to call a place with circulation and movements as home because the definition of home is often a permanent dwelling that you feel the most comfortable and private. But it's not the case for those whose life built on the high mobility structure. I do not need to take a look on the map and know where everything is by my memories in Haneda Airport. I could easily draw a map for someone who asks me how they can go through Immigration and Tax-Refund and recommend the lunch place. It's my backyard. I felt relief whenever I came back to Japan or departure at the airport. The sound, the scent, the vision of the airport are so familiar that whenever I've been there, I'm touched. The greeting and farewell signs of Haneda Airport is like a mother telling you "see you later, have a nice day" in the morning when you go to school, and "welcome back home" after an exhausting day.



23.
I Am Home: Thoughts of a Nomad. (2012). [Online]. Directed by Anastasia Kirillova, England: Independence Film. [View: 6 November 2020]. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/39100216>

FINISHING OF HOME "THE ENCOUNTER"

*I am a confusion of cultures.
uniquely me.*

I think this is good because I can understand the traveller, sojourner, foreigner, the homesickness that comes.

I think this is also bad because I cannot be understood by the person who has sown and grown in one place.

They know not the real meaning of homesickness that hits me now and then.

sometimes I despair of understanding them.

I am an island and a United Nations.

Who can recognize either in me but god?²⁴

— Alex Graham James, *Uniquely Me*

24. James, A. G.. (2001). 'Uniquely Me' in Pollock and Van Reken. *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*. Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, p. 39. [Accessed: 21 October 2020].

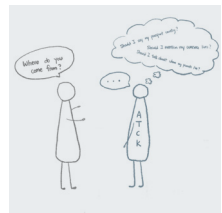
Growing up as third culture kids, they face difficulty distinguishing the difference between them and those who grew up in a monocultural environment. By the age of 18, TCKs finally have the power to choose "where to go" not "force to go". The transitional life of TCKs had impacted on their choice into two controversial directions: to stay at a place permanently or to keep moving forwards. The previous one usually chooses to return to the passport country which allows their "THE ENCOUNTER" and "THE RETURNS" become the same phase in searching homes. However, in this chapter of "THE ENCOUNTER", we mainly focus on TCKs who choose to not return to their birth country nor staying in host culture but just another country in their TCK life to stay in their college years.

At this stage, the life of TCK has been constructed firmly. The foundation and structure are usually set before the age of 18 with the rich diversity of cultures backgrounds, high mobility, and liminality of space. These elements build up the stories of each TCKs which the one usually simplified when they met new people or changed the narratives depend on whom they are talking with.^[viii]

I went to high school in Kenya, my parents currently live in the Philippines, I have two passports. What do I say? So I'll say well it's complicated. Then the clean editable question follows: well where were you born. I'm thinking that doesn't answer the question. I mean I know what are you looking for, but that's not going to help you figure out who I am. And so it's complicated and so I launched in this short maybe 30-seconds spiel of places I've lived and the thing I noticed with that is that immediately after I'm done, the conversation is over.²⁵

— Erik Vyhmeister, *Building Identity as a Third Culture Kid* (TED TALK)

Vyhmeister talked about his experience in the orientation week at Andrews University. People did not know how to respond to this "unfamiliar style of

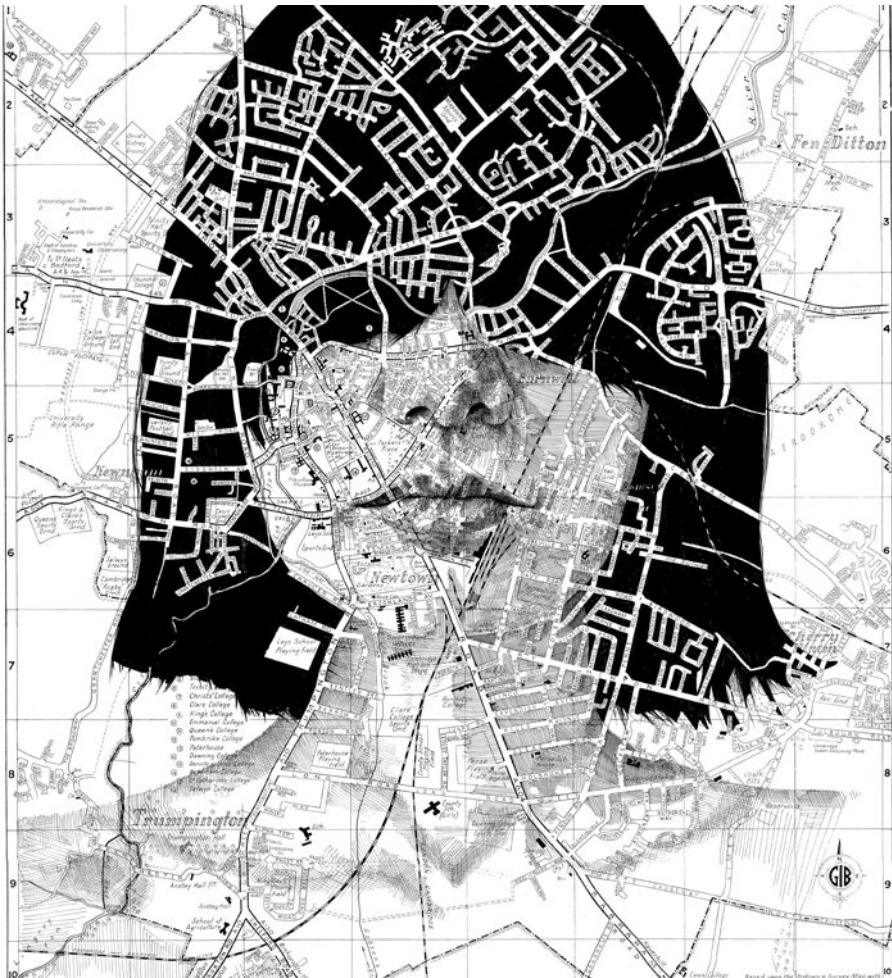


[viii]

The question of "where do you come from" is usually the communication starter in the welcome events of the university. However, TCKs saw this question as the "monster": should I say my passport country? Should I mention my overseas lives? Should I talk about where my parents live? But I've never been there yet. It's a series of self-questioning when it comes to the self origin of TCKs.

25.

Vyhmeister, E. (2015) *Building Identity as a Third Culture Kid* TEDx-Andrews University. Youtube. Available at: <https://youtu.be/8RC-mgMKJRy8> [Accessed 16 October 2020].



[11] Cambridge © Ed Fairburn

living” like they are facing the unknown human beings which makes them speechless. “My backgrounds are a conversation stopper at any level”²⁶ written Marilyn Gardener. TCKs realize their stories built an invisible wall between them and the others which are not their intention. “It’s complicated, it’s not simple. It’s not something that can be explained, can be verbalized. But its something that’s a core part of all of us.”²⁷

Due to the noticing reality of being abnormal, many TCKs chose to “change nationality” depends on whom they were interacting with. They do not tie to a physical location, which makes them mentally in-between spaces. Their ability to define themselves and change identity if the situation needed is being valued for the society as a cultural bridge. They manipulate multiple languages, experiencing local cultural backgrounds, adequate the flexibility of changing, dynamic communication and social skills, and wearing masks while observing. TCKs can relate to different people by their multi-culture experiences, but at the same time, they are isolated to each of them because of their experiences.

SPACE TYPOLOGY: Student Accommodation

International students often get along together when they share the

same accommodation even with different majors and different ethnic groups. Other than meeting people in class and orientation week, accommodation is a space to start the social relation of students in university easier than at anywhere else. Staying in the same shared common space forces people to communicate. This does not only apply to TCKs but also other students who chose to stay in the halls. All these international students are expats, it already makes them share a common relationship which brings them closer. However, it’s considered an advantage of being TCKs in student accommodation that they could relate to people from different countries in surprising ways. For example, a British growing up in Nigeria who went for local schools for 3 years and happening to have a Nigerian roommate in the university in the states, they can easily start on a conversation by sharing the same Nigerian educated backgrounds that the Nigerian might feel familiar and hospitality with. At the same time, there might be another roommate who came from Singapore where the British TCK spent another 3 years in high school. Then it’s easy for the TCK to relate to both and act as a cultural bridge in the accommodation.

Unlike university campus where it’s possible to get away from people you do not want to interact with, accommodation leaves you no room to escape which highlight the

Thomas, W. (1991). “Colors”, [expatchild.com](https://expatchild.com/tck-home-identity/) [online] Available at: <https://expatchild.com/tck-home-identity/> [Accessed: 11 November 2020].

I grew up in a Yellow country
But my parents are Blue.
I'm Blue.
Or at least, that is what they told me.
But I play with the Yellows.
I went to school with the Yellows.
I spoke the Yellow language.
I even dressed and appeared to be Yellow.
Then I moved to the Blue land.
Now I go to school with the Blues.
I speak the Blue language.
I even dress and look Blue.
But deep down, inside me, something's Yellow.
I love the Blue country.
But my ways are tinted with Yellow.
When I am in the Blue land,
I want to be Yellow.
When I am in the Yellow land,
I want to be Blue.
Why can't I be both?
A place where I can be me.
A place where I can be green.
I just want to be green.

– Whitney Thomas, Colors

26. Gardner, M. (2018). ‘A Third Culture Kid Talks About Raising Third Culture Kids’ in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 2.1, para 9. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].

27. Vyhmeister, E. (2015) *Building Identity as a Third Culture Kid* TEDx- Andrews University. Youtube. Available at: <https://youtu.be/8RC-mgMKJRy8> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

importance of social communication skill. When you master several languages, you have the advantage of speaking the same language which naturally brings people together. As TCKs, it's common that they master at least two languages^[ix]. Language in addition to the experience gives the surroundings an illusion of they came from the background.

During the phase of "THE ENCOUNTER", TCKs face difficulty defining their home because they have so many places so-called home, however, it's also a strength that they can relate to many different cultures. TCKs might find the challenges in the space and time because not only they are suffering from the different school system, different culture, leaving families, but also have to suffer from the question of origin that they can hardly define and give an answer to. This makes them feel odd to fit in the place. Even when they "luckily" meet someone that's from their passport country in the university accommodation, it does not make their life easier. Instead, it accelerates the feeling of separation and loneliness that they do not sympathize what other people think they are "supposed to" come from. When there's another international student that happens to come from the same passport country as TCKs, the music, the places, the neglects are not some-

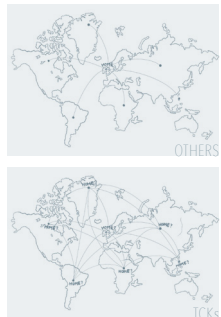


[12] Tied | Brooke Shaden Emulation Series © May Xiong

thing TCKs feel familiar with but the international student who is not a TCK might think you should share the same background. Then TCKs will have to start to explain their experience on "oh I moved to Indonesia when I was 5 and then Japan at 12, Norway at 16". But often time the international student wouldn't understand your experience and how can you not understand your own country. Eventually, TCKs get to a point where they do not expect other people to understand them. They are exhausted, tired, and gave it up.

CASE STUDY: Komazawa Shared Accommodation

[ix] Perhaps it's more likely that they do three or four, one from the passport country, one from the host country, and international language English is their starter up kit as a global nomad.



Typical Japanese Studio Room



[x]
The accommodation types are usually studios in Japan because Japanese people consider privacy more important and rarely want to share common space with others and rather have compact tiny space to live.

Student hall is not necessarily provided by the universities in Japan. However, some accommodations run by organizations are provided to students from any colleges. The needs in share house type of accommodation grew expeditiously because more international students are welcomed. Studio type of room^[x] may not be as affordable as the en suite, and international students who left their home countries may want to share some common space to make friends. TCKs, on the other hand, can deal with the change of country rapidly so they may not feel as lonely as other traditional international students since they are used to being at the other countries all the time. However, sharing the common space such as lounge and kitchen brings communication between residents of the accommodation and people to feel more relax interacting with each other because they are the “family” here in the accommodation when they are all alone in the third world.

Komazawa Shared Accommodation targets on the international students including TCKs to live in. With 5 floors of the apartment, ground floor and rooftop are the common areas such as lounge, kitchen, bathroom, post box, and laundry space; between first to the fourth floor, every two floors share toilets and coin laundries and there are floors for female only. A friend of mine lived in the accommodation that we usually spent the nights doing our projects together along with other residents in the common area. We’ve come to know the residents very well because they spent more time in the commonplace after coming back home. There was one TCK I met in the accommodation that she been raised in New York, Netherlands, and then came to Japan for the university while her birth country is Korea. She said that she felt pretty much home at the shared accommodation because there were so many people from each part of the world that she could relate with. Different from the normal accommodation where neighbours rarely have interaction and communication, at a shared accommodation she was able to interfere with people from different cultures that sometimes she felt intimidated with and sometimes she found the unknown captivating. She admitted that her



[13] the living © Collin McAdoo

multi-cultural background makes people feel unrelatable which creates the sense of rootlessness, but perhaps international students could share more of her rootlessness than the locals which she found her backgrounds were more acceptable in the accommodation. The shared accommodation for international students is working as a community. In campus, there are German communities, Korean Communities, Pakistan Communities, but there is never going to have a community for Third Culture Kids. However, TCKs could find themselves more like “at home” in the accommodation when they are surrounded by people around the countries creating little United Nation.

DWELLING OF HOME "THE RETURNS"

*Just being brought up by people who didn't and still don't feel fully here, fully present – that's very intense... it's not just all about the house we live in and the friends we have right here. There was always a whole other alternative universe to our lives.*²⁵

— Jhumpa Lahore: *The Quiet Laureate* – Time Magazine 2008

*I think there's a simple reason they have so many problems on reentry to their passport culture. In the host country, they are often seen as different. They can always console themselves that, yes, they are different, but it's because they aren't from this place. They see themselves as members of their passport country. The problem is when they go back to their passport country and still don't fit, what is their excuse?*³²

— Barb Knuckles, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*

Thinking the major difference between immigrants and TCKs that the previous one considers themselves part of the other culture and the latter one are expected to return after the journey. However, reentry is often more challenging and unsettling than initial culture shock, affecting academic, social, and psychological functioning³⁰. Sometimes TCKs are naïve at the reentry when they are finally "going home" with the excitement and expectation on getting themselves with a root, a culture, a place they called home. However, reading through many ATCKs' stories on their reentries, things are not that simple.

Unlike immigrants, TCKs have chances to go back to their passport country once a year for visiting families on vacation. They take their experience on revisiting during summer vacation and interpret into a dwelling^[xi]. In transitional life of TCKs, their passport country functioned as a summer resort, like how the others go to the Maldives. It's a misunderstanding that "travelling for a vacation" and "dwelling as life" can be equalized. Sometimes TCKs face difficulties in "THE RETURNS" phase due to the illusion. To insult to injury, the hopes of finding the same kinds intertwine into the circumstance. TCKs might not realize that their experiences already shape them into the new community called Third Culture Kids and still dream of finding their kinds in passport country^[xii]. However, the awkwardness and misunderstanding from the surrounding awake them that they do not belong to their birth country. The self-deception of sameness and expectation of home might cause a deeper sense of loneliness and rootlessness that eventually lead to the depression of TCKs.

The psychiatrist Ester Schubert has reported that the suicide rate of TCKs after their first-year home when it seems they give up hope they will ever fit it³¹. The despair of "even the birth country is not my home", "I could never have a settlement" has been a struggle to TCKs which most of the people do not realize and applause to welcome them back. It's very contradictory that the surrounding of TCKs at birth country welcome them at the

30. Gaw, K.F. (2007). 'Mobility, multiculturalism, and marginality: Counseling third culture students', *Special Populations in College Counseling: A Handbook for Mental Health Professionals*, in Lippiincott, J.A. & Lip-pincott, R.B. (Eds.) pp. 63-76. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association. [Accessed: 10 November 2020].

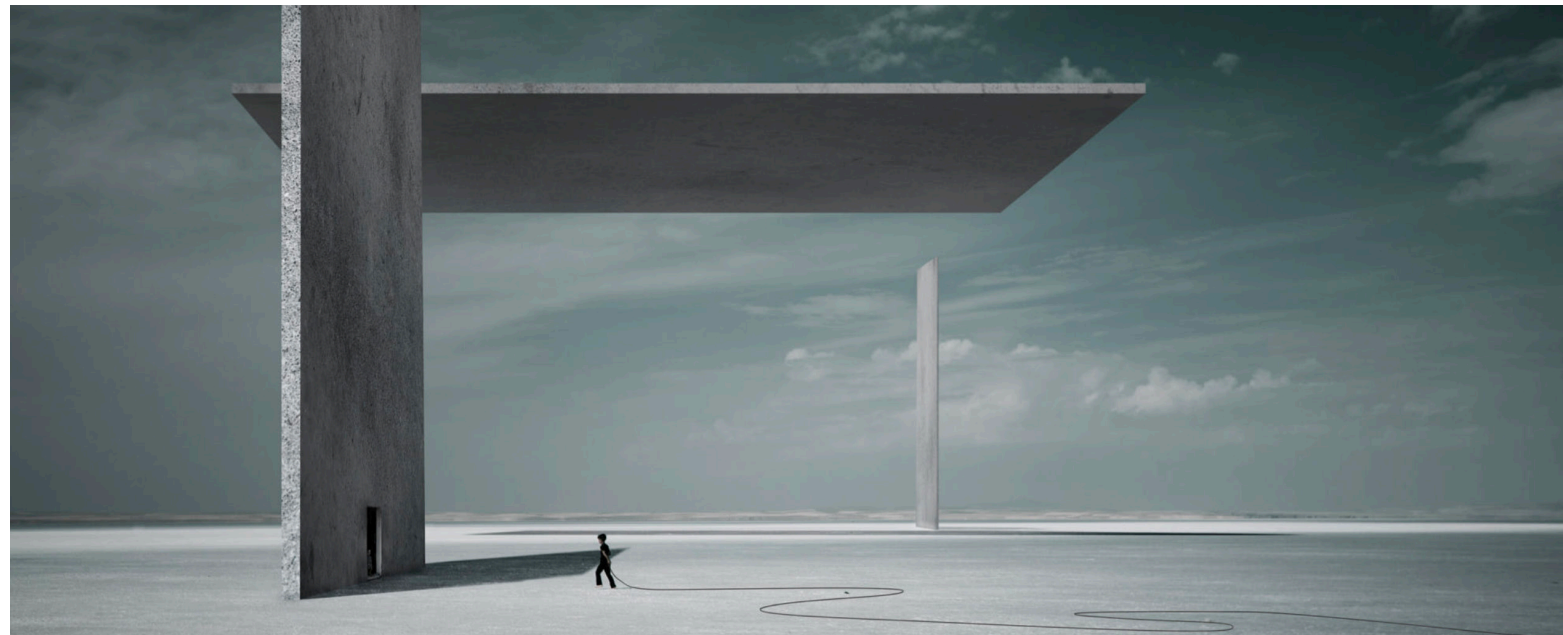
[xi] TCKs thought that they knew what is like to live in passport country because they spent 1/6 of a year there.

[xii] The birth country might feel home to TCKs' parents because they were born and raised in the environment, but TCKs weren't. Therefore, the gap between TCKs and their parents becomes obvious during the phase of reentry.

31. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 230. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

28. Grossman, Lev. (2008). 'Jhumpa Lahiri: The Quiet laureate', *Time*, 8 May. Available at: www.time.com/magazine/article [Accessed: 2 November 2020].

29. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 231. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.



[14] Dreams of Lost Children © Özkan Durakoglu

same time startled at how TCKs know so little of their birth country. "Friends, relatives, and classmates are shocked at the TCKs' ignorance at the these most common practices necessary for everyday living"³². It is like blaming TCKs for not knowing things they are supposed to. People must understand the idea of TCKs and what they are facing, and it's never going to work that if you see TCKs as "normal" because they simply are not. Their experiences which were choice-less makes them stuck into an in-between space psychologically. It's been said that TCKs grew up faster during their development years where they learned the adaptability and flexibility to fit in each culture they encountered and typically have a hard time in mentality and easier to reach a depression phase during their 20's. During the 20's, the experience as transitional and in-between have set obstacles on TCK's journey continuing to identify their origin, their home.

In "THE RETURNS" phase of TCKs' life, another essential process that TCKs been through is the healing/recovery. As mentioned in "THE IN-BETWEENS", sometimes TCKs have an unconscious fondness in escapism when facing difficulties in solving problems. They always thought of going to the next country where they can leave everything behind being unsolved. However, when they get back to their passport country as expected, where can they escape? It is supposed to be their "final destination" coming back home. Nevertheless, TCKs might find the passport country is the place that causes the most troubles in their mentalities and this time they do not have a "next stops". Eventually, they realized the healing/recovery process is needed for rebuilding their sense of home base on their experience.

*If I allow myself to like it here, it may mean I didn't like it there [...] If I adjust and fit in, I may lose my memory of and commitment to return to that place where I grew up [...] If I let go of the place and the people where I have always identified most and fit in best to align myself with my home country and country, will I lose some important part of me?*³³

— David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*

SPACE TYPOLOGY: Hometown

Walking down the street, seeing people that speaking the native language, having the same ethnic appearance, TCKs have a sense of feeling that they are back to a place that they are supposed to belong to. The belonging to a country is crucial when you grew up in several places and cultures. In the hometown, TCKs have this self-deception that this place is home where they share the same root. However, when identifying the root of TCKs, the ethnics do not necessarily mean the essential element of one's self-identity.

During the reentry phase of TCKs' life, hometown can be a double-edged sword space that TCKs find relief and harms. Hometown is just another place and culture that they need to adjust themselves to fit in like all the other places they've been; hometown is an uncomfortable environment that no one but themselves knows that the sameness is superficial. Considering the transitional experience that TCKs been through, there should be 100% confident that they can handle the situation just like thousands time they did in their life. However, what makes this different from the previous adjustments TCKs made in other countries is the speciality of "hometown". The space typology of hometown gives TCKs a definition that they are supposed to find the feeling of home here. However, this thought obstructs TCKs in their journey of searching home. If TCKs are not given the pressure that "This is your home, your country, your place of belonging" when they return, it might be a lot easier for TCKs to find their sense of belonging by adjusting their in-betweenness into a permanent root. However, the invisible force of stress in their admitting to a hometown as their home has blocked the way.

The rebound of such stress is that TCKs feel like they have to keep continuing their journey as an extension to their transitional life. Meanwhile, they have an urge deep in their heart that to find a way back home, it's the matter

32. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 228. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

33. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 229. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

that they do not know where the place would be.

*I did try and settle into normal life. But late in my twenties, my itchy feet got the better of me and I took off round the world with just a backpack for company [...] I realize I couldn't live in just one country for the rest of my life.*³⁴

— Clara Wiggins, *When an ATCK Does Not Choose a Life Overseas*

This influences TCKs' decision that hometown is not a place of belonging but another stop. However, when ATCKs chose to continue their journeys, the lack of rootlessness become unsolved grief sticking with them the whole life. "But what I didn't have was a base. A home"³⁵ written Wiggins, after she chose to run away from her birth country and realized that no matter where she was, oversea or hometown, the rip in her heart kept bleeding that she was still the kid who did not have a home. After going through several places after returning hometown, ATCKs eventually realize they need to be settled, they need to stay, they find that where they can go back and feel safe is always where their families are – which is their birth country, their hometown.

CASE STUDY: Taipei

The stage of "THE RETURNS" is not something I've been through yet, but I've got a chance for half year temporarily stay in Taipei during my gap year before enrolling college. 6 months were the longest time that I got to spend for the first time after I left my country and started life as a TCK. Let's called this phase as "PRE-RETURN". In the "PRE-RETURN" phase I was conscious that my unwillingness to bond to a place permanently is stronger than what I was expected. The urge of returning to hometown was supposed to be my wish after years of being transitioning from places to places, however, the reality and mentality do not work that way. The searching for a home does not stop once you get back to your home country. Instead, the drive of finding home grows stronger than before.



[15] Taipei, Taiwan © Teemu Jarvinen

It might be hard to hear that people saying how ignorant I am when returning homeland. The lack of knowledge about geography, history, politics, fashion, trend... all these is signs and reasons that people called me a "Fake Taiwanese", which I have no other choice but to admit. See, the stress that surrounding puts on TCKs might be a lot more difficult than others suggest, and all we can do is to cope with the pressure of not having a sense of home here. It seems like our faults that we do not feel we belong to here. However, hometown is still part of our past, our history, our experience. No one can deny that every single person's sense of home is built up by his/her culture

34. Wiggins, C. (2018). "When an ATCK Does Not Choose a Life Overseas" in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 2.5, para 5. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].

35. Wiggins, C. (2018). "When an ATCK Does Not Choose a Life Overseas" in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 2.5, para 10. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].



[16] Endless White © studiopapuzzo

and experience. It's just that TCKs have an unusual experience that changes happen so often that they have such unique stories to tell. People might find unrelated, but it might be helpful that people try to understand our stories. Like how we did wherever we've been, but this time, it's the other way around.

So, when she comes to you, don't ask her where she's from, or what's troubling her. Ask her where she's lived. Ask her what she's left behind. Open doors. And just listen. Give her the time and space and permission she needs to remember and to mourn. She has a story – many stories. And she needs and deserves to be heard, and to be healed, and to be whole.³⁶

— Nina Sichel, *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*

The journey of searching home apparently does not stop when you enter "THE RETURNS". Somehow the situation gets more complicated. Nonetheless, if TCKs find themselves unsuited in their hometown, they re-started their life as ATCKs once again, until they find a place that they can define as their home.

36. Bell-Villada, G. H., Eidse, F., Orr, E. N., and Sichel, N.. (2011). *Writing Out of Limbo: International Childhoods, Global Nomads and Third Culture Kids*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

CONCLUSION

*It's almost like you have been stalking me for the past 20 years of my life. And I just realize that you exited 7 months ago. Way to go on concealing your identity for two decades! That's very impressive... and makes me feel a bit confused. And frustrated. And weird, especially since you've been stalking me. Yet I have chosen to embrace you anyway. [...] I didn't know I was a TCK until I met you in that class. And to be honest, I hate you. But I also love you. And I couldn't imagine my life making more sense without you.*³⁷

— Mary Bassey, *An Open Letter to my Third Culture Identity*

The acculturation that TCKs have benefited from their adaptability and flexibility to adjust culture changes and ability to turn as dandelion whenever they go. This ability is what society looks for as we enter the age of globalization. In 1984, sociologies Ted Ward claimed that TCKs are “the prototype [citizens] of the future”³⁸. The prediction of internationalizing culture environment is the sign of increasing numbers in third culture kids. In future, not only TCKs but global nomads are going to be what we called “normal” and “common”. Therefore, the challenges that TCKs are now facing about searching home will become the shared problems between these future citizens.

In the writing portfolio, the four phases that TCKs go through a journey in searching home are “THE BEGINNING”, “THE IN-BETWEEN”, “THE ENCOUNTER” and “THE RETURNS”. It is the journey of their experiences, the journey of building home identity, the journey of finding themselves. In each stage, the meaning of home seems to be changed as they go through. “THE BEGINNING” states that TCKs learned their ability to absorb surroundings as part of their knowledge of home as grow up. TCKs did not realize the starting point of their TCK life has shaped their home identity into a direction different from the others. All they define home by this stage as “I’m from my passport country, but I grew up here, nothing a big deal” and feel excited to have two homes. “THE IN-BETWEEN” defines home when TCKs realize that their experiences do not fit in anywhere while they grew up in a back-and-forth high mobility environment. They found it uncomfortable to explain their loneliness and rootlessness which they did not know it came from their third culture identity. They only feel like there’s no home for them. They are stuck, double-teamed, and lost. TCKs came to “non-place”, the liminal, transitioning, the in-between space of the home. “THE ENCOUNTER” gives TCKs chance to choose where they want their home to be for the first time. In the third place they chose, their experience as TCKs helps them finding a temporary home when they interact with people from different backgrounds and culture. As a cultural bridge, TCKs find a sense of belonging that “this is the

38. Arathoon, A. and Echerd, P. (1989). *Understand and Nurturing the Missionary Family*, p. 57. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

37. Bassey, M. (2018). “An Open Letter to my Third Culture Identity”, in Jones, R.P. (ed.), *Finding Home: Third Culture Kids in the World*. Chapter 1.2, para 1. Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Finding-Home-Third-Culture-World-ebook/dp/B07CLB85ZZ> [Accessed: 18 October 2020].

place where I want to be” because they are bathed under multiculturalism. They undergo a process of accommodating and adapting to the social-cultural and psychological changes between groups³⁹. “THE RETURNS” represents the destination of TCKs life and the expectation of their belonging. Some find settlement in hometown whereas some choose to continue their journey – even after their reentry.

*While the world is trying to figure out what to do with “diversity” based on traditional models that are primarily defined by many of the externals of the cultural iceberg, most TCKs have lived a life where, indeed, they saw the person first and the details of race, culture, or economics second, third, or not particularly at all.*⁴⁰

— Pollok and Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*

Whenever TCKs were asked about the best part of their experiences, the answer is usually related to how they meet people from different countries, experience multi-cultures as locals not tourists, master several languages, etc. TCKs won’t stop their journey as long as they are not satisfied with their answer to home due to their complicated and diverse backgrounds. The definition of home is not a simple answer. Sometimes it can be explained in several ways during different stages of life. Especially to people with the backgrounds of global nomads who experience the diversity of cultures themselves in the environment instead of the book. It can be crucial during the journey time by time, but finding a home, a base is what human nature



[17] Life is about creating yourself © Florenta Constantin

does. We want to feel the sense of sameness, find a sense of belonging. And to do that, we can only carry on the journey by travelling, until we find a place where we belong.



39. Downey, D. L. (2012). *Identity, Mobility, and Marginality: Counseling Third Culture Kids in College*. [online] Available at: <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/ETD-UT-2012-05-5574/DOWNEY-MAS-TERS-REPORT.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

40. Pollock, D.C., and Reken, R. E. V. (1999). *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds*, p. 235. Boston, Ma: Nicolas Brealey.

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So much of who we are is where we have been.

— *William Langewiesche*