

From Economic Considerations to Social Implications?

A Case Study of Female Workers in Norwegian Industry,

Jiangsu Province, China

Linda Rønning

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Department of Geography,

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

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Abstract

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An increasing number of companies are relocating from developed to developing countries. The recent years, China has emerged as one of the largest recipients of foreign direct investment in the world. The reason for the relocation is mainly to save costs on production, where labour is one of the main factors. Many of these workers are female and much literature has focused on bad working conditions and exploitation. Through a case-study of some female blue- and white-collar workers in a Norwegian company in a rural town in Jiangsu province, China, this study seeks to find what impact economic globalization has on their lives. Through in-depth interviews, some of the experiences of working in the Norwegian company are tried captured. Key-informants in the company and the local government are also interviewed. The interviews are supplemented with observation and secondary literature to contextualize the answers. The analytical framework is the capability approach, to see if foreign industry can lead to capacitation and potentially empowerment of the female workers. Both material and immaterial achievements are considered. The focus is on the women in the context of the household and the changes the Norwegian company represents compared to the earlier places the women have worked. The industrialization of the area where the women lived meant expanded employment opportunities. Most of the women had worked in different Asian or Chinese companies before and the change to the Norwegian company represented generally a shift to the better in terms of working conditions and wages. This had enhanced their capabilities to a certain degree. Paid employment can potentially give women a stronger bargaining position in the household. The women controlled their income and were responsible for the daily shopping. Larger expenditures were discussed with their husbands and decisions were apparently jointly made. There were no significant changes in the gender division of labour, suggesting that traditional gender roles are resistant to change. Thus, the women were better off in the Norwegian company in terms of wages, working hours and welfare, but their lives in general did not change significantly. There were considerable differences between the white- and blue-collar workers though, indicating the role of education.

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I know I am not alone when I say that writing a master thesis is like a trip with a roller coaster. I bought a ticket and did not quite know what was waiting for me, only that it would be a lot of ups and downs. It was terrifying and joyful at the same time, and suddenly, just when I thought “I will never make it the whole way through, please put me down on the ground!” the trip was over. I survived! I could not have made the trip alone though, and I owe a big thank to the people and institutions that helped me through:

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACWF	All-China's Women's Federation
CA	Capabilities Approach
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
EPZ	Export processing zone
FDI	Foreign direct investment
FIE	Foreign-invested enterprise
FTZ	Free trade zone
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross domestic product
GLF	Great Leap Forward
GMD	Guomindang
GRP	Glass Reinforced Plastic
HD	Human development
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HR	Human Resource
HRS	Household responsibility system
JEDZ	Jiangyin Economic Development Zone
MNC	Multinational Corporation
NICs	Newly industrializing countries
NIDL	New International Division of Labour
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
SEZ	Special economic zone
SOE	State-owned enterprise
TVE	Township and village enterprise
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNMDG	United Nations Millennium Development Goal
VAT	Value added tax
WTO	World Trade Organization

Local terms

Guanxi	Social capital, social connections/relationships
Hukou	Household registration
Mahjong	A traditional Chinese game
<i>mu</i>	Chinese unit of area measure. 15 mu = 1 hectare, 1 mu = 666 sq. metres
RMB	Renminbi. Local currency. 1 RMB = 1 yuan
yuan	Local currency. 1 yuan = 0.13 US Dollar and 0.78 Norwegian Kroner (17.04.07)

1 Introduction

Globalization has made the world appear smaller. The whole world is considered when companies search for profit. Many companies relocate from developed to developing countries and cheap resources, especially labour, is one of the reasons. China has an abundance of this resource as about 150 million people live on less than a dollar a day and the country is home to 18 percent of the world's poor (World Bank 2007b). The combination of cheap resources and a huge market makes China attractive for foreign investors, also Norwegian. According to a Norwegian newspaper: "*Norwegian companies are queuing up for China*" (Dagens Næringsliv 2004). After thirty years of seclusion to the outside world and a planned economy, China moved towards a market economy and opened up for foreign investments in the late 1970s. This coincided with the restructuring taking place in the world economy, where cheap labour was sought for labour-intensive manufacturing processes (Saich 2004). Ever since, China has been one of the world's most rapidly growing large economies, with an annual average annual growth of gross domestic product (GDP) at around 9 percent. In 2002 China was the largest recipient of foreign direct investment¹ (FDI) among the developing countries and second in the world next to the US (Cai & Liu 2002). GDP per capita was US\$ 1,490 in 2004 (UNDP 2006a) and the same year, China contributed with one-third of global economic growth and FDI surpassed 54.9 billion US\$ (World Bank 2006). The average income has risen accordingly, from US\$ 280 in 1985 to US\$ 1,290 in 2005 (World Bank 2007b). By the end of 2005, foreign-invested enterprises² (FIEs) from over 190 countries employed more than 24 million Chinese citizens (The US-China Business Council 2007). Both older and newer material estimates that up to 90 percent of the work-force in some of the export-oriented enterprises and special economic zones (SEZs) are young females (Croll 1995; Pun 2004).

Through qualitative methods, this study seeks to go behind the numbers and statistics and find the workers' experiences of working in a foreign company. The literature on globalization is vast, but much of it is about processes at macro-level. According to Freeman (2001) there is a widely agreed need in the humanities to focus on the lived realities at the local level of these processes. Opposed to minerals, electricity and other inputs to production, cheap labour

¹ Foreign direct investment is when one firm invests in another with the intention of gaining some control in that firm's operations (Dicken 1998, in Potter et al. 2004).

² The three main types of Foreign Invested Enterprises are: wholly foreign owned enterprise, joint venture, and a representative office (China Solution 2006)

concerns human actors, with thoughts, feelings and intentions. How are they affected by the foreign investments? An increase in GDP does not necessarily lead to more welfare. On the contrary, Summerfield (1994) found that in spite of better incomes, there has been stagnating indicators of human development because of changes in social welfare. Through interviewing some of the female workers in a Norwegian company producing life-boats in a rural town in Jiangsu, one of the most prosperous and developed provinces on the Chinese coastline, an understanding of how the interplay between the global and local turns out for some particular persons in one particular place is sought. A case study can give valuable insights to similar processes taking place worldwide, although generalizations have to be handled with care (Nichols 1991).

Women comprise some of the cheapest labour and much of the early literature on the relocation of industry to developing countries concluded with exploitation of the female workers (e.g. Fröbel et al. 1980; Safa 1981). Later more nuanced pictures emerged (e.g. Lim 1990; Lie & Lund 1994; Gao 1994; Summerfield 1994). How does this turn out in China? Does foreign industry deteriorate the female workers' lives or can it have a positive influence and enhance their capabilities to live valued lives? According to Shu (2004), few societies have prescribed women a lower status than traditional Confucian China. Since 400 BC the Confucian moral philosophy has influenced the Chinese people and made female inferiority the norm (Hooper 1984). According to Confucius, "*For a woman to be without ability is a virtue*" (Judd 1994). In spite of efforts at ideological redefinitions of gender relations during communism, traditional Confucian beliefs about gender roles remain strong, particularly in rural China (Ho 1995; Tsai 2002). Little is known about the development of gender attitudes in the fast-developing Chinese society (Shu 2004), which is a mixture of elements from Confucianism, the republican era of 1911-1949, Maoist socialism of 1949-1978 and Deng Xiaoping's political and economic reforms after 1978 (Whyte 2002). The Norwegian company will enter this amalgam of structures and create a new context for the female workers. New employment opportunities and influences from the Western culture may alter gender roles and attitudes (Summerfield 1994; Ho 1995; Shu 2004).

The focus will be on rural women, as most of the employees in the Norwegian company are local. Rural women can be seen as a marginalized group because of their gender and residence. The divide between urban and rural China became institutionalized and deepened with the household registration (*hukou*) system in the 1950s, when every household was

classified as either agricultural or non-agricultural. Although the system is no longer a serious obstacle to labour mobility and is used less to ration goods and services (Ho 1995) it is still difficult to change to a non-agricultural hukou and it determines the access to work, social welfare and schools (Turner 2006). The market reforms led to increased social polarization from the mid-1990s, as agricultural productivity and rural income stagnated (Wang 2000 in Pun 2005; Goldman & MacFarquhar 1999). This makes local economic opportunities important.

To get the full picture of productive work's impact on women's lives in the context of social change, the totality of women's work should be examined (Ward & Pyle 1995; Roberts & Hite 2000, Rosenfeld 2000; Stockman 2000). Women generally have the main responsibility for reproductive and domestic work. Participation in productive work can lead to an intensification of women's workloads or a renegotiation of the gender division of labour. The household has served as a division-line between men's "outside" work and women's "inside" work and is important for an understanding of gender and work in China (Entwisle & Henderson 2000). The household can be defined as a group of persons sharing a common budget and residence. The household is most of the time made up of families, which refer to a social unit where the members are connected by relations of blood and marriage, and have certain rights and duties under the law (Wong 1998). Most decisions in rural China are made in the context of the household and the family has always been, and still is, "*central to women's and men's perceptions of themselves, their work patterns and their relations with others*" (Jacka 1997: 54). Thus, to gain a better understanding of the impact of paid work on the female worker, this study will to a large degree focus on the women in the context of the household. Paid employment can potentially lead to changes in gender roles and increased standard of living. The household is a society in miniature and roles and responsibilities in the domestic domain reflect the values and norms of society. Vice versa, ideas and beliefs about gender in the household are reproduced in society, making state and market institutions bearers of gender (Kabeer 2003). Economic change can influence gender roles, and earlier research (e.g. Stockman et al. 1995; Jacka 1997; Hare 1999; Entwisle & Henderson 2000; Bian & Zou 2001; Chen 2005) has concluded with a certain renegotiation of gender roles in the private sphere in China, but that traditional values are still prevalent.

The study builds on a structure-agency approach, with the capabilities approach (CA) as the analytical framework. Whereas many earlier studies treated the impacts on female workers in

foreign industry as structurally determined, this study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding. Global capital can have varying impacts and potentially contribute to development of human capabilities.

1.1 The research questions

The general objective of the study is to provide insights to what impact foreign industry has on the lives of some female workers and if it can enhance their capabilities. Furthermore, the aim is to see if the role as worker in foreign industry has meant changes in gender roles and values, potentially in conflict with the traditional. Based on this, the research questions are:

How does working in the Norwegian company affect the women's lives and capabilities?

-In an inter-generational perspective, what changes can be traced in the women's lives regarding work and the household?

-In the light of their work-histories and aspirations, what position does the job in the Norwegian company have?

The first question aims at finding whether there are any changes materially and in women's position and roles in the household. In that regard, both their mothers' lives as well as their daughters' will be of interest. The focus will be on the standard of living, education and the gender division of labour as the latter two can indicate changing values. It also focuses on what role work has played in the women's lives, in terms of farm work, housework and paid employment. The second question focus more on the Norwegian company and what changes it represents compared to earlier places the women have worked and how the women perceive the job. To answer the research questions I have used a qualitative approach. The main source of information has been in-depth interviews with the workers, to get the individual experiences and feelings, and more structured interviews with other key-informants. I have supplemented with secondary literature and observation.

1.2 The structure of the thesis

In chapter 2 the concept of globalization will be explored, as the point of departure for the thesis, and providing a theoretical basis. Global economic processes are linked with political decisions and the female worker, who is conceptualized as between the local and the global.

In chapter 3 I will give a brief country profile of China, an introduction to the study area, Jiangyin and Yuecheng, and the Norwegian company. Extracts from a mother's life will serve as an introduction to what factors have influenced Chinese women in connection with work and the household.

In chapter 4, my analytical framework will be presented. Structure and agency is the basis, with gender as one of the most important structures. Agency is discussed mainly under the capability approach, which is the main analytical framework. The household is theorized as a site of cooperation and conflict, and will be linked to gender and capabilities.

In chapter 5 I will give an account of the methodology used. It is quite thorough as I find it important to give an account of what obstacles I met and the choices I made as it influences the data, the reliability and validity. Doing research in a cross-cultural setting brings a dimension that can not be overlooked. To get the women's experiences and feelings, I found qualitative in-depth interviews most suitable. I also interviewed key-informants. My unfamiliarity with the culture and language raised particular challenges related to the use of interpreter. It is also the rationale for my extensive use of secondary literature as a supplement to the interviews and observation.

In chapter 6, 7 and 8 the analysis will be presented. Chapter 6 will give a brief socio-economic introduction to the women's background, with a focus on parents' occupation and the division of labour, the living standard of the household and the women's education. I will also touch upon their mothers' lives. Chapter 7 will focus on the company and the differences to other places the women have worked in terms of access to material and immaterial resources. In chapter 8 I turn to the impacts of the women's paid employment on the contemporary household, focusing on material achievements, the domestic work and the children's roles in the household. In chapter 9 I will conclude and give some final considerations.

2 Globalization

The occupation with globalization in academia is part of the ‘spatial turn’ in the social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s, where space became important in understanding social and cultural phenomena (Hubbard et al. 2002). Allen (1995, in Potter et al. 2004) divides globalization into three broad strands; economy, politics and culture, which all are related. I will treat the political dimension briefly through topics like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and politics at the national level. The primary focus is how gender, as part of local culture and structures, is affected by economic globalization. As workers in foreign industry, the women can be seen as mediators between the local and the global, where the local can be affected through changed practices and discourses.

2.1 A world in the grasp of capital

There is no single, widely agreed-upon definition, but put simply, globalization “*refers to the intensification of global interconnectedness, particularly the spread of capitalism as a production and market system*” (Schech & Haggis 2000: 58). Globalization can be understood as “*a set of technologies, institutions and networks operating within, and at the same time transforming, contemporary social, cultural, political and economic spheres of activity. [But it is also] the evaluation and interpretation –the naming- of those technologies, institutions and networks as socially, culturally, economically and historically identifiable phenomena that in a sense bring globalization into being, or make it real to most people*” (Schirato & Webb 2003: 21).

Although the focus on globalization has increased the last decades, it is not a new phenomenon. Curiosity, the “drive for capital accumulation” (Harvey 1992: 292) and strategic interests have brought people to other parts of the world for centuries. In the thirteenth century missionaries and merchants came to China, and even earlier, Europe was “discovered” by Chinese missionaries (James & Martin 1993). Capital and globalization are inextricably linked in dynamic processes, where the global processes that take place in the contemporary scene is more wide-reaching than the earlier logics of empire, trade, and political domination (Appadurai 2001). Drawing on historical materialism, Harvey (1992) considers capitalism to be the fundamental force in reshaping the world’s politics, economy and environment. The capitalist system shapes the material reproduction of everyday life and is the basis for social change (Perrons 2004). Today, the former trade between nations is to a

large degree replaced by transactions within transnational corporations¹ (TNCs), which control around 40 percent of world trade (Potter et al. 2004). Massey (1994) has argued that gender and spatial variations in gender relations are a significant component in an understanding of the organization and reorganization of the economic space. Different gender relations have been used by industry to stay competitive.

Globalization and accelerated economic integration has been made possible by improvements in transportation- and communication-technology, and speeded up in the 1980s and 1990s because of cheaper transportation and technologies like internet and mobiles. The reduction of spatial barriers has led to a “time-space compression” which has reduced the friction of distance and made the world appear smaller (Harvey 1992: 294). International agencies and institutions have furthered the connections and interdependencies in the world. After the Second World War institutions like GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) was established, which in 1995 changed to WTO. WTO is a “key-player in the neo-liberal project”, encouraging free trade and the deregulation of markets (Ransom 2001, in Potter et al. 2004: 301). The neo-liberal ideology has led to a footloose character of companies operating at a global scale in the search for profit. Issues like labour rights, health and safety should not be a hindrance for TNCs or capitalism (Potter et al. 2004). WTO promotes a globalist, liberal view, where globalization is seen as a road to modernization, and change and development will trickle-down. After reform, China has to a large degree followed this way of thinking in its chase for development and economic growth, and entered WTO in 2001. The skeptics, mainly Marxists and dependency theorists, argue that exploitation and increased polarization will be the result. The competition for investments and capital can affect the workers negatively, with a race to the bottom of wages and social standards (Deckers 2004). A major shortcoming of both neoliberals and Marxists is that they focus on economy and do not incorporate gender or emphasize social and cultural aspects of development (Lie & Lund 1994). The liberally influenced feminist Boserup (1970, in Elias 2004) saw women’s participation in a gender-neutral market and the public sphere as beneficial for their role and position in society. Through equal opportunities to work as men, women’s subordination would be overcome, hence multinational corporations (MNCs)/TNCs and foreign industry were important for modernization and women’s liberation. Later feminists have criticized this

¹ Earlier these companies were referred to as multinational companies (MNCs). Since they often have the headquarters in one country, although they operate in at least two, they are now usually termed TNCs (Dicken 1992, in Potter et al. 2004).

view, arguing that women do not have equal opportunities to men as they might face different cultural constraints (Elias 2004). The issue of gender and economic globalization will be discussed more thoroughly in the following section.

2.2 The New International Division of Labour

Traditionally, there was production and extraction of primary commodities in developing countries and manufacture in the advanced industrial countries. Later some developing countries shifted to import substitution (Potter et al. 2004). From the 1960s onward there was a restructuring of the world economy and a new international division of labour emerged, a phrase used in the book “The New International Division of Labour” (NIDL) (Fröbel et al. 1980), which marked the beginning of the globalization literature. Developed countries experienced increased competition in trade, tight domestic labour markets and high wages, growth of the welfare-state and technological development. The technological innovations led to a deskilling of work that fragmented production, but also made relocation possible: The high skilled jobs remained in the developed countries while less skilled, labour-intensive jobs, mainly textiles and electronics, were relocated to Latin America and later to East and Southeast Asia by TNCs and MNCs. The availability of cheap labour was the main determining factor and in most cases this meant women (Safa 1981). The production was exported back to the developed countries or to affluent markets in the third world (Stichter 1990).

2.2.1 Export-processing zones

Third World countries shifted from import substitution to “industrialization-by-invitation¹” where they tempted foreign companies with fiscal incentives, infrastructure and cheap labour, and market mechanisms were allowed to operate without constraints in special zones. In many of these industrial areas there were weak unionization of the workers and exemptions from labour legislation, which was profitable for the companies and the governments. The rationale behind these zones on the behalf of the Third World countries was improved foreign exchange and employment (Safa 1981). The success of this enclave industrialization made more developing countries open up similar areas under names like free trade zones (FTZs), export-processing zones (EPZs) and maquiladoras. In China it was decided in 1979 to establish four SEZs in the south, which were supposed to generate “trickle down”-effects to

¹ This is a variant of modernization theory, where foreign funded industry combined with an unlimited supply of labour was expected to lead to a self-sustaining, linear path to modernization (Lewis 1950, 1955, in Potter et al. 2004).

the rest of the country (Saich 2004). Local and national governments had an important role in attracting foreign investments in the increasing competition between countries and localities as local social, political and economic conditions are crucial to the strategies of companies operating on a global scale (Lie & Lund 1989, in Lie & Lund 2005). Diminishing spatial barriers made relative advantages profitable to exploit and the difference between places more important than ever, the downside was potential uneven development (Harvey 2000). The theories of trickle-down effects do not always work in real life.

By the end of the 1990s, 38 percent of global FDI went to developing countries, one third to China alone, making it the biggest receiver of them all. At the end of the 1990s, China had 124 of the world's 850 EPZs, employing 18 million workers. Of the 27 million people in the 850 EPZs, 90 percent were female (Potter et al. 2004). Similar numbers were found for the Chinese SEZs (Summerfield 1994). Between 1975 and 1995, 74 percent of developing countries and 70 percent of developed countries experienced a feminization of employment as women's activity rates increased while male rates declined (Standing 1999, in Perrons 2004). It is argued that global industrialization is as much female led as export led, but it is predicted that when the export-production becomes more skill- and capital intensive, there will be less demand for women (Kabeer 2003).

2.2.2 Women in NIDL

Fröbel et al. (1980) argued that the foreign companies in free production zones preferred to employ young women. The women did not demand much pay, could work at high intensity and were un- or semiskilled. The women's knowledge that they could easily be replaced and the need for an income made them vulnerable, cheap labour and easy to dispose (Roberts & Hite 2000). They were a *reserve army of labour*. It was argued that their docility and lack of labour mobility, which made them attractive to employers, was a result of subordination to patriarchal controls in the household (Chapkis & Enloe 1983, in Stichter 1990). The male breadwinner norm was seen as a reason why women were regarded secondary workers and paid less. Women's primary role was doing domestic work and childcare (Elias 2004). Women were attractive not only because of lower wages; they were actually more productive than men because of their "nimble fingers", resulting from household tasks like sewing and chopping vegetables (Elson & Pearson 1981). In this way the culturally specific division of labour and the relations between women and men were connected to the capitalist sphere of production. This socialist-feminist view regard attributes connected to gender as socially

constructed through the relations between women and men and is an important contribution to analyses of globalization (Schech & Haggis 2000). It also connects the household and its gendered relations closely to the public sphere of work.

2.3 Between the local and the global

Work on NIDL, such as Fröbel et al. (1980) can be linked to the structuralist dependency theories which were predominant in the early 1970s (Elias 2004). These theories were a confrontation with the optimism of the modernization theories of the 1950s and 1960s and focused on the unequal relations of exchange and the exploitation of poor peripheries by the rich core nations. The dependency feminists focused on patriarchal, global capitalism's detrimental effects on the female workers in developing countries, in terms of low wages and poor working conditions. The modernization and dependency approaches share a centre-periphery model of the world, with culture as a bounded entity that is penetrated and absorbed into the globalizing, homogenising forces of Western capitalism. This structural determinism leaves the local little power or agency and is a very static view of a world of flows of people, capital, goods, technology and ideas, forming networks in which places can be seen as nodes. A more fluid understanding of culture is needed (Crang 1999; Schech & Haggis 2000). Although structures are important and have to be included in investigations of how gender changes in processes of globalization, the effects on the female workers are not structurally determined by capital and patriarchy (Pearson 1998, in Kabeer 2001: 7). People actively shape a new social reality and adapt to foreign structures. They can act back on the structures and benefit from them (Lie & Lund 1994). The dynamism of local and global processes are shaped and driven by the strategies and powers of actors at different levels, not only governments and companies, but also individuals. Because gender is socially constructed in time and space the effects on women will differ.

The global flows will intrude into specific local constellations of cultural, economic, social and political structures, leading to local transformation. What happens in distant localities will influence the here and now (Giddens 1990). Decisions made in Norway can influence a rural community in China. Thus, the local should be understood through a "global sense of place" and its connections and interdependencies with other places; it is a meeting-place of interrelations at local and global levels (Massey 1995: 58). China has undertaken globalization from within its own particular system; hence scholars must study China in its

singularity if they wish to understand the relationship of contemporary China to globalization. Globalization became the prime social development objective in relation to the modernization and the social reforms in the 1970s. The analogous Chinese concept to the Western notion globalization is “heading for the world” and it became the historical turning point for China’s encounter with the world. (Li 2001: 1275).

The female worker is situated between the local and the global. For Gregory (1982) and Pred (1986, in Castree 2003: 173) this was conceptualized as *locale*; the “scale at which people’s daily life was typically lived”, with outside forces intruding “into the objective and subjective aspects of local life”. Through working in foreign industry, the women’s lived experience is permeated by the global, making it part of their daily life. This “commonalization” of the global makes it consciously and unconsciously reworked and adjusted to the women’s frames of understanding, resulting in hybrids between local and global influences. How aspects like income and working conditions influence the female worker’s life has to be investigated for each individual as their lived experience, life and perceptions will differ. Thus, Kabeer (2001) argues for a shift of focus from the needs and strategies of employers as the works on NIDL often did, to the female worker. The stereotypical picture of young, unmarried woman migrating to the export processing zones might have to give way to great varieties when it comes to age, marital status, social background, education and residence. There has been a rise in married female workers in the NICs, reflecting government policies in order to deal with labour shortages (Elias 2004).

2.3.1 The companies

The local conditions are highly varied and so are the global structures as none of the companies are identical. Lie & Lund (1994, 2005) found that the focus of NIDL on the growth of large TNCs, the establishment of FTZs and the footloose character of the factories searching for the cheapest female labour did not give a correct picture of the changes taking place. In their study of Norwegian companies in Malaysia in the 1980s, Lie & Lund found them differing in several aspects; their size, type of production, location, employment policy, market orientation and the large share of male workers. There is a need to broaden the picture as the majority of the female workers in foreign industry are not employed in EPZs and MNCs (Lim 1990). Even if the companies have to relate to some common labour legislation, there is reason to believe that they will have different policies toward the workers. Foreign companies provide an expansion of employment opportunities and potentially better wages

and working conditions than domestic companies. The exploitation women might experience is relative as they are often worse off in indigenous companies (Lim 1983). In China, most companies come from Asian neighbours, such as Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, whose neo-Confucian societies are characterised by gender relations that favour women even less than those in China (Chen 2002, in Turner 2006), and have the some of the lowest wages (Chan 2001). In 2001 Hong Kong accounted for 36 percent of the total FDI in China. Only a small share came from western countries (Chen 2002). The negative dimension of work is said to be the working conditions and not the wages, and that the working conditions should be compared with the alternative forms of employment (Elias 2004). The influence of work in foreign industry on the female workers will also differ with personal characteristics as well as marital status.

2.3.2 The women

Pun (2005) finds the Chinese female worker's position between the local and global as one of triple oppression between state socialism, global capital and family patriarchy, which puts her in a position of exploitation along lines of class, gender and the rural-urban divide. The different local and global forces intersect, and produce and reproduce local inequalities in a gendered labour-market in the East Asian "hypermasculine" economic development (Elias 2004: 32). Individual actors and social groups are differently located in geometries of power in relation to the global flows and interconnections, affecting the outcome of the dialectic processes between local and global (Massey 1994). The power is based on different kinds of resources, where gender and economic capital are among the most important. Because of practices of exogamous and patrilocal marriages, and patrilineal descent and heritage, China is said to be a country of "extreme patriarchy" and gender discrimination, where women are subject to strong patriarchal controls from the national level to the household (Kabeer 2003: 92). These patriarchal controls can potentially put women in a subjugated position also in the labour market. But even if women are adversely affected by global structural change, they may still use their agency to cope and strategize in their work and lives (Lie & Lund 2005). They can renegotiate their position and gender roles as income can be converted to assets and increased capabilities and empowerment. If engagement in waged work is based on a desperate need for an income for mere survival, as NIDL tended to assume, women can be exploited. On the other hand, if waged work is freely chosen and contributes to women's sense of independence and self-worth, it can lead to empowerment (Kabeer 2003). Besides, decisions as why to work are not always purely economic; social and cultural factors have to

be considered too. Traditions for female participation in the work-force will differ between for instance Muslim and Communist societies (Lim 1983, 1990). To gain a better understanding of the implications of industrialization for the female workers, the impact of their earnings on intrahousehold income distribution and decision making should be examined (Pearson 1992, in Kabeer 2001). Wage work can empower women in the household and increase their autonomy.

2.3.3 The household

Safa (1981) found that the wage the young, unmarried women in NIDL got did not improve their status much as it was very low and they would give most of to their parents. If they were married though, they could gain greater economic autonomy and the power to dissolve unsatisfying marriages. In this regard paid work can be said to have given the women greater agency. They might get a stronger voice concerning strategic life-choices, like choosing a marriage partner or delay marriage, and in household decision-making in general (Lim 1983; Kabeer 2003). The engagement in paid work is said to loosen the bonds of patriarchal control and tradition (Safa 1981; Lim 1983; Li 2001), although patriarchal relations cannot be expected to be significantly undermined as they are deeply embedded in social, cultural and economic relations, as well as people's identities. Lim (1983) argues that foreign companies can only give partial economic and social liberation, but they can contribute to increased living standard for the women and their families. Individual empowerment can lead to structural change and thereby social transformation. In contrast with abrupt physical changes in the environment, like new roads and company buildings, cultural and conceptual changes happen slowly. Some are not to be seen immediately but can be indicated in changed values and the socialization of children. Changes happen as the new is mixed with the old and familiar (Lie & Lund 1994).

Summary

This chapter has given a brief introduction to globalization as process and phenomenon and looked at the connection between economics, politics and culture. It has provided a theoretical point of departure for the thesis and tried to identify some of the most important actors in processes of globalization, i.e. the companies, the national governments and the female workers. It has focused on economic globalization in terms of NIDL and newer approaches, and what implications economic globalization can have on the lives of the female worker in

the context of the household. The next chapter will give a country profile of China, the study area and the company.

3 Country profile

This chapter presents a contextual background to the study. It gives a brief country profile, some facts and figures and short historical introduction, before factors directly influencing women and work are presented. In that regard, Confucianism, the Mao-period and the era after reform in 1978 will be the focus. A short introduction to the study-area and company will also be given.



Figure 1: China. Arrow indicating the study area (Source: University of Texas 2007).

In 2005 the People’s Republic of China (PRC) had a population of 1.3 billion spread unevenly over 9.6 million square kilometres (World Bank 2007d). Most of the population lives in the eastern coastal provinces, which constitute China’s most developed part and has most of the cropland and urban areas. Among them, the most densely populated province is Jiangsu, with 72 million inhabitants, 5.8 percent of China’s total in one percent of the area (Cai & Liu

2002). Around 60 percent of the country's population lives in the countryside (World Bank 2007b). In 2004, 46.9 percent of the population was employed in primary industry, 22.5 in secondary and 30.6 in tertiary. In Jiangsu the numbers were 31.0; 36.2 and 32.7 (China Statistical Yearbook 2005). 45 percent of the labour force is female and the share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector in 2003 was 40 percent of the total (World Bank 2007a). Female economic activity for women aged 15 and above was 69.2 percent in 2004 (UNDP 2006a)

In 2000 the sex ration at birth was 116.9 live males for every 100 females (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2005). This skewed number can be related to the one-child policy was introduced in 1979 as a measure to stabilise the population at 1.2 billion. Sons have been favoured over daughters, especially in the countryside, and many female babies have been killed or aborted. Since 1984 the one-child policy has been more relaxed and in some rural areas families can have a second child if the first child is a daughter (Tsai 2002). In 2005 the annual population growth was 0.6 percent. In 2004, females accounted for 48.6 percent of the population (World Bank 2007a).

Among 177 countries, China ranked 81 in the 2004 United Nations Development Program's (UNDP's) Human Development Index¹ (HDI), with a HDI value of 0.768. Infant mortality rates per 1000 live births in 2004 were 26 and the life expectancy at birth in 2004 was 71.9 years (females 73.7 and males 70.2). Adult literacy rate of people aged 15 and above was 90.9 percent (female 86.5 and male 95.1) while youth literacy rate for females aged 15-24 was 98.5. Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio was 70.9 percent (female 70 and male 71) and combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio, female as percent of male, was 97.9. The gender-related development index (GDI) ranks China at 64. Female economic activity for women aged 15 and above was 69.2 percent in 2004. GDP per capita (PPP US\$) was 5,896 in 2004 (UNDP 2006a, 2006b). Participation of female pupils in 2004, as percent of total, was 47 in primary school and 47 in secondary school. In 2004 gross tertiary enrolment ratio, as percent of age group, was 14 for girls and 17 for boys, while it was 4 and 2 respectively in 1990 (World Bank 2007c).

¹ The HDI measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living (UNDP 2006c). These are the most basic human capabilities (Potter et al. 2004).

Because children represent China's future, childcare and education is of serious concern (Robinson 1985). Nine years education is compulsory for both girls and boys, but children whose families do not pay school fees are not allowed to attend school (Brown & Park 2001). Gender differences in rural school enrolment at all levels are greater than in urban areas. Expenditure on education has fallen in the countryside, but wealthier regions provide more resources to rural education and have higher rates of enrolment for girls in primary and middle school. There has been an increased spending in universities and research institutions to educate a small core of people to lead the country through modernisation, but very few college-age youth are accommodated in universities (Goldman & MacFarquhar 1999). In the 1990s, only a third of high school graduates were able to get into post-secondary schools and there was an abolition of the government-guaranteed job placement policy for college students. Work and educational quotas for women have been abandoned. This makes parents less likely to consider sending their daughter to school relative to boys. Private education has flourished in the 2000s and with the opening up, many students study overseas (Li & Tsang 2003; Turner 2006). At the end of 1998, women constituted 38.3 percent of all students in postsecondary institutions (Tsai 2002).

All key positions in the government are held by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) members, where only 17 percent are female. Membership is valuable, as the Party still distribute jobs, education and other benefits. In 2004, 20 percent of the seats in the national parliament were held by women, but none have ever been in the Standing Committee, where the political power lies (McLaren 2004; World Bank 2007e). The party allows no organized opposition and all organisations like labour unions, must be approved by the government. Media is owned and controlled by the state (Dickson 2002).

3.1 Historical introduction

Chinese civilization spans more than 3500 years, but most modern historians begin with the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BC). In the Zhou dynasty (1122-256 BC), Confucius was one of the many thinkers. He regarded himself as a transmitter of an ancient culture of morality, advocated respect for hierarchy and order, and ascribed women a subordinate role in the feudal patriarchal society. The thoughts of Confucius became orthodoxy in the coming dynasties during centuries of prospering culture, cruel wars and expanding international trade. The chain of dynasties ended with the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), and in 1912 the first Chinese republic was formed. The Republican period lasted until the founding of the PRC in

1949, when the CCP came to power after defeating Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party or Guomindang (GMD) in the civil war (1947-1949). (Buoye 2002)

The immediate goal after the establishment of the PRC was social order and restoration of the economy. The way to successful economic modernization was political and social revolution, through the Soviet model of rapid industrialization and a centrally planned economy. Capital-intensive state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in heavy industry were built and industrialization was fuelled by accelerated agricultural growth (Dickson 2002). The experiences with western and Japanese imperialism and Christian missionaries closed China almost totally off to the outside world (Stockman 2000). China forbade foreign investments and hardly took foreign loans (Chen 2002). The Party policy oscillated between economic development and the ideological goal of a Communist society. This altered women's position. The ideological goals were visible through the collectivization movement (1955-1956), the Great Leap Forward (GLF) (1958-1960), and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The GLF was an economic disaster and the Cultural Revolution a political disaster, and when Mao died in 1976, the Party and the government had problems with legitimacy (Naughton 2002).

To reassure the legitimacy, the style and direction of policy had to be changed. People were disillusioned and desired increasing living standards (Dickson 2002). In the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in 1978 it was decided that the ideological goals and class struggle of the Maoist era had to be replaced by economic development. This shift has led to increased inequalities for women. There was a move towards market economy and Deng's more pragmatic politics is caught in his phrase "The cat could be any colour as long as it catches mice" (Goldman & MacFarquhar 1999: 4). Agriculture and light industry was prioritised in front of heavy industry. To facilitate economic growth and access export markets, foreign investments, technology and higher consumer goods, China opened up to external economic forces (Saich 2004). The party control over the economy, society and public discourse was slackened, and the socialist egalitarianism was attacked as it retarded economic growth. Decentralization and privatization became important in all sectors, also education and social welfare (Goldman & MacFarquhar 1999). Confucianism was rehabilitated as the essence of society and the political leaders have used it to legitimate authoritarian forms of government (Stockman 2000).

3.2 Factors impacting on women's situation

To better understand how the women's lives have changed and developed, I will present a mother's life-story as an introduction to three important macro-structural influences on women; Communism, Confucianism and the turn to capitalism and market forces after 1978. The two mothers I interviewed and some of the oldest blue-collar women were children in Mao's China. One of the mothers was born in 1948, the other in 1956:

Ana's mother was born in 1956. When she was a child the farm belonged to the government, it was not enough food to eat and they were always hungry. She was living with her grandparents, four sisters and two brothers. They were 11 people in a small house and the family faced difficulties because of all the children. Her parents worked on the farm, there were few factories at that time. They gave all the food they grew to the government, and the government gave money to the people. The family only had to buy clothes, but only at New Year. She and her older sister had to work in the farmland; they got little education as the family could only afford to send one or two children to school. One of her sisters and two of her brothers went to middle school, another sister went to primary school. Her mother had no education. When Ana's mother was 11 years old she began to work in the farmland for the village committee. She had to earn money for her family. After Ana was born in 1981, the farmland was given to the families. According to Ana's mother, when you own your own farmland, the spare time can be used in factories and she started working in a plastic factory a relative opened when Ana went to college in 2000. She had to pay the school fee for Ana and her brother and she and her husband also wanted to build a house. The school fee was high and the wage low, but it became better when Ana started to work after college. Her husband started working after the division of the farmland. None of her sisters and brothers was doing farm work anymore, there was less farmland and more factories. She found working in factories better than farming because she could earn money, around 500 per month. She did not quite like the job though, it was harmful to health and there was no insurance, but she had to make money. There had been many changes in the village; more buildings, bigger houses and better road. Now many had electrical machines, TV, heaters and washing machines. Before, there was no running water; they had to carry water in buckets from the rivers. Life had become easier.

Box 1: A mother's story.

3.2.1 Confucianism

According to Confucianism, women were "inside" people, responsible for the tasks that could be done without leaving the household and the private sphere. Women's most important roles were as daughters, wives and mothers. They were born to serve their husband and family and do manual labour, like spinning, weaving, and needlework. This womanly work was one of the four virtues of a respectable woman (Mann 2000). Agriculture was something in-between "inside" and "outside"; men did most of it, but women had to help. The husband never contributed with cooking, cleaning and sewing (Harrell 2000). Work in the private sphere was

“invisible” and did not produce goods or services for exchange, so it was considered of less value than work in the public sphere (Ho 1995). This gender division of labour contributed to women’s inferior status in the family and society in rural China. Although Confucianism emphasized learning and social mobility based on intellectual development, it denied women access to education and work. Educated women were not desirable as wives and daughters (Chen 1994, in Turner 2006).

The society was organized into a variety of hierarchies, which existed both within and outside the family. They were supported in attitudes and norms, and were based on gender and age, with young women at the bottom. The hierarchies were strongly patriarchal and constituted the basis for the household’s division of labour. Women were subordinate to men in all stages of life; a daughter should obey her father, a wife her husband and a widow her son. These were the three obediences, physically expressed through foot-binding (Shu 2004). If everyone fulfilled the expectations associated with their status and believed in the legitimate superiority of all social superiors, social stability and harmony would be maintained. The self was defined by its social relationships, where the most central were the five cardinal relations: between father and son, ruler and subject, husband and wife, older and younger brother, and between friends. Each relationship was defined by a special character, respectively love, duty, distinction, precedence, and sincerity. Only by acting correctly in social relationships could a person realize the virtues of humanity (Stockman 2000).

Family relationships were at the core of a stable and harmonious society and a large, extended family, with at least three generations under one roof was the ideal. The oldest man was the head of the family household. He represented the family and promoted its well-being, making binding decisions on the behalf of the whole family. Marriage was arranged, according to the parents’ strategic choices. Its main purpose was to continue the family patriline and was patrilocal and exogamous. The new wife would move to the house of her parents in law in another village, where her low status improved when she had given them male successor. She had no right to divorce. Patrilineal descent involved patrilineal inheritance. Daughters did not inherit, but received dowries. Her parents-in-law would take precedence over whatever relationship she would develop to her husband and she was dictated work by the mother-in-law. Filial piety involved deference towards parents and ancestors to whom one had certain obligations, particularly providing them with descendants, i.e. sons, and providing for the

aged. Young family members and females were supposed to show respect for older members and males (Stockman 2000; Whyte 2002).

3.2.2 The Mao era 1949-1978

The CCP attacked Confucian, feudal values and saw women's liberation and empowerment as a key component of the transition to socialism. The constitution of 1949 legally stipulated the equality of women as full citizens and to assure their equality with men, women's economic and political status had to be improved. This was in accordance with Engel's theory that "*the emancipation of women will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale*" (Engels 1975: 221, in Hooper 1984: 318). However, women's liberation through paid work has to be seen in relation to the goal of transforming and modernizing China. Rural development was on the agenda. Early initiatives included the expansion of public health facilities and the Marriage Law, which outlawed traditional arranged marriages, denounced patriarchal authority in the household and granted women's right to divorce (Tsai 2002). Through the Land Reform, both male and female peasants were given some land. This changed women's economic status (ACWF 1991).

With the collectivization of industry and agriculture in 1955-1956, 90 percent of the rural society was restructured into collectives and farmers had to sell their produce to the state monopoly at fixed prices (Tsai 2002). Production was moved from the household into the public sphere, and all adult women and men were to take part. Ideologically there was no difference anymore between women as "inside" workers and men as "outside" workers (Harrell 2000). Some domestic services were taken care of by older women, but what was left in the household was still women's responsibility. Men started participating in domestic chores, but more in the cities than the countryside (Stockman 2000; Shu 2004). The resultant double burden gave women less time to participate in compensated work, but despite slogans like "equal pay for equal work" and "each according to his labour", the work women did was valued and compensated less. Besides, women's work points were allocated to the households to which they belonged making their contribution to the household invisible (Harrell 2000).

During the GLF, peasant households were organized into communes and the peasants were mobilized into production brigades to continue economic growth. People were diverted into the industrial sector and agricultural output confiscated to feed the urban workers. The peasants were left little to eat and 30 million died in famine 1960-1962 (Dickson 2002;

Naughton 2002). The communization of domestic services continued, but the communal dining and nurseries were unevenly distributed and women still earned less than men. Where non-agricultural employment was available, women did agricultural tasks while men pursued other forms of work. By the 1960s, the costs of the communal facilities were considered too high when the services could be performed in the household for free (Tsai 2002). Women had to return to the home and make their major contribution to socialism through their domestic roles (Hooper 1984). Nevertheless, women's participation in agricultural production increased from below 40 percent in the late 1940s to 50-70 percent in the mid-1950s, and 60-80+ percent in the 1960s and 1970s. The participation in agricultural production had a great impact on rural women's status as it gradually established a basis for their economic identity. During the 1960s and 1970s some women were selected to leave the land. About 25 percent of the peasants selected to work in SOEs were women and 30 percent of those who were assigned to work in commune-brigade enterprises (Ho 1995).

The hukou system was introduced in the 1950s to stop the migration to the cities. Citizens with urban hukous were entitled to subsidized grain rations and housing, permanent employment and health insurance and old-age pension schemes. The costs of these entitlements made it almost impossible to change to an urban hukou (Ho 1995; Stockman 2000). In rural areas education and health care was provided by the communes, but of lesser quality than the cities. A unified pension scheme was never introduced and the family was to provide most of the welfare (Yan 1997; Wong 1998).

During the Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards attacked bourgeois values, and everything that symbolized power and elitism. There should be no social distinction; all aspects of consumer culture were eradicated and clothing became homogeneous. Women should dress and behave like men and put politics and production before her family. There was a slogan of "what men can do, women can do too", but except from a short-lived campaign in the early 1970s, there was nothing saying that men could do the domestic work women did (Li 1995; Jacka 1997). Mass education in rural areas developed. Female illiteracy declined from more than 90 percent in 1949 to 23 percent in 1997 (Tsai 2002). All individual matters became political and CCP determined decisions about jobs, housing, and access to food and opportunities to travel, and assumed most of the government's responsibilities (Dickson 2002).

3.2.3 The reform era post-1978

The rural sector was targeted as one of the Four Modernizations (in industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defence) (Tsai 2002). A household responsibility system (HRS) was introduced, where the households returned as units of production and regained decision-making power over the allocation of land and labour resources. The concentration of economic authority in the family made sons important again for current income and old age support (Michelson & Parish 2000). Communes and production teams were dismantled, giving rise to surplus labour, and the land could be leased by households in return of a contracted amount agricultural produce to the state. The surplus produce could be kept and the livelihood could be diversified through non-agricultural employment. Women were encouraged to start domestic sideline activities, where production was located within the household and spare household time and labour was used. Because these kinds of activities tend to be seen as an extension of women's traditional roles, they did not increase women's decision-making power in the household (Tsai 2002; Kabeer 2003)

There was a rapid growth of private or locally owned township and village enterprises (TVEs), which in accordance with the intentions of the CCP led to industrialization and more occupational choices. Jiangsu continued the rural industrialization that started in the 1950s. The slogan for the rural development strategy in the early 1980s was "leave the land but not the countryside" (Ho 1995: 360). Many men changed for wage jobs or migrated to the city and agriculture was feminized, especially in south Jiangsu (Ho 1995). Other women became paid workers in TVEs and rural industries, especially in textiles, clothing, electronics, papermaking, and food processing. Their visible contribution to the household changed their economic status and gave them greater authority and bargaining power (Gao 1994; Summerfield 1994). Decision-making and housework became more egalitarian, but women still had the main domestic responsibility, resulting in a double burden (Ho 1995).

In addition to the SEZs, in 1979 a Joint Venture Law allowed joint ventures¹ between foreign companies and Chinese enterprises, later it was opened for investment by wholly owned foreign companies (Saich 2004). The state found a concentration of resources and

¹ The foreign partner provides at least 25% of initial capital and usually supplies cash, equipment, and intellectual property. The Chinese partner usually supplies land, cash, equipment and intangibles such as an existing distribution network, a well-trained workforce or large market share (China Solution 2006).

specialization of the coastal region necessary for speedy economic growth (Wei & Fan 2000). Until the end of 2000, around 80 percent of the foreign-invested enterprises were located in the east (Chen 2002). The SEZs have led to accelerated economic modernization and brought Western political ideas and values (Goldman & MacFarquhar 1999), but also increasing regional inequalities. The utilisation of FDI in Jiangsu was initiated in 1981 with a joint venture with Hong Kong, and in 1985 the Yangtze River Delta, in which Jiangyin is located, was designated as an Open Coastal Region. The Delta has become the focus of the open policy and is at the forefront of the globalization of China's economy. Ever since 1994, the annually utilised foreign investment in Jiangsu has been second in China. Jiangsu's annual growth rate in GDP was over 12 percent in 1999, 3 percent over the national average (Cai & Liu 2002). The annual growth in per capita rural income has increased with an average of 12 percent from 1988 to 1995 for Jiangsu, while it was 5 percent for China as a whole (Saich 2004). There are also intra-provincial inequalities, where northern Jiangsu is poorer than the southern part (Wei & Fan 2000), where Yuecheng is located. During the 1980s, more cities and areas along the coast were involved in the open door policy¹, some opened free zones on their own initiative. Many TVEs started producing labour-intensive, light industrial products for export and some experienced investments by foreign businesses. This stimulated rural industrialization and rural industry has emerged as the leading exporter in China. Employment opportunities have been created and diversified, and the welfare and status of peasant women have been affected in diverse ways. In 1990 female workers constituted 48.1 percent of the employed in industry in rural Jiangsu (Ho 1995).

During the domestic recession in the 1980s and 1990s, many TVEs closed down and official policy encouraged women to return home at reduced wages to give room for male employment. The companies had become responsible for recruitment processes, profit and the cost of the workers welfare after reform, and women were discriminated against because of the costs of maternity leave and health care. TVEs offer usually no welfare because they have less economic resources and there are more claims for profit. The foreign investments and SEZs helped offset this employment discrimination and created work opportunities for young women. Besides, the wages tended to be higher than outside the zones (Summerfield 1994; Ho: 1995; Turner 2006). Another picture was drawn by Croll (1995), who found that the majority of the women were working under bad conditions in the foreign or joint foreign-

¹ The open door policy refers to a series of policies regarding foreign trade, foreign investment and foreign exchange (Cai & Liu 2002).

Chinese enterprises. Those particularly at risk were those migrating from the countryside, working in smaller manufacturing enterprises from Hong Kong or Taiwan.

In the 1980s and 1990s the public discourse in the academic and popular press promoted modern feminine ideals beauty and being virtuous wives and good mothers. The emphasis on women's traditional roles can partly be explained by the lack of public social services and partly by the attacks on the egalitarian attitudes of the Cultural Revolution. Women's important domestic responsibilities rationalized female lay-offs and the view that they did inferior work compared to men. They were expected to fulfil traditional roles, but at the same time participate in public labour to aid the four modernizations and improve the family's living standard (Hooper 1984; ACWF 1991; Croll 1995; Li 1995; Jacka 1997; Turner 2006). Women should be able to handle the relationship between marriage, love, and childcare on the one hand and work, labour and study on the other (Robinson 1985). The participation in market work and the persuasion of professional careers should not be at the expense of their culturally prescribed roles (Bian & Zuo 2001; Wylie 2004). Women's domestic role made them key persons in rearing their children's mental and physical health. They should teach the children to become good socialist citizens. Neglecting education in the early years would be detrimental to the development of the child's intellectual abilities (Jacka 1997).

3.3 Study area

3.3.1 Jiangyin city

Jiangyin is a county-level city in Southern Jiangsu Province (De Wang 1999), administered by Wuxi. The city is in the centre of the Yangtze River Delta, 2.5 hours driving from Shanghai and 2.5 hours driving to Nanjing. It has a population of 1.16 million, around 200 000 immigrants, and is the first port city along the Yangtze upstream from Shanghai. In 2003 Jiangyin was ranked number one in the national county-level economic competitiveness assessment, turning out a GDP that accounts for over one-250th of the national GDP. Since 2000, Jiangyin has taken the lead of the whole Jiangsu Province in terms of its financial revenue for five years consecutively and ranked number one in the third and fourth national economic competitiveness evaluation. Nine big enterprises are listed among the Top 500 Chinese enterprises, among which 4 enterprises of Huaxi, Sunshine, Sanfangxiang and Xingcheng took the lead in achieving over RMB 10 million of sales income. Huaxi is China's richest village. 12 enterprises are listed in the Top 500 China's large-scale private businesses.

The per capita GDP of Jiangyin exceeds US\$ 6000. In 2004 there were over 2200 foreign-invested enterprises in Jiangyin, where 271 of the foreign funded projects are in the Jiangyin Economic Development Zone (JEDZ). The contractually utilized foreign investment in 2004 was 70.83 US\$ 100 million, and actually utilized foreign capital was US\$ 4 billion. (Propaganda Department of Jiangyin CPC 2005; JEDZ 2005).

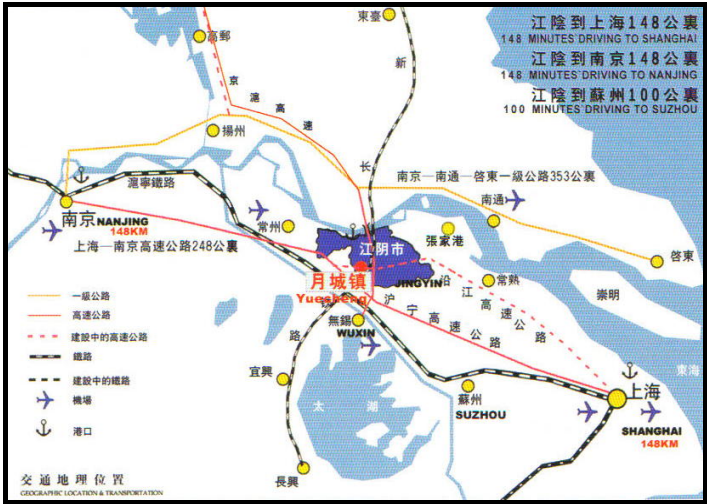


Figure 2: Yuecheng town and Jiangyin city (Source: Yuecheng Town People's Government 2003).

3.3.2 Yuecheng town

The following presentation is based on the interviews with representatives for the Yuecheng Town Government and “Guide to investment” (2004) the booklet Yuecheng Town People’s Government had produced for presenting the town to foreign companies.

Yuecheng Town is one of the 16 towns in the jurisdiction of Jiangyin City. Within a radius of 200 kilometres there are 10 large and medium cities like Shanghai, Nanjing, Nantong and Wuxi, comprising a total population of over 100 million and a big market. The town comprises 16 villages and 45000 inhabitants. Around 10000 are from other places. In Jiangyin the average net income is 10000 RMB, for a rural resident it is 8000 RMB. The industrial development in Yuecheng has gone through different phases. Before the reform there were collective companies owned by the town government and some SOEs. After reform there was a period with locally owned industry, now there are mostly private enterprises. The economic development started with mining, going through a period of construction in the 1980s, then printing and now it is mixed and almost no SOEs.

15 years ago Yuecheng was an agricultural area and people had a poor living standard. The Jiangyin city government and the town government did a lot of work to attract foreign investment and now many foreign companies want to come to Yuecheng. With the industrial development the income and living standard has risen. At present, almost no inhabitants rely exclusively on agriculture. Most of the people are workers and an increasing number is also doing commerce.

“With the development of the society, more people want to be rich. They know that if they want to get rich they have to go to the factory to work. As farmers they can not get rich. Some workers are also farmers, more and more do it this way, to get income from two sources... Life conditions have improved a lot, it is better than before. Still, it is not sufficient; most people hope they can be richer and richer. In a few years there will be no break-through in people’s living-conditions, but they will be better and better both for farmers and workers”
(Kong Yi, pers. comm. 2005).

The town government wanted to improve the environment and transportation and increase the living standard in 10 years time.

Yuecheng has an Industrial Zone, where the first area was approved by the Jiangyin city government in 2002, the last two in 2003. More than 50 enterprises have invested over 400 million RMB in the zone, using 1000 mu of land. There are over 300 industrial enterprises in Yuecheng within metallurgy, motor accessories, colour printing, building material etc. More than 38 of these are foreign, employing around 3000 or around 20 percent of the labour force. The government hopes more people can be employed in foreign industry. Most foreign companies are in light industry, which is the most developed industry in Yuecheng. Around 45 percent of the workers in light industry are women, particularly in textiles, package and printing. Most women are working in service, but many are from other provinces. Like in the rest of China, the majority of the women below retirement age is working. More and more women go to work, but there are still few women in important positions. Around 12000 people work in industry and the service sector is increasing rapidly, but there were no official numbers on the total workforce. In recent years, export-oriented economy has been developing quickly.

Yuecheng and Jiangyin received foreign investment because of local incentive and their location near coastline development cities. The first foreign company came in 1988 from Hong Kong. Now, there are also companies from US, Japan, Korea, Spain, Singapore and

Norway, but the majority is from Asian countries. Foreign companies have to follow the same labour rules as the Chinese. Foreign industry contributes in different ways to the area. It provides employment and better working conditions, like insurance, medical services and safety to the workers, and the town and city government get tax revenues¹ and “adjustment of the industrial construction” as the companies bring different industries and use local services and raw material. *“For the society, generally speaking there are no negative effects. The city and town government want more foreign companies here”* (Zhu, pers. comm. 2005). Among the prices for power, water and resources, the town government advertises with take-home pay at 800 RMB per month for workers and about 2000 RMB for specialized technical personnel. Some industries, e.g. non-polluting, are encouraged, and get incentives like less tax on imported machines.

The value added tax (VAT) is one of the policies towards foreign investment that is decided at the local level. Some of the tax income is used for salaries to officials, infrastructure and welfare. The welfare system differs between the cities in Jiangsu according to prosperity, and the Yuecheng and the Jiangyin governments have different measures to add to the welfare of the inhabitants. A sickness insurance was introduced and an old people’s home was under construction. The demand for old people’s homes is bigger than the supply though. Some enterprises invest in such places, but they charge more than the homes owned by the town government. Childless old people do not have to pay much, but there are more expensive places, 800-1000 yuan per month, for more prosperous families. In addition to old people’s homes, there are also kindergartens, which nearly all the families use. The fee for one child is 2000 yuan per year. The town government is concerned about children’s education and has a kind of support for children from poor families. To receive help the yearly income have to be below the minimum wage in Jiangyin, which was 600 yuan in 2005. According to the town government, all children go to school and the education is very good with high scores in the city.

Many of the inhabitants still have some mu of rice-fields, but like the rest of the coastal provinces, much agricultural land is used for industry. The town government encourages the farmers that loose land to work in the enterprise that establishes there, and the enterprise to

¹ In 2004 the financial revenue to Jiangyin from both foreign and Chinese companies was 9.2 billion RMB. This increases by 15-20 percent every year. Around 20 percent of the tax income comes from foreign companies. The sales value was 5 billion, for 2005 it was estimated to be 7 billion. (Liu 2005, Zhu 2005)

employ the farmers. There is no private ownership of land and the compensation is given to the town government, which gives parts of this to the farmer. Young people get less compensation than older, if they are over 50 they get 200 per month. If they lose the house too, the government can either move them to a new apartment or give them money. At present, the city government requires the town governments to protect the natural environment. From a focus on industrial development the last years, the first priority now of the Yuecheng government is agriculture. Through lower taxes people in Yuecheng are encouraged to only grow rice on a big scale, 30 hectares, and not work in addition. They are also encouraged to do multiple operation-chains, where they grow rice and breed chickens with parts of it. It is not clear how much emphasis it is put on this, as much land is planned converted to industrial development also in the future.

3.3.3 The company

When the Norwegian company established in Yuecheng in 1999, it was a joint-venture with a Chinese and a Singaporean company. In 2003 the company became fully Norwegian funded. The main reasons for relocating to China were closeness to the Asian market, and reduced transportation and production costs. The advantage with Yuecheng was an existing competence in building life-boats. In addition to China and Norway, the company has established in Greece and Mexico. The products made in Yuecheng are mainly sold in Asia, primarily in Korea, Japan and Singapore, but also China and Poland. The Chinese company also produces parts to the other companies. The mother company in Norway is selling to the whole world.

The local company has 128 employees, only the plant manager is Norwegian. The rest of the administration is in Norway. The production is divided into workshops. The big workshop is divided into 6 sections. In *small parts*, Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP), the workers mould all the parts for the boat, like boxes, tillers etc. There are 18 workers and 12 are female. In *lamination*, there 18 workers and 8 are female (figure 3). They mould the body of the boat, like the hull and deck. The same work is done in the *moulding* section, where 2 of the 6 workers are female. In the *cutting* department, the workers cut clean the different parts. None of its 7 workers are female. Neither are there any female workers among the 6 workers doing *carpentering*, making the paddles and wooden parts in the boat. In the *installation* department the 14 workers install the boat with all the parts. There are no females, but two women sewing safety-belts and seat-covers belong to this section. In the Metal Workshop, two of the 23

workers are female. In the analysis I will refer to the females in the workshops as blue-collar women. Among the 27 in the office-staff, 9 are female. These will be referred to as white-collar girls and have tasks like personal assistant, secretary, accounting, technical drawing etc. In addition to these the company employs a cleaning lady, one man taking care of trees, flowers, rubbish etc. outside, two men in the quality control, two females cleaning the boats after they are finished, one man for after sales service and one lady cleaning the Norwegian plant manager's house.



Figure 3: Women laminating (Photo: L. Rønning).

According to the human resources (HR) manager, the company does not require any specific education for the common worker, but if they work with equipment, high school or technical school is preferred. Personal experience is the most important. There is no particular age group or marital status preferred. Females get the same jobs as males and the same pay, in accordance with the law. There is not much turnover. For the workshops the company put an advertisement in the labour market in Yuecheng town, but there are also some that come through relatives and friends. The office-staff is often found through job-fairs in the weekends. The workers start with one day of labour safety training, afterwards they have three months probation where they get 800-900 RMB per month. Few quit after this period. When they get a contract they get 1400-1500 RMB per month. The office staff gets salary according to their position, but a secretary gets 2000-3000 RMB per month.

According to the HR manager, the workers hardly ever work Sundays, but sometimes Saturdays. On average they work six days a week, eight hours per day (0730-1600). In the

summertime they start 0515 and leave after lunch at 12 because of the heat. If they work overtime, the worker should be paid 1.5 times the wage Monday to Friday, and 2 times the wage on Saturday and Sunday, according to the Labour Law. The company only pays the basic wage though, less than ten persons in the company get 1.5-2 times overtime payment. In order to compensate the workers' loss of working time, the company provides the workers a yearly bonus of one or two months' salary.

Summary

The chapter has given some a brief introduction to the main historical events and structures that have provided the context for the Chinese women, especially in the period from 1949 to present, but also earlier history. The focus has been on women, employment and the household, and China's open policy after reform. This information and the mother's story provide useful background knowledge for understanding the female worker's choices and actions, what changes are taking place and why the Norwegian company established in China. The chapter has also given a brief presentation of the study area, comprising Jiangyin and Yuecheng, and the Norwegian company. In the next chapter, the analytical approach will be presented.

4 Analytical approach

This chapter presents the analytical approach of the thesis, starting with structure and agency. Structures act as opportunities and constraints for the women's choices and actions. Gender is one of the most profound structures and is discussed next. The capability approach is used as the main analytical framework to see what impact access to resources has on the women's lives. The access can potentially lead to a stronger bargaining position in the household, which is theorized as a site of cooperation and conflict. The chapter closes with an analytical model where the main concepts for the analysis are put in connection.

4.1 Structure and agency

Geography has most of the time focused on either structure or agency. As a reaction to the earlier structural determinism, which was touched upon under globalization, a humanistic approach emerged in the 1970s (Goodwin 1999). Within development thinking, it took the form of an alternative development paradigm, emphasizing people's capacity to effect social change through a bottom-up, basic-needs approach (Potter et al. 2004).

Although the agent rightfully has been brought to the fore, structures are still important. We all live in and interact with a material and socio-cultural context where certain written or unwritten, explicit or implicit norms and rules exist. This context will shape our visible actions as well as cognitive processes and expressions, and inhibit and promote individual resources, agency and achievements (Kabeer 1999, 2003). Structures of politics, economy and culture will influence our behaviour. Drawing on the "cultural turn" in geography in the 1980s and 1990s, culture can be seen as a process or the shifting systems of shared meaning through which people gain their identity and make sense of the social and material world. It is the main mean through which society and space is constructed and is produced and reproduced by language, discourses and social practices (Hall 1996; McEwan 2001, in Hubbard et al 2002: 59). Culture is important for understanding gender and changes in gender roles as it is the source of socialization in gender attitudes (Shu 2004). Cultural imperatives become part of us through our lived experience and embodied history, or habitus, which constitute the basis for meaning and action and generate and structure social practices. We incorporate the social structures at the same time as we create and recreate them (Simonsen 2003). The lived experience is a product of our life-histories and environment, and will be marked by our social upbringing, class, gender and age. This will shape the perceptions of

choices, obligations and legitimate behaviour and lead to variations in preferences and interests. It can be difficult to separate between the choices made of personal preferences and the values and wants of society, which we may have internalized as our own. This is particularly the case for preferences connected to gender, which have become part of our identity. They are often taken-for-granted and resistant to change (Kabeer 1999, 2001). In this way structural inequalities can become part of us (Nussbaum 2004). Thus, knowledge of the local culture is important for understanding gender and the changes taking place. The female workers' preferences and perception of opportunities will be influenced by the social context and their lived experiences, but their actions can generate changes in the surrounding structures.

Structures are constraining and enabling, leaving social actors, being individuals, households, or enterprises, more or less room to formulate and execute choices and actions (Lin Nan 2000). Even in circumstances of extreme coercion where individuals face situations of no choice, action will take place (Giddens 1984). An example is Mao's China. Chinese rural women have faced constraints in terms of the hukou system, work opportunities and family policies, which have influenced the access to resources and the freedom to make choices (Lin Nan 2000). Nevertheless, structural constraints can be challenged by agency and the power to make a difference and difficulties can be transformed to something positive. Agency can be seen as social actors' "knowledgeability" and capability (Giddens 1984, in Long 2001: 16) and concerns both observable action, like decision-making, bargaining and resistance, and cognitive processes of reflection and analysis (Kabeer 1999). People have feelings and creativity and are able to reflect, and act back on the structures in both conscious and unconscious ways. Similar structural circumstances can be interpreted differently, giving rise to various social forms (Long 2001). This makes it important investigate each company, place and worker as a special case. The introduction of a new company will mix into and alter the existing local structures, and create opportunities for a new work identity and livelihood for some, while others lose their fields and houses. The structural change can alter social practice through for instance income and working time, and thereby the gendered relations and the lived experience. In this way, the acts of the individual female worker can lead to structural change and social transformation. The study aims at identifying some of the discourses and the economic, political and cultural structures that have influenced the women's choices and actions, and in what ways the Norwegian company alters the existing

structures. Some of the most fundamental structures in society are gender relations (McDowell 1999).

4.2 Feminist geography/gender

The assumption of a categorical difference between women and men is rooted in the biological sex and deeply embedded in most societies, also in China. While sex is more constant¹, gender can be seen as a set of meanings and practices, socially constructed in specific socio-cultural and historical contexts. This approach is influenced by cultural theory, poststructural and postcolonial approaches, and supplements the emphasis on socio-material conditions in the 1980s (McDowell 1999; Panelli 2004). There is no universal woman (Mohanty 1991), and the differences will be found between and within countries, as well as between generations, households and the individual women. Each woman has a unique lived experience. Based on social institutions, class, religion and culture, certain gender roles and expectations of behaviour are socially ascribed. Our gender and social position will shape the way we act and perceive expectations from others (McDowell 1999). I will try to identify what expectations are and have been connected to the Chinese females, as daughters, wives and workers and what differences there are between the women. Potential changes between the generations will be of particular interest.

Gender is both an outcome of and rationale for social arrangements, like the allocation of household labour (West & Zimmerman 1987), and serves as a basis for distributions of power and resources (Fernández-Kelly 1992). In societies like China, where women have been seen as inferior to men, females have sometimes been denied central life choices and satisfaction of central human functions, like health, education and even their life (Sen 1999). Women have often been treated not as ends in their own right, but instruments for others (Nussbaum 2004). In China they have served as a means for enhancing national prosperity and for providing the patriline with sons (Hooper 1984; Li 1995). Do they now serve as a means for foreign capital? Chinese women's inferiority has been explained with patriarchy (e.g. Li 1995; Jacka 1997; Tsai 2002; Kabeer 2003; Pun 2005), which can be defined as "*the system in which men as a group are constructed as superior to women as a group and so assumed to have authority over them*" (McDowell 1999: 16). Patriarchy is exercised through legal systems and official ideologies, and everyday attitudes and behaviours in a mutually reinforcing manner. In the same way as there is no universal women, patriarchy is a social construction that will differ in

¹ Works influenced by poststructuralism argue that also sex is culturally constructed (Schech & Haggis 2000).

time and space (Hubbard et al. 2002). Patriarchy in China is said to be particularly strong, with patrilocal-patrilineal traditions and men in most deciding positions. Is patriarchy still vigorous or does it face any challenges?

A constructionist approach to gender makes gender not only flexible, but also central for understanding social change. Changes in the socio-cultural or material environment, like new employment opportunities and legislation related to education, can generate changes in gendered practices. Chinese women have traditionally been assigned to the private, inside sphere, expected to make sacrifices for their family (Li 1995). The spatial division between public and private, inside and outside plays a central role in the construction of gender (McDowell 1999). This control of spatiality and identity (Massey 1994) had an extreme expression in China through foot-binding. Its aesthetic aspect justified women's limited mobility; they were inside people. When women's labour was needed for national prospering though, their reproductive role was redefined through powerful discourses. With the entrance into the "male" sphere of productive work, gendered boundaries can be renegotiated and changed (Jacka 1997; Fernández-Kelly 1992). Because of the various factors involved, this calls for an investigation at micro-level and a processual and open-ended approach to social change. The consequences can be both intended and unintended. Women's well-being can be affected in different ways; some women experience an increase in their work-loads, other women are able to re-allocate some domestic work to family members (Kabeer 1999, 2003; Nussbaum 2004). How does this turn out for the women working in the Norwegian company? Are the gendered boundaries, between productive and reproductive work, and traditional gender roles changing? Or do the women face an increase in their workloads?

4.3 The capability approach and empowerment

In the mid 1980s there was a turn in alternative development from the basic needs approach to human development (HD) and individual and institutional capacity building. Development as capacitation was grounded in Amartya Sen's capability approach (CA) (Niederveen Pieterse 2001, 2003). In Sen's CA a "functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve" (Sen 1987: 36). *Capabilities* are notions of freedom, the real opportunities you have for living a valued life and achieving various functioning combinations, i.e. various lifestyles. Women's freedom to seek paid employment can contribute to freedom from relative and absolute deprivation in the household and society (Sen 1987, 1999). *Functionings* are the various things a person in a given context may value doing or being, ranging from the

basic ones of nourishment and health, to the more complex of social participation and self-respect or independence from powerful others. The *functioning achievements* tell whether the potential has been realised. They are well-being outcomes and the outcome of agency; hence a person's well-being has to be enhanced through own agency (Sen 1990, 1999). Based on Sen's theory, Kabeer (2003) has developed an analytical framework, on which I will mainly base the analysis.

Nussbaum (2004) sees capabilities as a sort of human rights, as there are certain functionings that should be developed to be a full human being. Well-being can not be measured in GNP, besides GNP does not tell how the resources are distributed. The focus should neither be on resources as people differ in their needs and ability to convert resources into functionings, nor preferences as they are shaped by traditions of privilege and subordination. Rather, the central question is what the individual is actually able to do and be with the available resources.

Thus, it is not the resources, like income or education, in themselves that are important, but how they can enhance the capabilities (Sen 1999). People may choose not to realise the potential (Nussbaum 2004). Material and symbolic resources can be seen as the media through which power is exercised (Giddens 1984). Thus, access to resources can strengthen agency and enhance the individual's *power to*, the capacity to define goals and life-choices and act upon them, and the *power within*, the inner strength and purpose behind actions (Kabeer 1999, 2003; Nederveen Pieterse 2003). These two forms of power are similar to Friedman's (1992) social and psychological power. Agency as *power over*, or domination, is the capacity to override the agency of others, sometimes through the exercise of authority or violence (Kabeer 2003, 1999). Power can also be in the form of political power of voice and collective action (Friedman 1992), but I will not focus much on this.

Paid employment, education and health can enhance the capabilities through which achievements can be reached, but can also be seen as achievements and ends in themselves. The main focus is paid employment and in what ways the access to immaterial and material resources expands the potential to live a valued life. Does it enhance the women's agency and power to and power within? Education is also a resource that will be considered. It can make agency more informed and skilled, and strengthen women's position in the market and the household (Kabeer 2003; Shu 2004). Are there any unintended transformations of structures of patriarchal constraint (Kabeer 2001)? Income can be used to satisfy basic functionings and

buy commodities, like clothes, washing-machines, gas and televisions, which can satisfy women's practical interests¹ (Friedman 1992; Kabeer 1999). Meeting practical interests can potentially lead to more *effective agency* in the fulfilment of women's ascribed roles and responsibilities. What is achieved and what choices we make depends on a combination of the physical and socio-cultural context, family situation and individual characteristics, like age, gender and physical abilities (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2004). Elder women might have bigger difficulties in finding a job and few jobs might be available. A divorced woman or sick person needs more resources to reach the same level of well-being as other people, but this can be mitigated through publicly provided goods and services. Choices can also be restrained by immaterial structures that shape our perceptions and preferences. Paid employment can be an achievement in itself if it enhances women's self-worth, dignity and self-confidence, which are central to well-being and processes of empowerment² (Kabeer 2003).

Access to paid employment and education are practical interests that can lead to *transformative agency* and empowerment. Kabeer (1999) defines empowerment as a process where one becomes able to make strategic life choices in a context where this was previously denied. These are choices of critical importance for living a desired life, like choice of livelihood, where to live, whether and who to marry, and health. *Disempowerment* reflects a situation where the failure to achieve one's goals originates in some deep-seated constraint on the ability to choose (Kabeer 1999, 2003). Chinese women's freedom to choose has been constrained by the Party doctrines, the official ideology and the Confucian philosophy, which have prescribed them a position of obedience and inferiority to men (Li 1995). Through a transformative agency, women's strategic interests can be met through challenging the oppressive power relations and patriarchal values that keep women in a subordinate position. To be able to question and change women's taken-for-granted roles and responsibilities, like the gender division of labour, there is a need for alternative discourses that give room for choice and active agency (Kabeer 2003). Choices based on taken-for-granted norms are not real choices or indicators of the person's power. Norms and traditions are followed more or less passively without questioning them and no alternative way of organizing is perceived to exist. Some of these "choices", like the preference for sons, are made to maintain status in

¹ Practical and strategic interests were first discussed by Molyneux (1985). Friedman (1992) uses the terms practical and strategic claims, while Young (1993) prefer practical needs and strategic interests.

² Critics have argued that the concept of empowerment is rooted in the Western culture of individualism and personal achievement (Rowlands 1998, in Datta and Kornberg 2002).

society and serve to reproduce gender inequalities. The women might recognize the existence of the inequalities, but not perceive them as unjust. In addition, distress sale of labour, claim for less household resources, like food or education, and parents choosing their children's marriage partners, are examples of power exercised as "non-decision-making" (Lukes 1974, in Kabeer 1999: 438). Thus, concerning the achievements made, it is important to differentiate between inequalities in the capacity to make choices and difference in the choices made. The HDI, which is influenced by Sen's CA, can be seen an effort at finding a more "objective" assessment in measuring capacitation or human resource development (Kabeer 1999). Other measures than the women's own run the danger of representing the values of the researcher, in my case Western, which can potentially conflict with those of the women. Nevertheless, I will use the gender division of labour and education as indicators of empowerment and see if the women are able to make more strategic life-choices now.

Higher education has been a scarce resource for girls in China. Changing attitudes to daughters' education can lead to questioning and challenging patriarchy through access to knowledge and information. Changes in gendered practices have to be accompanied by changing the way people think and the undervaluation of women's work, which can be indicated by the values mother's teach their children, especially daughters, at home (Young 1993). Processes of change can happen gradually, for a specific person or across generations. Daughters can be empowered compared to their mothers, either through actions taken by themselves on the basis of their mothers' achievements, or because the mothers want to give their daughters the chances that they never had themselves (Sen 1999; Kabeer 2003). If the daughters are taught values that depart from the traditional gender roles and are given more opportunities than the female workers had, this indicates that changes are under way and potential empowerment. Are the daughters socialized to be good housewives?

4.4 Household

The Chinese household has officially been designated as a biological cell and regarded the lowest analyzable unit in society (Judd 1994). Analyses of the rural Chinese household have frequently treated it as a homogenous unit, or a unit where the division of labour and the decisions taken by the household head are to maximize the collective well-being. This will obscure power relations and inequalities within the family. Why particular gender divisions of labour are maintained is not questioned; neither what impact these divisions have on the lives of individuals (Jacka 1997). An alternative approach is to see the household as a site of

simultaneous cooperation and conflict regarding the social arrangements, or divisions, of the household's resources and responsibilities (Papanek 1990; Sen 1990; Jacka 1997; Kabeer 2001). The divisions can be seen as bargaining problems in the intrahousehold decision-making, in which household members have different positions and powers according to established conventions, hierarchies of gender and age, and available resources, like education or income. The outcomes of the decision-making will benefit the individual household member to different degrees (Sen 1990, 1999). Available resources determine the members' fallback-position, i.e. how dependent they are on the household for their well-being (Kabeer 2003). The allocation of food, who is entitled to education and decisions over income are examples of different social arrangements over which there can be conflicts. The gender division of labour is a social arrangement that can influence the other divisions as productive work is perceived to contribute more to the household's prosperity than reproductive (Sen 1990). I seek to find what position the female workers have in the household divisions and if it varies with age and between the generations, and what outcomes the women get.

The culturally ascribed gender roles can be seen as implicit contracts; the claims and obligations the household members have and can make to each other (Kabeer 2001). As individual interests are downplayed, conflicts could be expected. Cooperation is intended though, as individual efforts would give smaller returns and the members in most cases are connected through ties of blood and marriage. The absence of protests or questioning of inequality does not necessarily indicate that it is non-existent (Sen 1990). Power and dominance operate through consent and complicity as well as coercion and conflict (Kabeer 1999). In societies with a strong orientation towards the family, like China, women can confuse their individual welfare and interests with those of the family. This can result in a "perceived interest response", where the woman prioritize family well-being and do not press her claims in the bargaining. Women's internalization of a subordinate status can make them unconsciously behave in an altruistic way, which can undermine their welfare and sustain traditional inequalities. Access to resources can lead to a clearer perception of their individuality (Sen 1990, 1999). Agarwal (1997, in Perrons 2004) argues that altruistic behaviour can be a conscious strategy to secure long-term interests and well-being, and that women are more altruistic towards children than husbands. Socialized to be good mothers and wives, Chinese women have traditionally acted altruistically (Jacka 1997). Do the female workers sacrifice themselves for the family or have the access to resources changed this?

Productive work away from home and a visible monetary contribution to the household can improve women's agency and give them a greater status in society and the household. The diminished dependence on the household can give women a stronger bargaining position (Sen 1990, 1999), and make them break the implicit contract (Perrons 2004). But access to resources does not automatically transform into power. Women should be able to control (i.e. have a say in the disposal of) the whole or parts of the income (Kabeer 2001). Do the women in the Norwegian company hand over their income to somebody else in the household, or is it in their control? Do they have a say in how the money is used and can they use the money as they please? Gender roles and responsibilities can have an independent effect. It is argued that in highly patriarchal societies, resources such as income can only be translated into power if the men allow it (Safilios-Rothschild 1982, in Stichter 1990). This can be a strategy to maintain their status and power within the household. The husbands can devalue women's productive work if it is regarded supplementary to that of the main breadwinner (Ward & Pyle 1995). How important is the women's income for the household and is it treated equally with the men's income? I will try to find whether the access to resources, primarily paid employment and secondarily, education, have made the women able to renegotiate the divisions in the household, especially the gender division of labour. This can serve as an indication for empowerment as patriarchy and oppressive structures are challenged.

4.5 Analytical framework

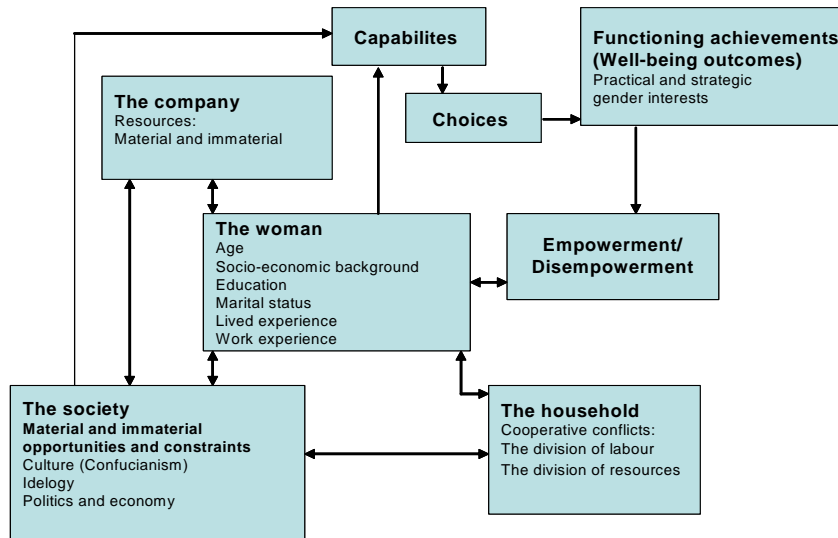


Figure 4: The analytical model, derived from the capability approach.

The analytical model presented tries to summarize the theory I have presented in this chapter and builds primarily on Kabeer's analytical framework. There is a dialectic interplay between the local and the global, and the female worker is situated between influences from both levels. This constitutes structures of power that provide certain opportunities and constraints. The establishment of foreign companies provides opportunities for employment and access to resources like income, social networks and potential welfare benefits, which will influence her agency and capabilities. In addition to contextual opportunities and constraints, the choices will be shaped by her lived experience, the perception of possibilities, family situation and other personal characteristics like age, education and socio-economic background.

The achievements can meet practical and strategic gender interests, contributing in different degrees to the well-being of the person in question. Material achievements can indicate the standard of living and meet practical gender interests. Meeting strategic interests, like renegotiating the gender division of labour, and the ability to make strategic life choices can be seen as empowerment and the result of transformatory agency (Kabeer 1999, 2003). Disempowerment relates to situations where the women are not able make decisions or choices with profound impact on their lives. The physical conditions at work or provision of welfare can restrain or enhance their capabilities as health is important for human functioning. Paid employment can be a functional achievement in itself if it is taken up as a result of active agency and give the woman independence and personal freedom.

Summary

This chapter has provided the analytical approach in the thesis, through which the findings can be interpreted and understood. It builds on a structure-agency approach, with gender as one of the main structures. The structures are both enabling and constraining and the introduction of a foreign company will alter the existing context. The capability approach is presented as the main analytical framework to see what impact access to resources has on the female workers' lives. As gender is understood as socially constructed, access to resources can potentially change gender roles and empower women. The household is seen as a site of conflict and cooperation and serve as the locus where most of the achievements and potential changes will be evaluated. In the next chapter the research process will be presented.

5 The research process

In this chapter I will present my methodological approach and how the research was carried out during August, October and December 2005. With qualitative methods it was easy to be pragmatic and flexible and change the research design as I progressed. Working in the field, flexibility is crucial (Kitchin & Tate 2000; Valentine 2001). Through keeping a field-diary, it was easier to reconstruct the choices I made during the fieldwork.

5.1 Methodological approach

The primary means to answer the research questions are interviews, supplemented with observation and secondary data. The different methods can validate findings and give alternative perspectives (Valentine 2001). Qualitative methodology seeks to understand the lived experience and the subjective perception of the world, and I found in-depth interviews best suited as each person has a different experience of the Norwegian company. I could have supplemented with questionnaires to get general information about the informants, like time spent on housework, monthly expenses etc., but due to time and language limits, I considered the costs bigger than the gains.

5.2 Outsider, insider and positionality

As a rule fieldworkers should be the same sex as the interviewees (Nichols 1991), but even if I am a woman I was no insider as I differed from the Chinese females in most aspects, like colour of the skin, cultural background and language. Besides, gender is not fixed, it is negotiated in different settings, and researcher and informant will adjust their experience as gendered individuals towards each other (Pink 2001). The “sameness” and “difference” in relation to the interviewees is produced during the encounter between the researcher and the informants (Valentine 2002: 120) and defines their relationship in the “landscape of power” (Mohammad 2001: 104). My position was based on different elements of my identity; a white, childless master-student with a working-class background, but also my acquaintance with their boss and role as a novice researcher. Although I was an outsider, some of these factors probably gave me some power. They also shaped the outcome of my research and capacity to tell the story of the “Other”, in this case Chinese females. What I saw and noticed was coloured by my background and position as a stranger to both the language and culture. I do not claim to tell any “truth”, but through acknowledging knowledge as constructed and being conscious about the biases I brought, a mediated interpretation and representation can

be made (Ley & Mountz 2001), through accessing the women's mediated representations of themselves.

Difference can legitimate the researcher's observations and questions (Sæther 2006), but also lead to distance from the informants, whereas sameness can lead to more trust and information (Rose 1997, in Mohammad 2001). As an outsider and a stranger I had to build up trust gradually. The limited time I spent with the workers restricted this, but it could come indirectly, through workers I had interviewed and who spread the word about who I was and what I was doing there, and that what they said stayed confidential. Being an outsider also gave me the advantage of seeing the field with "fresh" eyes, and thereby note details an insider would not (Kearns 2000). My position in the field was constantly negotiated and because knowledge is situated and created during the interview, I tried to be self-reflexive and conscious about my appearance. Properly done, this can give the researcher some control over the way the informants ascribe her an identity and position in the field (Pink 2001). I entered the stage with glasses coloured by a Norwegian culture where equality between the sexes and welfare is quite advanced, and a portrayal by popular and academic media of exploited, third world women. Because of several travels to third world countries I thought I had few preconceived images though, but I realised I was surprised by the high standard of the first home I visited. I carried one of those stereotyped pictures of third world women that Mohanty (1991) warns against.

When I started interviewing in August, the words of a Chinese male student mixed with those of the manager's secretary. While the student meant that I would have difficulties in interviewing timid Chinese women, the secretary said that "*Chinese women are very honest, if you ask them they will tell you the truth*". It turned out to be a combination. I found them honest and quite open, some were shy while others were rough and talked freely. Although they were informed about the reason I was there in the beginning of the interview, they seemed to find it strange that someone came all the way from Norway to hear about their lives and work. There is no value-free research, but I tried not to let my feelings carry me away, at the same time as I wanted to show interest and empathy, and listen carefully to the complaints they had about the company or life in general. Different aspects of my identity, like my North Norwegian roughness might have come through if I got too engaged or eager though. I tried to ask questions about work in an indifferent tone and at different stages during the interview, and read the non-spoken signs. My insecurity in the unfamiliar setting and a feeling of

disturbing the women or the routines of the company, made me reluctant to ask questions I thought were too private, like conflicts in the family, or spending more time with them. This resulted in lack of data in some aspects.

5.3 Primary data

To produce primary data I used mainly semi-structured interviews combined with direct observation, but also structured and unstructured interviews were conducted (Appendix 1).

5.3.1 Selecting the informants

I was originally going to do a case-study of a company my supervisor had chosen, in Wuxi. This plan changed when it turned out that a friend of my brother was working for a Norwegian company close to Wuxi. I decided to do the case study in the company he worked because through him I had freer, but not unlimited, access to the workers. Another reason was that all the workers came from the same town, which gave me an opportunity to see how a small, rural town can be affected by fast industrialization and the establishment of foreign industry. The workers in the Wuxi-based company came from different places, and although I spent two days interviewing them, I will focus on the other Norwegian company because of limited space and time.

The aim of qualitative research is not to be statistically representative, but present depth, richness and a range of views through an illustrative sampling (Valentine 2001). In the Yuecheng company I talked to eight of the nine white-collar girls, while 16 blue-collar women were randomly picked by the supervisors. In Wuxi I was asked who I wanted to talk to, and in accordance with my wish, they selected women of different age and different departments, nine in total. I did not talk to any white-collar workers. To better understand the changes taking place and society before, I interviewed the mother of one of the blue-collar women and the mother of one of the white-collar girls Yuecheng. The snowball-method (Bradshaw & Stratford 2000) was used to find informants in Jiangyin. One of the urban planners in “Jiangyin Urban Development Bureau”, which I entered on a walk, drove me to the city government where I could talk to a secretary in the Jiangyin Investment Promotion Centre. She again organized an interview with a team leader in Jiangyin Economic Development Zone.

The Norwegian manager was a gate-keeper and door-opener (Sæther 2006) to the workers and the town government. One of his female assistants arranged interviews with the government and accompanied me to translate the three times I went there. I felt very welcome, but did not always get the information I wanted. Sometimes the data was in another department or confidential, other times the answers were so round and vague they hardly told me anything. The representatives of the government were conscious mediating a positive representation of the town and wanted to “sell” it to further the foreign investments. Some information was lost simply because of language and recording problems and bad notes.

5.3.2 The interpreter

Finding an interpreter was one of the biggest obstacles. I was told that the Nordic Centre at the Fudan University in Shanghai would help me help me find one. What I was not told, until the evening 31 July was that it would be closed all August, the period I was going to start my field-work. My contact person at the department of Sociology gave me the e-mail addresses to two of her former students. Unfortunately, none of them were able to help me, even their friends, whom they encouraged me to contact, were busy. I was frustrated and eager to start, so I accepted the offer from the Norwegian manager of using his secretary as interpreter. He assured me she was very reliable and that the workers had confidence in her. Still, I was very uncomfortable with the situation as I knew it could influence the answers, especially issues concerning the company, but if I wanted to get going, I had no choice. In a few interviews I used one of the other white-collar girls, and one of the days a girl working in a bar in Jiangyin assisted me.

I continued the efforts at finding an external interpreter to be able to check the reliability and make the research less dependent on the company. I could only use the white-collar girls if they were not busy working. The few people I knew in Jiangyin were all connected to the company in some way. None seemed to understand why I wanted to find another interpreter when I could use the girls in the office staff. Few people speak English outside the big cities, and if they do, they are most likely occupied in a job or studies. In desperation, I e-mailed a boy I had never met from Wuxi, a Norwegian girl I knew had a friend in Wuxi and a Chinese student I met in Shanghai. He put up a note at the Fudan University, and from the many answers I chose a girl from Jiangyin who helped me during the “Golden Week” in October. This was the only time possible as she was studying in Shanghai. A friend of her assisted me when I interviewed one of the mothers, two days in Wuxi and with some follow ups in

December, but was not available apart from that. Other interviews were conducted with three different white-collar girls as interpreters. This dependency on the scarce resource of interpreters and external conditions, like power breaks and tight production schedules, put me in a disempowered position. I had to puzzle the days the interpreters were available with the days I could access the workers.

Using an interpreter brings a third dimension to the interview and an inevitable filtering of information. I experienced that my interpreters omitted information they considered irrelevant, in the form of short-versioned answers and that they answered on behalf of the informant on follow up questions. A Canadian girl I met, who also interviewed Chinese females, experienced that her interpreter consciously left out information she considered inappropriate to create a certain impression of Chinese women. I think there were other, less conscious reasons my interpreters filtered the information though. I should have been clearer concerning the interaction and what information I wanted translated. I ignored some of the problems as I was afraid of being rude and ending up with no interpreter. Other problems were related to language as none of us were fluent in English. The interpreters had to express the rich information through words and phrases they knew, which probably simplified some of it. There are always some details or nuances that are lost as some words and expressions are impossible to translate, especially when it comes to exploring people's attitudes (Nichols 1991). The wording of questions can shape the answers and make them difficult to compare (Dunn 2000). I sometimes had to rephrase or clarify the questions for the interpreter, thus it was difficult to be consistent about the wording and some of them turn out leading.

5.3.3 The interviews

In the construction of knowledge, the researcher's personal qualities and ability to interpret the information is important, but factors like the structure of the interview, the setting and the people present will also play a role. The interview is an inter change of views or an *interview*, between two or more persons, thus it is important that the interaction works well and that the informant has confidence in the interviewer (Kvale 1996) and interpreter. To limit the study I had decided to interview only female blue-collar workers. Because of the problems finding an interpreter, I ended up interviewing many of the white-collar girls as well, as they spoke English and were more available. Most of these interviews were more like informal conversations that could turn in unanticipated directions. This made me sometimes forget

central questions, but they also gave me valuable information and new perspectives. I considered all information useful.

Through an exploratory approach, using primarily semi-structured, in-depth, open-ended interviews, I wanted to see how the women's lives had unfolded and how it had changed from their childhoods and that of their mothers. As a novice interviewer, unfamiliar with the culture, I found an interview guide necessary (appendix 2) to be sure I covered all the topics I wanted and to be able to compare answers. I used a structured guide in the first two blue-collar interviews and when I interviewed the town government. A structured guide can serve as a fall back and keep the interaction going if the conversation stops (Dunn 2000). Until I got more used to interviewing, I found it difficult to figure good questions, listen carefully and make notes at the same time. This was my experience when I interviewed the secretary in Jiangyin Investment Promotion Centre without interview-guide because it was an unplanned interview. The problem with the guide was that I could get too attached to it. Sometimes because I wanted to make sure I covered all the questions, other times I was not enough focused and automatically went on, or there were information I did not know had relevance for my project.

The interview situation involves an unequal distribution of power, where the interviewer is in charge of defining the topics and the structure and direction of the conversation (Kvale 1996). The informants have the power to include or exclude the interviewer from their experiences and control the flow of information though. The access to their information is partly determined by the researcher's ability to ask the right questions and give proper information. The informants should know what is expected from them (Dowling 2000). In the first interviews some of my questions were not understood and my feeling of helplessness seemed to be reciprocal as one of the informants said: "*I don't think my answers can satisfy your questions*". I had to turn this lose-lose situation to a win-win; they should feel they could master the situation and feel comfortable, and I could get information. I was thinking too abstract and had put the responsibility of analyzing their lives on them instead of doing it myself. They should tell about their lives, a subject where they were the masters. The change of questions in the interview guide meant that the research questions had to be changed too. Concrete episodes or events were easier to talk about than thoughts around changes happening and emotions, and I decided to let the coming women just talk about their lives,

focusing around their childhood, job, and household. Rereading these unstructured interviews I found interesting clues I included in an interview-guide for the next workers.

As I got more confident, I changed to a semi-structured interview-guide, which is a guide that contains predetermined themes and suggested questions, but where the sequence can change and follow ups on interesting aspects can be done (Kvale 1996). In this way I uncovered their lives layer by layer, there was all the time issues I could explore further; the question was whether I understood where to dig. For example, I asked some of them if they had a washing machine, as it could save them from time-consuming, heavy work and be an indicator of their living standard. Only after passing a woman who washed clothes in a river, I realized that I had to ask the women if they actually *used* the machine. As I will return to in the analysis, many of them did not. The lesson learned was that there could always be a lot of information hidden behind the answers I got.

The central theme in the interviews was productive work, so their first job and subsequent changes were important events, in addition to school, marriage and childbirth. The questions should ideally serve as triggers that make the informants talk (Dunn 2000), but many of the blue-collar women answered my questions briefly and seemed to say “I don’t know” before they even gave the question a thought. It might be because they were afraid of answering as Chinese history has too many examples of people being punished for speaking their mind. Information about domestic work and the way the women were treated in their childhoods compared to their brothers could give an indication of gender norms. When interviewing, the words used are important for the outcome as they are imbued with power and connotation. They are the labels through which a certain representation of the world is made (Berg & Mansvelt 2000). I realised that asking about housework as a *duty* could have negative connotations, and changed it for *responsibility*. Nevertheless, as I used an interpreter, I could not control which words were used all the time.

5.3.4 The interview setting

I could to a very little degree decide where to conduct the interviews, but I wanted to create a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, to make the informants feel safe to talk freely about experiences and feelings (Kvale 1996). I am not sure if I succeeded. The first six blue-collar worker interviews took place in the office to a workshop-leader who from time to time entered the room to pick up something or talk on the phone. Sometimes he laughed at a

question or commented it, which was very disturbing and could influence the answers. The last interviews, mainly follow ups, were conducted in the office to the general manager who was absent. This was the least interrupted place, but maybe where the workers felt most out of place. The white-collar girls were interviewed in whatever office was available. In Wuxi, the interviews took place in the meeting room, where we could speak uninterrupted. The interviews conducted in the company lasted 45-60 minutes. The effective time was shorter, as all information had to be translated. In their homes, I could use longer time, but normally spent no more than one hour and a half. This limited the depth in the interviews, but this was to a certain extent compensated by interviewing some of them twice.

The women's homes provided the setting for some follow-ups and all interviews during the "Golden Week". This was probably a more relaxed setting and can disrupt the power hierarchies between the researcher and researched (Oberhauser 1997, in Aitken 2001). If the husband was present he tended to answer the questions. This gave me an impression of the distribution of power between the spouses. If neighbours dropped by they wanted to see what was going on rather than participate in the conversation. These situations could have served as group interviews, but I did not try, mainly because of the language. Lack of privacy can silence participants (Aitken 2001), but generally I did not ask what I considered private questions, and especially not with other people around. Noise, like a phone ringing or children playing, apparently disturbed me more than the women. The informants' interaction with the setting can give interesting inputs, but to get the full understanding of the interview-situation both verbal and non-verbal knowledge is required (Jackson 2001). I knew neither the culture nor the language and was probably not able to read all the non-spoken messages given.

I knew recording the interviews could make people reluctant talking, but as I worried I would lose information, I brought a small mp3-player. I asked the women if I could record the conversation, assuring them it would be treated confidentially. Nobody said no, and it did not seem like they were more inhibited than in interviews without it. I do not really know how it affected their answers though. I stopped using it after a while as there was time to take notes while the interpreter was translating. The notes made it easier to go back to earlier answers, to follow their story and stay focused. In addition, it served as a back-up: After interviewing 9 workers without checking if it has been recorded, it felt good to have the notes when it turned out there was nothing on the tape... The notes also saved me time as I did not have to

transcribe the interviews. I typed them out on the lap-top nearly every day, and e-mailed them to myself. The typing made me able to add things I had not written down.

5.3.5 Observation

It would be hard not to do any kind of observation in the field as we use our senses, also hearing, smelling and touching (Kearns 2000), all the time in our daily life. As such, the six months in China was an unstructured, uncontrolled covert observation (ibid.) of life and society in general. I could see the new shops and parks in the city, the factories being built in the “backyard” of the farmer’s houses and how quickly new things were built and the interaction between people.

After the first interviews in the company I got to visit some of the workers in their homes. One of the male work-shop leaders said; “*Now all the women are going to run home and clean their houses*”. If they did, the house and its contents would still be the same. I was showed around in most of the rooms and conducted a more structured observation, looking for domestic appliances, washing-machines, TVs and other goods indicating standard of living, and the standard of the house in general. I was not familiar with the two floored, countryside houses, and only through visiting them I got an idea of how big they were, how much space there was to clean and how cold they could get in the winter. The observations gave me a different and broader perspective, and access to information that was not mentioned in the interviews, sometimes because it was taken for granted by the informants (Punch 2001; Valentine 2001). Besides, it is impossible to ask about everything and observation can complement and assist interpret the interviews and judge the reliability. Because the interview is an artificial situation removed from the processes of everyday life, observation, particularly participant observation, can give other perspectives (Kearns 2000). I did not conduct participant observation, partly because of the limited access to interpreters, partly because I did not want to disturb the women more than necessary. I had to get an impression of their activities indirectly, by going to markets where they bought food or participating in the preparation of a traditional Chinese meal with my friends. It can be argued that all observations in social situations are participant as the mere presence of the researcher will alter the setting to a smaller or larger degree (ibid.).

Through the visits to their homes I saw the interaction between the family members if they were present; how the daughter was hanging around the neck of her mother or a son drawing

on the concrete floor and how the neighbours, mostly the old, just entered the house as it was their own, standing there listening to the conversation. It showed me how the women dressed in private and that some of them wore working clothes with the company logo at home. I saw Ting Ting's old mother, sitting on her wooden stool, carefully rolling embroidery cotton into small bundles and folding small pieces of paper around them for an additional income. This was her domestic sideline activity. These, and the observations at the company, were open, as everybody knew I was there because I wanted to see how they were living.

I spent quite a lot of time at the company too. Most of it was used for reading and writing, but I also did valuable observations in addition to the interviews. It seemed to be quite a relaxed atmosphere at the office level. Sometimes the girls and one of the male workers among the office-staff would come and have a chat in the office I had at my disposition. I visited the two workshops only a couple of times, as I should not interrupt the workers. The first time I entered the big workshop, I was hit by a strong smell coming from the liquids the workers used to make the shell of the lifeboats. I got more used to it after a while, but it was always a vague odour around the workshop. In a big hall the life-boats were installed and lined-up. Most of the female workers were in the adjacent rooms, moulding and making glass reinforced laminates. Some of them were wearing white cotton masks (figure 3). It was quite tidy and lighter than the metal workshop, where they were cutting parts for the boats on the lathe. On the second floor there were two women sewing the seats for the boats in a very quiet and clean room.

5.4 Secondary data

The aim of doing research is producing new knowledge. Qualitative methods gave me the chance to be where the "action" is, exploring it with my own senses, and produce my own data (Kitchin & Tate 2000). But research is not done in a vacuum, and the information I gathered had to be grounded in secondary data, as a supplement and help in *all* stages of the research process, even if it is created in another context and for another purpose. Combining different data will give a better understanding of the phenomenon, and help avoid "reinventing the wheel". Before I went to China I read literature, both academic and fiction, watched Chinese movies and planned proper methods, but it is impossible to plan a qualitative research in detail before arriving in the field. One has to get a feeling for the place, negotiate one's position and adjust to it. Working with people involves unanticipated actions and happenings in any setting and it is hard to be prepared for everything. My limited

knowledge of China before I left shaped the fieldwork. I was aware of different problems that could evolve, but being aware of them is not the same as solving them in an easy manner.

The reading of literature and documents, mainly books and articles, continued throughout the research process. Some of it was written by people from the culture and country, which is advisable (Skelton 2001). Unfortunately, much of the secondary literature is in Chinese, which made it difficult to find information about the study area, as it is only a small town and up to date statistics about for instance the female labour force. This was the reason why I kept on returning to the town government for information. Besides, some statistics are very hard or impossible to get. Reading secondary literature, it is important to be critical about who has written it and for what purpose. Texts often promote the views of powerful, authoritative people, information can be held back and there can be hidden agendas (Forbes 2000). Texts convey a certain representation of the world, like the PR brochures the local governments used for potential investors. Statistical information does also have to be treated with care, as numbers can give a biased picture of reality. There have been raised questions around the methods and standards China's National Bureau of Statistics use, as the numbers not always seem reliable (Dagens Næringsliv 2007). After the fieldwork, secondary literature helped interpret and analyse the results, validate the data and gave theoretical support to the operationalization of concepts. It also gave me information I did not get in the interviews.

5.5 Data processing and analysis

There are several ways of analyzing qualitative data and the researcher can use the methods she is most comfortable with. Through an *ad-hoc* approach different techniques can be combined (Kvale 1996). The analysis should be conducted during the whole process (Kitchin & Tate 2000), and by starting at the stage of interviewing, I got a picture of the situation early on could and could easier see what information I had gathered. This directed changes in the interview guide and the interviews. Analysis done on the basis of transcripts, long after the interview can become just a text-analysis where the live situation and actual conversation, wrapped in non-verbal cues, is forgotten (Kvale 1996; Jackson 2001). What is *not* said can be as important as what is said, and I related the interviews to my observations and reflections. If there were answers I did not understand I asked my informants or interpreters, who helped *interpret* things and provided additional information about the country and the culture. In retrospect, I could have been more thorough on this though.

The analysis and interpretation is based on the research questions and theory (Löfgren 1996). I had a fair idea of the pattern in the interviews, but when I applied my analytical framework it directed more specifically what to look for. The framework made it possible to go behind what was said and interpret it against more abstract concepts like gender roles, conflicts and capabilities. Prioritizing sons' education in front of daughters' and the unequal division of domestic work can be examples of conflicts and injustices. To easier compare the different stories I coded the data in different colours, according to categories like childhood, education, work, housework, children etc. I looked for connections between the different events and variables, like year of birth and education, and tried to relate them to the historical and social context to better understand their choices and lives. To get an overview, I plotted the variables into a matrix. This was a kind of categorization where the occurrence or non-occurrence of a phenomenon (Kvale 1996), for instance if brothers got more education and the mother had a paid job, was reduced to 1 and 0. It is also a kind of meaning interpretation, where the statements were seen in relation to the whole interview (ibid). I compared the interviews to each other, looking for similarities, patterns, variations and contradictions (Mikkelsen 1995, Ley & Mountz 2001). Were there differences within or between the group of blue-collar workers and the group of white-collar workers, and the workers and their mothers? The women have different lived experiences and perceptions of the same events and there is no single story that covers them all, but still there are many similarities that make it possible to treat them as particular groups and draw the big lines.

5.6 Ethics

One of the most important issues doing research on and with people is ethics. The ethical considerations have to be done at all stages of the research. Qualitative research involves interaction with people and societal structures, thus in some way they will be influenced (Dowling 2000). Besides, the knowledge produced can affect the understanding of problem area (Kvale 1996). Being conscious about the behaviour and conduct in the field can reduce the effect of the researcher's interference with it, also after leaving the field. The questions I asked may make the women reflect on issues they have not given much thought before, like those connected to housework. I have a human responsibility as the people involved in the research should not be harmed, offended or used, and the negative effects should be outweighed by positive (Kitchin & Tate 2000). The people should not be afraid of participating in later projects by other researchers; I have a scientific responsibility too. An inadequate knowledge of the culture and each individual made it difficult to assess where the

boundaries should be drawn. Interviewing people involves emotions and two of my informants started crying as some questions evoked sad memories.

Concerning informed consent, all aspects of the research should be made clear so that the informants know exactly what they are participating in, also what is expected from them (Dowling 2000). As mentioned, this was not clear in the first interviews. The participants were informed about who I was, what I was doing and that everything was voluntarily; they did not have to participate or provide any kind of information unless they felt like doing it. The problem is that most of the women would probably not refuse to participate when they were picked by the supervisor. They live in a strongly hierarchical and authoritarian society where most people are used to follow orders from above. Still, I do not think they found the interview situation uncomfortable and I chose to look upon it as giving them a break from work. Some of them thanked me after the interview, but I do not know whether this was politeness or if they appreciated my interest in their lives. Apart from the ethical side, interviewing people under “pressure” would not provide good data. When it comes to observation I was only looking for general patterns and processes, thus I do not think any ethical guidelines was broken.

Because I used the informants’ time and knowledge, I asked some of the interpreters if I should bring the informants something, but they said it was not necessary. I thought that giving any kind of compensation could be interpreted as “buying them” and that they could potentially say anything I wanted to hear. Mikkelsen (1995) argues that giving payment in any form sets a precedent for later researchers in potentially less affluent situations, and besides, the field study situation can not provide reciprocity, only give and take. Too late I learned that I could have brought inexpensive gifts as a symbol of friendship, which is customary in China. Some of the women we visited gave us fruit and home-made rice-wine upon leaving.

When it comes to confidentiality, the anonymity of the interviewees should be secured also when recruiting and interacting with them in the field. This was impossible, as people saw who was interviewed and who I visited in their homes. The extracts and quotes from the interviews used in the report, have pseudonyms where permission from the informants is not asked. The results are saved in a place with restricted access.

5.7 Accessing the data

Reliability and validity have to be considered during the whole research process. Kirk and Miller (1986, in Mikkelsen 1995) defines reliability as the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research; will the same results be obtained if the method of data collection is used in similar circumstances by different researchers at different times? Validity concerns the degree to which findings are interpreted in a correct way, or the truthfulness or accuracy of data compared with acceptable criteria (Mikkelsen 1995). Because there can be alternative interpretations, it is not possible to measure the reliability of qualitative data in the same way as quantitative. Besides, the afterthoughts of an interview may change the interviewee's perceptions and lead to other answers in a repeat interview (Mikkelsen 1995). I got the impression that some of the workers had been talking about my questions. An assessment, by being critical to the sources, has to be done though. This relates to the selection of informants, the way the interviews were conducted, the answers given, the material produced etc. (Löfgren 1996). Doing fieldwork in a cross-cultural setting, other biases than inadequate sampling and interviewer techniques can be more influential for the outcome, like unfamiliar cultural norms, language and the filtering of information through interpreters (Mikkelsen 1995).

Through transparency of the research process and stating the criteria through which I am writing-IN myself in the research and what choices I have taken and why, the reader can judge the trustworthiness of the report (Berg & Mansvelt 2000). Whether the answers I got are trustworthy are maybe more central than if I was not a friend of their boss or used girls in the company as interpreters. By approaching the same theme from different angles, comparisons could be made and the women's answers could to a certain degree be validated. I asked how the blue-collar women liked their job, and tried to check the consistency of the answer by later asking if they would like to change job and if they wanted their daughter to have the same job as them. By using different interpreters I could see if there were significant variations between the informants' answers, especially on sensitive questions. Observation of the body language, like hesitation, looking down or moving on the chair could also give hints about the trustworthiness. I found that whether they expressed satisfaction or not did not depend on the interpreter and found no reason to doubt the information they gave or to use it as a basis for the analysis.

According to Löfgren (1996), there is no big difference between qualitative and quantitative data in judging validity. The result of the research has to be based on certain criteria: Internal validity concerns whether data, method and analysis is valid in relation to the research questions and objectives, while external validity (construct validity) concerns whether theoretical concepts and terms are correctly operationalized and incorporated in the research design. The conclusion has to be valid in relation to the objectives, the research questions and theoretical terms. The operationalization of the methods and concepts, and the interpretations done have to be supported by other, validated literature (Löfgren 1996). I think the methods I have chosen are the most adequate for my research objectives, time and resources considered. Connected to these issues is generalization. To be a base for generalizations, the case-study and the information from the interviews has to be related to a theoretical framework (Mikkelsen 1995), or earlier research (Löfgren 1996). Although can be difficult to draw any firm conclusion on my material, it should be convincing and more credible than alternative interpretations.

Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology on which this study is based and the choices and obstacles I met during the fieldwork. A thorough review is done to provide the reader the necessary knowledge to assess the validity and reliability of the report, and in what basis the conclusions are done.

6 The female worker

In this chapter I will give a brief presentation of the female workers' socio-economic background. I will focus on education, the first job, and the gender division of labour in the household of origin. These events are related to strategic life-choices and can indicate changing values today.

6.1 The workers' socio-economic background

The socio-economic level of the family of orientation, the family size and the educational and occupational characteristics of the parents can influence the future status, especially in less-developed settings where ascription predominates (Junsay & Heaton 1989).

Paid employment in the non-agricultural sector and education are two of the suggested resources for promoting the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG) of gender equity and women's empowerment. However, the effects are more marked when women migrate from rural areas and patriarchal control (Kabeer 2003). This was not the case for the blue-collar women I interviewed who all, except one woman from Sichuan, came from villages related to Yuecheng. The woman from Sichuan came because a friend who had migrated told her she could find lighter work than farm work in one of the many factories. Only two of the white collar girls were local. Three came from Jiangyin and three from other rural places near Jiangyin or Jiangsu. Even if the women were local, it can be expected that changes have taken place, as the work in the Norwegian company has given access to material and immaterial resources and changed their social practice.

The white-collar girls were born between 1977 and 1983. Three of the blue-collar workers were born in the period 1957-1963, one in 1980, one in 1981, and the remaining eleven are born in the period 1967-1973. This makes it probable that the majority started working after reform in 1978. I will try to relate constraints and opportunities to their age and year of birth, as there have been big changes in society from the childhood of the oldest workers to the childhood of the youngest workers. The two groups differed in appearance. Some of the blue-collar workers seemed a bit insecure and some looked tired and resigned, and older than their age. The skin was often dry, with tiny wrinkles, like someone who had been much out in the sun, and their clothes were often a bit old-fashioned. The white-collar girls from Jiangyin dressed in neat dresses or more trendy clothes and had a fresher, more modern look. All the

white-collar girls had taken English names and in the following, the English names refer to them.

6.1.1 The household of origin

The childhood of the mother I presented in Box 1, seems to be quite common. The mothers had little or no education and their families were poor. Ting Ting's mother (1948) only went to school half a year. She had to take care of her three younger siblings and the farm from she was 12 until she was 14 because her father stayed at hospital in another city and her mother had to be with him. Her father's illness made the family particularly poor. The children seldom ate vegetables, never meat, and had to mix rice-powder with water as they did not have enough rice for the family. Ting Ting's mother had a poor life and was working hard all her life, doing farm- and housework, first for her parents, later her mother-in-law:

I had to work hard all the time, no stop. (...) My mother-in-law let us stay in the place beside the pigs. I always cried. Why could we not get a better place to live? (...) When I got the baby, my uncle and auntie gave me some food. I didn't eat it, I sold it for money. My husband sometimes spent his sleeping time to go out and fish to sell and get money. After three years we used the money to build a small house, (...) we had to borrow most of the money

Also many of the oldest blue-collar women experienced a childhood in poverty, lacking the most basic functionings. There were few factories and as farm work did not pay well off because of the CCP's policies, the living standards were low.

Our house was old and had one floor. The living conditions were poor. The food was so-so, we didn't have enough clothes, they were old; my sister had used them first and then passed them on to me. The food was what we grew ourselves; potatoes, vegetables... four times a year we had meat (Sun, 1970).

There were not many opportunities for work and because of the hukou system, people could not move freely around. Until the one-child policy was implemented in 1979, many households were quite big, corresponding to the Confucian extended family. Most of the parents to the blue-collar women and some of the parents to the white-collar girls were peasants. The working days were long, and they had few or no machines to help them.

My mother did all the housework; cooking, feeding the animals, washing, cleaning...she made the clothes herself. She was very tired, and my father also. In the village, the women were

always more tired than the men, because of all the housework. She seldom played or talked with the neighbours (Sarah, 1978).

Sarah's mother was a typical peasant wife. She did the housework, but also had to help in the fields and took care of chickens and pigs. This was regarded domestic work (Jacka 1997). The fathers and the males did the hard work outside and seldom helped inside the house. With the introduction of the HRS, many got an additional income. They started with some kind of sideline activity or small business, like selling vegetables or self-bred fish, and some got a paid job in some kind of industry:

My mother started working in a boat factory 25 years ago; I was seven or eight years old. Before this she stayed at home. My father was the head of a group of farmers. Later he went to a textile factory (Ming Mei, 1973).

Most of the fathers found another income than farming, but Ming Mei's mother was one of the few mothers who started working in factories. Most of them remained farmers and housewives and a couple ran a shop with their husband. The opportunity to find an additional income or leave farming completely made some of the parents able to pay for their children's education. This was the case with Sarah's parents, as well as the parents of two of the other white-collar girls. The rest of the white-collar fathers were working in industry or ran a business, if they had not retired. Some of the mothers had been working in factories or other paid jobs. This may influence the attitude to education.

6.1.2 Education and the first job

Education has to be seen in connection with the decision to start working. To be knowledgeable is one of the most basic capabilities and education is a resource through which it can be achieved. There was generally little emphasis on education by the female blue-collar workers' parents. This attitude can be influenced by the feudal view of women as one of inferiority and unworthy of education (ACWF 1991). Instead of doing homework the girls had to help in the house and on the farm, in accordance with traditional gender roles and the hierarchies of sex and age. The oldest daughter had to do more than her younger siblings, especially brothers. Lian (1971) did most of the housework from she was eight years old. Many responsibilities at home may influence the achievements at school. In similarity with most of the blue-collar women, Lian quit after middle-school, at the age of 16-17. Some of the oldest women had to quit earlier: Mee (1960) after primary school, Jun (1963) had to start

working on the farm after seven years at school, while her younger sisters got nine years education. Hua (1957) was the oldest woman and had to leave school even earlier:

I have not graduated from primary school; I went to school four years, from I was 8 to 12. I had to work on the farm. We were many children so we didn't have good economy. I didn't want to continue, I disliked going to school. They liked sons better, so my brothers went to school. Boys and girls are treated differently in Asian society.

The traditional preference for sons has been prevalent until recently. Amber (1982) said her younger brother was given the best food by their grandmother. Females' traditionally inferior position gave them weaker bargaining powers in the division of scarce familial resources. In similarity with food, education can be seen as a restricted resource about which there could be conflict and where sons were prioritized. Daughters' bargaining position was weakened by the patrilocal tradition that deprived the parents any benefits from educating girls, while education of boys was an investment for their old age (Croll 1995; Hannum 2005; Turner 2006). The returns from educating daughters were also diminished because the jobs girls normally got were low paid and did not demand skilled workers (Li & Tsang 2003). Nevertheless, Amber was treated differently to her brother by her grandmother and not her parents, which may indicate that changes are taking place. This is further strengthened by the fact that Amber's parents financed her higher education.

The choices of the oldest female workers, like Jun (1963) and Hua (1957), were restrained by traditional norms and lack of resources. Their labour was needed at home. The younger women might have faced additional obstacles as the expansion of income-generating activities and TVEs in the 1980s made some of them an economic asset for their parents. Some daughters stayed at home to take care of the house and farm while the parents worked; other girls were sent out to earn an income. This was the case for many girls from Jiangsu in the late 1980s (ACWF 1991). Lian (1971) was one of them. At the age of 17, she started working in a factory that produced parts for trucks and cars. Her parents had told her to find a job because they wanted to build a house. She said at the same time that she did not want to continue school, just have a job, maybe because she knew education was no option. She was expected to work and might have felt it was time to start repaying the debt to her parents, as part of the implicit contract as a filial daughter. Another woman said: "*I started to work because I was 19; I was old enough so I needed to, and should, work*". Salaff and Kung found in the mid-1970s that filial piety was the reason Chinese girls in Taiwan and Hong Kong

started working in the emerging employment market. It was more of a family strategy than a personally motivated action. The contribution to the household indirectly supported their brothers' education (Salaff 1990). This seemed to take place in Yuecheng too:

I gave all the money to my parents, my sister too. My brother went to university. He earned money but used it for himself. My parents paid the university (Guan Yin, 1967).

Although not explicitly stated, the two sisters probably financed their brother's university education. The girls did not question the social norms and the different treatment of boys and girls. Guan Yin did not even think about going to university because for her, like Lian, that possibility did not exist. She and her sister had internalized a status as persons of lesser value, which made them make fewer claims on the intrahousehold distribution of resources, as it is based on deep-seated notions of who deserves what (Sen 1990). The decision to start working may seem like the women's own, but because of cultural norms, higher education was no choice. They had made the desires of society and powerful others (i.e. their parents) their own. There were no visible conflicts of coercion involved, but rather a situation of choice as "non-decision-making" (Lukes 1974, in Kabeer 1999). Power and dominance can operate in invisible ways. The hierarchies of gender and age give the girls a weak fallback position that is not enhanced through income (ACWF 1990). There are other sources of power in the family than income, for instance age and gender.

There was not much of a choice for the girls who wanted to continue education, like Mei (1968). She had to quit at 15 because the family did not have enough money and their land was used for factories. Her parents wanted the children to go to school and as she stayed home two years before she started working, there seemed to be no wish to get a "quick return". She was deprived higher education as a result of lack of economic capabilities. Accessing higher education is also a question of academic capabilities and in 1977 an annual national examination for higher education was introduced (Brown & Park 2001). According to Susana, the examination score is decisive when the education department decides which college the pupils can go to. Only a minority can continue and women need higher scores than men to enter universities (Turner 2006). According to Ting Ting (1973), many people did not want to have further education after middle-school at the time she quit, because it was difficult to pass the examination. This stopped Fai (1976) from fulfilling her dream of becoming a teacher in kindergarten. Instead, she started working as an accountant in a Chinese company. Ting Ting's statement explains how the perception of limited possibilities

rather translates into a want for a job. The women were disempowered by lack of money, cultural norms and later the national examination. Nevertheless, the women were not passive victims. Mee (1960) was a top student and really wanted to go to middle school, but the family could not afford it. To solve the problem, she fished in the river during the night and sold it on the market in the morning. She came late for school, but told the teacher she had to do housework. After 2 months in middle school she had to stop though. The village committee could send one person from each town out to work and she had to fetch bricks for houses in Wuxi. Mee shows how we can use our agency and act against the structures.

Very few Chinese rural women have the opportunity to participate in education beyond the most basic level. This will influence their possibilities in the labour market and their chances of advancement in the class and occupational hierarchy (Turner 2006). Education will also make them better equipped to adapt to and keep up with a changing environment and the challenges of a quickly developing society (Xiao 1999, in Wylie 2004). This can be illustrated by a quote from Ana (1981):

My parents have primary school. They feel their education is low, when they are out they feel it is difficult. In the big city, they don't have enough knowledge. They contribute hope to us; they let us go to school to get education. If not educated, child not be happy.

Ana's parents, like the rest of the parents of the white-collar girls, emphasised education. This was probably because some of the parents were economically better off, had higher occupational attainments (Bauer et al. 1992) or more education, where especially the father's education plays a role (Brown & Park 2001). Rose's father had a major in agricultural subjects and Sophie's mother was working in a kindergarten. As Ana's parents did not have any education, another reason could be the structural changes in the 1980s, when these girls were born. Tai (1980) finished technical school at 20 and was the only blue-collar woman who had education beyond middle-school. She did not have any job related to the education though. Education was emphasized in the public discourse and more job opportunities for women increased their value. This is something I will return to in 8.3.2. The view that girls were not entitled to education had changed, as several of the white-collar girls had younger brothers. This would normally diminish the possibility of education (Connelly & Zheng 2003). The white-collar girls had managed make a big jump in the class-hierarchy, from peasants to white-collar jobs. In the childhood, the girls were not allowed to do much house- or farm work:

If my parents wanted me to do housework, they thought I should first do my homework (...) I helped cooking and other easy things. It was important to get education. They always said "Study hard! Study hard!"" (Amber).

Based on the girls' abilities and their parents' efforts to pay the education, the white-collar girls got an opportunity for education and empowerment. Ana's mother (Box 1) earned 500 yuan per month and her father "more than 1000", which enabled them to pay Ana's college fee and cost of living of 10000 per year. Also Amber's parents managed to save enough to pay her education, in spite of their low income as farmers. They did not care about what education she got though:

I chose it myself, my parents don't know what I do, they don't care, they said you can do what you want. I chose machine and electricity because it is easy to find a job, if I graduated and didn't find a job I had to go back home.

The choice of education shows how different choices and freedoms are connected; the ability to get a higher education can free her from the lack of possibilities in the countryside and presumably give her a good job. Some of the other girls too had chosen technical subjects because it would be easy to find a job; Susana studied computer science, Ana mechanical engineering and Rose studied business English and international trade. If Rose's scores in middle school had been higher, she could have gone to a better university. Informed by the changing surroundings, these girls acted as knowledgeable and conscious agents and chose education in accordance with the needs of the market. In that regard it could be argued that they were not totally free, but directed by the market. Still, their higher education had empowered them as they were able to make more strategic life-choices, like livelihood and where to live, than the blue-collar women. Because they went to school in an urban area, they got non-agricultural hukous, giving them the ability to work and live in the city. This could have other implications for their well-being as the social services are generally better in the cities. The expanding market had increased the demand for skilled workers and increased the probability that girls got education. More jobs also meant that more people were able to leave farming.

6.1.3 Work

The blue-collar women's first job was generally in some local enterprise, often TVE, printing, making bricks or plastics, or other life-boat companies, in a job their father or relatives had found for them. In retrospect, the women often found the working conditions bad and the

payment low, but Hong (1960) said she liked her first job at the time she got it. Ting Ting said it was difficult to find other kinds of jobs at that time and that she thought it was ok. The perceptions of what was a good job had changed during the years because of more experience, indicating that there is a need for more objective measures of well-being. For half of the white-collar girls the job in the Norwegian company was the first. Two of them got the job before they had finished their education, as the manager had used an acquaintance at their school to find students with the needed skills. This indicates their strong position in the labour market. They could find other, good jobs much easier than the blue-collar women.

As indicated by Amber, there was a desire to leave the countryside. The blue-collar workers were not able to leave the countryside, but the land. The transition from farmer to industrial worker was a much appreciated change. Hua (1957) remember her first job:

I was 19, I made bricks on the hill. My family needed the money so I had to look for work in a factory, not at the farm. I earned 18 RMB the first month, the highest salary was 30-40 RMB; the town-leaders earned that. I was a worker, and I felt so happy; if I did farm-work it was only 0.5 RMB per day.

The two youngest blue-collar women never had to do farm work and one of them saw this as one of the best changes from the life of her mother:

I am more happy and satisfied than my mother. My life is better than my mother's. There is no need to do farm work. If they were off duty they had to do farm work, but not anymore.

There have been declining profits for Chinese peasants during the years, but the women not only found farm work less profitable than non-agricultural work, it was also tougher. This will affect their well-being, also because of a change in status as agricultural work is regarded inferior to modern factory jobs by both urban and rural people (Lim 1990; Wolf 1990; ACWF 1991; Gao 1994; Stockman 2000). This can strengthen their self-worth and power within. One of the blue-collar women said getting an income every month was an advantage compared to farming. Earning her own money was a good feeling, it made her feel proud. Thus, paid employment can be a functioning achievement in itself.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the workers' socio-economic background and briefly their mothers' lives. Most of the blue-collar workers came from poor households and the majority

had to start working after middle-school because of economic, cultural or academic constraints. They got jobs in different local enterprises that some relative found for them and were happy to leave farming. The white-collar girls came from households where education had been emphasized. The reason could be that the parents had a better job or more education, but also that they were born in the 1980s when there was a general emphasis on education in the Chinese society. Based on the knowledge of their backgrounds, has the job in the Norwegian company enhanced their capabilities empowered the women?

7 Working in the Norwegian company

This chapter will focus on the Norwegian company and what differences it represents compared to the previous places the women have worked. Access to resources can strengthen women's agency and enhance their capabilities, or potential for living the lives they want and achieving valued ways of being and doing.

7.1 Expanding the opportunities

NIDL pictured women working in foreign industry as young and single, and according to Hare (1999) are many factories in rural China filled with unmarried women. This was not the case for the women I interviewed. All the blue-collar and four of the white-collar women were married. All the blue-collar and two of the married white-collar workers had children, the other two were pregnant. As indicated by Elias (2004), higher levels of economic development tend to pull more women, both married and older, into non-agricultural employment (Lim 1990; ACWF 1991; Michelson & Parish 2000). According to the HR manager in the Norwegian company in Wuxi, some of the older workers had been laid off from SOEs and knew how important it was to have a job. They had families to support and were more stable than younger workers who often wanted to try different companies. Also the representatives from Yuecheng town government claimed that women just want a stable job. All the female blue-collar workers had been working other places before. Thus, if they were not in the Norwegian company they still would have been working. They did not stand out from most other Chinese women in that regard as women's access to paid work became the norm after 1949. Rather, the focus has to be on the differences between the current company and their previous jobs. Why did they start working in the Norwegian company?

Some of the blue-collar women had quit earlier jobs because they found another with higher wage or better working conditions; others had been laid off. As mentioned, women are the first to be asked to leave in times of recession, especially married, older or with young children. The establishment of foreign companies had altered the structures in Yuecheng and expanded women's employment opportunities. Although many decisions are taken in the context of the household (Jacka 1997; Kabeer 2003), the women were apparently not forced to work by powerful household members or by a desperate need for income. Based on available information and resources, they chose the job in the Norwegian company freely, an important element in processes of empowerment. They had more choices now than when they

got their first job, when few jobs were available and the decision to work was even more of a household strategy. In the most extreme cases, the women were just placed in a job by the local government. These were acts of power as non-decision making, or in some cases somebody's power over them. They had heard about the Norwegian company from people they knew or relatives, using their social resources or *guanxi*, and based on their lived experience they found it could enhance their well-being. Nevertheless, not everybody was there as a result of their choice, but because they had been working in the Chinese joint-venture company and were "ordered" to go to the Norwegian company when it became fully Norwegian funded. Except for the two girls that were looked up at school, the white-collar girls found the job through job-fairs, employment offices, and internet. The reason for changing to the Norwegian company was the different resources it offered, the material being among the most important.

7.2 Accessing material resources

For both the white-collar and the blue-collar women, the job in the Norwegian company was the best that far. The white-collar girls had quit former jobs for various reasons; lack of challenge, bad working environment and some missed their parents if they were working away from their home place. The blue-collar women had left their earlier job as they considered this job better, higher salary being the main reason. Money was the key to an easier life and the most important aspect by a job for almost everybody. Jun (1963) felt that the higher wages had given her a better life. She could buy more things and decorate the house. The preoccupation with money is maybe a combination of the poverty in their childhoods, with a resultant desire for an acceptable standard of living, and the emphasis on affluence in the public discourse. After reform the slogan has been "To get rich is glorious". The demands of society may have become their own. Women should participate in paid work to increase the household's living standard. As there are generally few opportunities for job advancement, particularly older women change company to be able to earn more (Turner 2006):

In my former job the salary was low [800 RMB], but being a warehouse keeper I was free. And the work was not hard. The work in the metal workshop is hard; I have to stand all day. I came because of the salary (Guan Yin, 1967).

Guan Yin considered money more important than her physical well-being. For her the job was a means to get an income that could make her capable to achieve valued functionings. Not

everybody had higher salary in the Norwegian company though. The cleaning lady earned less than in her former jobs. She wished she could earn more, but liked the job because she did not have to work shift and was treated better by the Norwegian manager than her former bosses. Social relations in the workplace can to a certain degree outweigh low wages (Kabeer 2003) and contribute to women's well-being. I do not have data on previous wages for all women and the women did not give exact numbers on their own or their husbands' wages, thus the following numbers are approximate.

In the Norwegian company the net pay after insurance was around 2000 RMB per month for the white-collar girls, two earned around 1300. A couple of them had earned more in their earlier job because the wage level was lower in Jiangyin. The blue-collar workers earned 1000-1300 RMB; the average seemed to be around 1200. The gross salary was 1400-1500. The cleaning lady earned 700 RMB before the insurance was paid and 500 after, illustrating the devaluation of traditional female tasks. Her day was as long as the others' and she felt she deserved more pay. As a comparison, in the Norwegian company in Wuxi the female blue-collar workers earned 700-1000 RMB, the average being around 900-1000. The basic salary was 670 RMB. Most of the blue-collar women in the Yuecheng company seemed to earn at least 200 RMB more now than in their earlier jobs, for some an increase of over 20 percent. One of them had two times the pay of her earlier job as a waitress. Thus, their economic capabilities to have a decent standard of living were enhanced. Access to resources does not automatically translate into achievements though, and in chapter 8 this will be discussed further. Susana found that the Norwegian company paid more than other foreign companies. According to Chan (2001), the level of wages in foreign-funded enterprises ought to be 12 percent higher than that in state- or collective-owned enterprises. However, because of the competition between the local governments to attract investment, some foreign companies offer lower wages than the locally set minimum wage. Companies from Nordic and Western countries generally pay more than the Asian (Prof. Jufen Wang, pers. comm. 2005). The minimum salary in Jiangyin was 750 yuan, and the average 1575¹ yuan. In addition to the wage, the workers also accessed immaterial resources.

¹ Per capita annual net income in 2005 of rural households in Jiangsu was 5276 yuan, while the national average was 3255 yuan. For urban Jiangsu disposable income was 12319 yuan, while the national average was 10493 yuan (China Statistical Yearbook 2006).

7.3 Accessing immaterial resources

7.3.1 Working time

For two of the blue-collar women this job was the first after being home with their children for a period. One of them had approximately the same pay in her former job, but in resemblance with many of the other blue-collar women she had quit because shift-work and unstable working time was hard to combine with the expectations attached to the roles as mother and wife. The role conflict between productive and reproductive demands and responsibilities can restrict women's productive role and make them less likely to be able to work overtime or have demanding jobs (Summerfield 1994; Perrons 2004). As long as the women have the major responsibility for domestic work, it is essential for their well-being that they find a paid job that makes this combination easier. Friedman (1992) sees time as a scarce resource in the completion of household chores and one of women's practical interests.

In the Norwegian company the women had fixed working hours and salary, monthly payment and most of the Saturdays and Sundays off (on average 6 days per week). During the "Golden Week" after National Day on 1 October and Chinese New Year, they got one week off. According to Jane, who had been working in a Taiwanese company, companies from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China often gave the workers 2-3 days or no holiday. In the Norwegian company they seldom worked overtime, and if they did, they would be compensated. Ming Mei said they got double pay if they worked extra. According to the HR manager (see section 3.3.3), less than ten persons were paid that way. Thus, it is not clear whether the women knew in what form the payment was done, indicating lack of information. Working seven days a week was normal in some of the earlier companies and the working time varied with slack and busy seasons. Some days the blue-collar women worked 12 hours, other times there was no work and they were laid off. According to Whyte (1999), these are very common practices for TVEs because of higher claims for profit. Whyte finds that workers in general have better working conditions in Western-funded companies than state and collective enterprises as they bring elements from the institutional culture in their home countries. This makes jobs in Western companies very attractive to workers.

People in foreign factories feel more secure. They have a stable salary and it is good that we get food (Ming Mei, 1973)

The workers might be safer in foreign companies as they often have a greater power of resistance in recessions (Lim 1990). It is argued though (e.g. Harvey 2000; Perrons 2004) that global capital is always on the move for cheaper places to produce. This was the reason the Norwegian company came to China in the first place, leaving the Norwegian workers behind without a job. Because of China's abundance of cheap labour the company might not move, but wages and the need for acceptable working conditions can be kept at a low level. Most rural employees prefer harsh working conditions rather than the "agricultural toil" or no job (Whyte 1999: 181). Thus, the women are in a vulnerable position as the dependency theorists argued. The white-collar girls did not talk about the stability of the job, probably because they knew they were capable of finding a new job relatively easy. Some of the blue-collar women had experienced that other companies delayed the payment or only paid some of it monthly; the rest was paid in the end of the year. This was the case for many of their husbands. In this way the managers try to keep the employees, as the workers will lose the accumulated money if they quit before the end of the year. This practice has also been found in some foreign-funded enterprises (Chan 2001). The option to leave a job with less pay and irregular working hours had improved the women's well-being. It can be argued that the women's relative exploitation was reduced. This can potentially contribute to processes of empowerment as they may feel less like a means for other people, enhancing their self-worth and thereby their power within. Their choices had expanded and their social practice changed through higher wages and the fixed and reduced working hours, but within the frames of their ascribed roles and socio-material context. Thus, rather than transformative agency, the changed working conditions may have led to more effective agency.

Returning from the company, most of the blue-collar women did housework and made supper, but spent the rest of the evening in front of TV, reading magazines or knitting. They went to bed between eight and ten to be ready to get up early next morning. If they had Sunday off they did housework or went to the fields, visited parents and family, went shopping, played cards or mahjong or talked with neighbours, who seemed to always be around. The conversations focused on the family and daily life, like how to do housework and cooking and who was doing it. For a stranger like me, it seemed very idyllic and quiet, but the tight relationship with the neighbours might exert part of the social control many rural women want to escape through paid work (Kabeer 2003). Some of the younger blue-collar women went down-town with their friends, to karaoke or dancing. A few went to Jiangyin city to shop and have a look in the department stores, or walk in one of the new parks. The white-

collar girls showed greater mobility than the blue-collar women. This was probably partly because only two of them had children and three of them were single, and partly because most of them lived in the city where there were more opportunities. In addition, they earned more. In the spare time the white-collar girls went to cinemas, were surfing on the internet and at least one of them read English books, in addition to housework, watching TV and going shopping. They were eager to acquire new knowledge.

There were different opinions regarding more time off, but most of the blue-collar women seemed to prefer only one day as they wanted to earn more money. They did not want to work more though, as mentioned did many quit former jobs because it was hard to combine with the domestic responsibilities. They wanted the wages to be higher. One of them was Ming Mei. She and her husband had to pay back a loan of more than 80000 yuan because he had bought a truck and his father had been ill. When we were talking about time off, she ended up in some kind of paradox: *"I don't feel free...I'm a little confused, I have nothing to do, but I don't feel free"*. The absence of a sense of freedom can originate in lack of money, but also cultural norms and expectations. Salaff (1990) found that Chinese women in the paid labour force experienced a widening sphere of choice and a certain freedom through the purchase of consumer goods, but at the same time were restricted by a sense of obligation to their family. Capabilities are also restrained by the material structures; the lack of cheap public health care facilities put more demands on the individual and the households, which Ming Mei's loan demonstrates. For the white-collar girls, bad working conditions were more about the management.

7.3.2 Management

As mentioned, companies from Asian and neo-Confucian societies are considered worse than Western companies. One of the white-collar girls said joint ventures and Japanese and Taiwanese companies were meaner to the staff. According to Jane, the boss in the Taiwanese company was like a king and very strict. She liked the style of the Norwegian manager better. He was probably influenced by more democratic ideals than the authoritarian Confucian. Turner (2006) found that many younger professional women stopped working in Chinese firms because of the working culture and difficulties with male managers. The white-collar girls who had been in other jobs found the environment in the Norwegian company looser and less bureaucratic. They were allowed more freedom in their work and could enhance their mental capabilities through more challenging and creative tasks and were developing

intellectually and professionally. This fits with the findings of Wylie (2004) among female professionals in the private sector in Beijing and Shanghai. During my stay, the company arranged an English course for the white-collar workers. Although it was in the company's interest to improve the employees' language-skills, the workers appreciated the possibility to enhance their abilities further. I got the impression that the white-collar girls were vital for the Norwegian manager. They translated, provided information, joined meetings and dinners, and their beauty could be the extra touch that made deals go through. This may be the reason they were treated that well. They saw the manager daily, as the offices were in the same corridor.

The blue-collar workers did not meet the manager that often. According to Ting Ting, he would sometimes go to the work-shops, but the workers did not feel free to talk with him, they only smiled. The women seemed to have great respect for their superiors; also other women said that if they met the supervisor or leader they did not dare talk. This is probably a combination of women's subordinate position in society and a general respect for authorities, grounded in Confucianism. In general, the blue-collar women found the management in the Norwegian company strict, but good. In one of Ting Ting's earlier jobs, there was no formal management and the rules were set by the owner. She found the Norwegian company more organized, had a cleaner working environment and stricter quality control. This put higher demands on the workers, but in general they found the formal organization good. Was the company well organized when it came to welfare too?

7.3.3 Welfare

Health is both a functioning achievement and one of the most basic capabilities. Health can be linked to transformative agency as human resources enhance the ability to exercise choice (Kabeer 1999). The capability to function is important for our freedom to achieve (Sen 1995). The job in the Norwegian company could affect the workers' health in various ways, but I will not focus too much on the physical working conditions. The women's physical abilities and lived experience gave rise to different experiences of the Norwegian company. "*This factory is more complex [than the former job], I am unhappy working here*" (Mee, 1960). The problems she referred to were related more to the social environment than the company as such. In general, the blue-collar women felt less tired than before, but a couple of them found it hard to stand all day. According to the HR manager, the blue-collar workers had half an hour lunch break and were allowed a 10 minute break after they had finished a task, amounting to a total of 30 minutes per day. None of the women mentioned these breaks,

indicating they did not use this opportunity, maybe because of the presence of the supervisors. According to Pun (2005), the supervisors have considerable power over the workers. This could be the reason one of the blue-collar women said they were not allowed to talk to each other while they were working. The HR manager said there were no rules against talking. Thus, the supervisor might have used his power over the workers to deny them this right. There seemed to be some unwritten rules about behaviour and the cost of going against the expectations was maybe too great. The long term interests were better served by cooperating. Another explanation could be that the women were not aware of their rights. Even if there are rules and regulations, they do not always have to be followed or informed of.

Two of the blue-collar workers worried about the smell in the big workshop. One of them called it “poisonous” and said it made the hair turn yellow. The cotton masks were sometimes too hot to use in the summer and they were not sure if they were good enough. According to the manager, a new restriction obliged all the workers to use better masks, but I do not know if this was carried through after I left. One of the youngest blue-collar women was moved to the sewing department when she got pregnant because of this smell. The women were not sure whether the smell was detrimental to their health and were not in a position where they could negotiate for better conditions. Their weak bargaining position was probably a combination of the knowledge that they were easily replaceable and their subordinate position. Not being able to prevent harmful effects on your health and not being aware of your rights put women in a disempowered position. Their choices were restrained and their well-being affected negatively. At the same time, it seemed like they had worse conditions in their earlier jobs and besides, the Norwegian company paid insurance¹.

The insurance was one of the most important aspects by the job for the workers. With the reductions in, and commercialization of, public social welfare after reform, many have to buy private health insurances because they are not covered by pension plans. Without health insurance people are likely to have to pay their medical expenses themselves (Yan 1997). In the Party Congress in 2002 it was said that the state’s abilities to contribute to a welfare-system was limited; on the countryside the people still had to rely on their family as the

¹ This included Endowment insurance: 30% of the salary (22% from the enterprise and 8% from the employee), Unemployment insurance: 3% of the salary (2% from the enterprise and 1% from the employee), Industrial Injury Compensation Insurance: 0,6% of the salary (from the enterprise), Medical Care insurance: 10% of the salary (8% from the enterprise and 2% from the employee); Housing Accumulation Fund: 16% of the salary (8% from the enterprise and 8% from the employee); Procreate: 0, 5% of the salary (from the enterprise).

primary social security net (Hjellum 2003). According to Susana there was a department in Jiangyin that made sure the foreign companies signed contracts with the workers and paid their insurance. Chinese companies did neither. The HR manager said that some of the local companies could not afford to pay insurance and that the Norwegian company paid more than those who did. This made the company attractive. If the blue-collar workers were sick they would get 600 RMB for a month and 24 RMB (600/25) for one day, calculated as 80 percent of the local minimum wage of 750 RMB. The office-staff would get around 1000-1500 yuan, depending on their salary. According to the HR manager, the workers were not sick very often. It is common that foreign companies and SOEs are better than smaller, Chinese and private companies concerning insurance. Employment is the key to access basic social security like pension, health care and unemployment benefit schemes (Prof. Jufen Wang, pers. comm. 2005). Collective enterprises also pay insurance according to the town government. The insurance can have some unintended consequences though.

Traditionally, the parents have lived with their son after he married. Because of the one-child policy some families only had a daughter, which meant they could be alone in old-age. The pension they got through the company's insurance could potentially make them capable of taking care of themselves. Although many wealthy villages have developed their own old-age pension schemes, the general lack in rural areas makes many rural elderly, especially women, dependent on their children (Yan 1997). This can make the preference for boys continue (Du Jie & Kanji 2003). Thus, a potentially transformative effect is that the pension can lead to diminished daughter discrimination as it puts less economic importance of sons. This has been the case in the cities, where pensions and other economic factors have been more available. Elderly parents reside with daughters just as well as sons (Croll 1995; Connelly & Zheng 2003; Shu 2004). It is not clear whether Yuecheng had a pension scheme, but according to the workers, old people in town got a monthly basic pension of 80 yuan. Ana said she would have to provide for her parents when they retired, as there was no insurance in the companies they worked and they only had the basic pension. The blue-collar women were not sure how much pension they would get through the insurance, but one of them thought more than 600 yuan. According to the HR manager, the workers had to pay social insurance for a minimum of 15 years to get retirement payment. This probably made the women want to stay in the company. One of the female workers had bought a private insurance because she was 38 and would not

be able to accumulate enough years before retirement¹. When the blue-collar workers retired, they would be paid around 800-1100 yuan per month, according to the HR manager. Other companies offered maybe 700. The office-staff would get around 1000-1300 yuan. For government employees the retirement payment was around 1500 yuan. Many of the workers hoped the pension would be enough not to be reliant upon their son or daughter; the children should be free and independent. This was maybe the reason any said the daughters could choose marriage partner themselves as long as they could check if he was a proper guy. They wanted them to be free and independent.

7.3.4 Intrinsic values

As with the cleaning lady, there are other aspects with paid employment that can outweigh low wages. Paid employment can be a functional achievement in itself if it enhances the worker's well-being, for example through social relationships (Kabeer 2003):

My husband's income is enough for the whole family, but I will not abandon my job. I want more money. I prefer to go to work, it makes me happy. Staying at home all day is boring. It gives me money and I am happy with my colleagues. I feel good at work (Mei, 1968).

Besides the extrinsic value of earning money, the job gave Mei other returns. She and the blue-collar women in general found it boring to stay at home. Socializing with other women can be important and to meet other women at work with common interests can contribute to collectivization and political power. Going to work made Mei happy, this is central for her well-being. The income was important and it can give a sense of independence. Ming Mei did not have to ask her husband for money and Yun said the money made her capable to survive by herself. This indicates strengthened agency and fallback position, and an increased likelihood of breaking the implicit contract. Yun is no longer dependent on the household for her well-being. Income can be personally liberating and women can gain increased power to renegotiate relations in the household and leave unsatisfactory marriages (Gao 1994; Kabeer 2001, 2003; Lim 1983). Only one of the women was divorced and although I did not ask the reason why, I find it reasonable to believe that without her own income, it would have been difficult to manage the expenses for herself and the daughter.

Thus, paid work can enhance women's dignity, self-worth and sense of agency, which are central in processes of empowerment as they have to start from within (Kabeer 2003). For Jun

¹ Retirement age is 55 for women and 50 in physical occupations. For men it is 60.

(1963) paid work was important for her self-esteem: *“If I work I don’t feel useless, but happy”*. She was proud of her job, but said it was nothing special. Other women said there was no such thing as pride, the job was just ok. They did it because it gave them money. Jun knew how to do her job and did not want to change. She seemed very self-confident and happy, and my interpreter said *“I think she feels happy”*. Her 17 year old daughter was the only other person in the household. Her husband was working in another place in the country, but sent her money every month. The two of them did not need much money to have a good life, and she was satisfied with her wage. Jun and Ming Mei (section 7.3.1) exemplifies that the same income does not result in the same levels of well-being. Different family situation or personal characteristics can restrain the capabilities and make some people need more resources than others.

7.4 The ability to have chosen otherwise

Apparently, the job in the Norwegian company was the women’s conscious choice and a response to a new opportunity. The question is if they could choose not to work? Because of the development, the cleaning lady (1972) found that the price of goods had increased more than the salary. One of the male white-collar workers said it was necessary that the wife worked to maintain the living standard. Already in 1980 a former vice-minister of labour said that it takes *“two to three employed workers to maintain the living standard of a family of five”* (Robinson 1985: 35). This can make women’s incomes fully absorbed even where the women have control over them, making this control more of an added responsibility than an expansion of choices and empowerment (Perrons 2004). The divorced woman found it very difficult to manage economically because she was the main provider for the family of four. One of the blue-collar women and Ana said it was a “high pressure” for consumption. Ana also worried about her future wedding as she felt she should help her parents economically with the furniture they would buy for her house when she married. She was not saving for this though, but spent all her money.

The blue-collar women were satisfied with their job, but they did not want their daughter to end up in the same position:

I would be depressed and upset, it would mean she hadn’t done well in her studies, I hope it will not happen. She could do it as a last step (Ting Ting, 1973).

Ting Ting liked her job though and felt proud because the Norwegian company was really good compared to other companies in town; people were envious of her. Many blue-collar women expressed this ambivalence. They felt lucky because their lived experience had shown that this job was one of the best they could get in Yuecheng if they wanted a decent salary and no shift work, but the job in itself was nothing special and they did not want their daughter to work in a similar place. It was not easy to find a satisfying job and they did not see many possibilities for changing their situation. One of the women said *“I can not think about what can not be”*. Fang (1971) thought it would have been better to stay at home than going to work, but it was impossible so she did not think about it. Fang felt better in the Norwegian company than in her earlier jobs though. When I asked her if she liked her former job, she said *“Even if I didn’t like the job, I still had to survive”*. This situation would have been one of a desperate need for money and disempowerment, where she could easily be treated as a means for other people and exploited. Through expanded job opportunities this situation can be mitigated.

The blue-collar women had accepted the situation, or rather resigned, and hoped they could give their children a better life. The main complaint of the present situation was the salary. Some capabilities are constrained by lack of money: *“What changes I can make depends on how rich I am, I can not think about it”* (1972) and *“How change? It is not easy. I would like to pay back the money, after this, think about the future”* (1981). Other capabilities are constrained by the social context. Available jobs have to match their personal characteristics such as education and age. Tai (1980) got the job because her competitor was older than her. Age was one of the reasons why the oldest women wanted to keep the status quo, it ruled out choices: *“I don’t want to change, I am too old. It is difficult to find a job, I will retire soon”* (Hua 1957). Also younger women considered themselves too old to find other jobs. Ming Mei was only 32, but said it was *“difficult to find one that is as good as this one; women at this age always find it difficult”*. They did not have many demands, they wanted to stay until they retired and not have any changes. *“I would like to have the present job and a stable living. That’s all”* (Fang, 1971). After working for companies where the women hardly new if they had a job the day after or a salary in the end of the month, stability was of major importance. The women had families to support and domestic duties. In this regard it can be argued that working in the Norwegian company led to more effective agency as they had more time to fulfil their traditional roles.

According to Jill, “*People are traditional they don’t like changes. They like to work today as yesterday and tomorrow*”. If this was the “average Chinese” the white-collar girls represented a new mode of thinking. They seemed concerned with developing intellectually and learning new things. They had a stronger sense of agency concerning work, expressed more self-esteem and self-confidence and knew they possessed resources the labour market demanded, being well educated and mastering English. They had more power to act upon their goals. Nevertheless, they were conscious that they continuously had to improve their abilities:

It (change) depends on our ability. If not hard studying, maybe nothing can change...but if study harder, have good opportunity. Can change a lot... (Sarah).

Sarah did exams to get a “higher career” and maybe move to another city to work. This was also the case for many of the other white-collar girls. They did different courses in their spare time, blurring the line between work and leisure:

In the free time, I do an exam for a special certificate. You can buy the books and pay the exam fee. After work I go to the school where I graduated; there is a library where I can read books. (...) It all depends on me, no teacher teaches me. This makes it harder to pass the exam. It gives the same qualifications as university. I pay less money than in the school, there you pay 30 000, for the self study 2000 for 17 subjects, the whole thing. [It is] suitable for the poor people. (...) If I get high education certificate, maybe my salary will improve. If several years later I change job, my abilities are already improved (Amber, 1982).

Because Amber had not teacher, she needed a strong agency to do the studies. But she knew that with more education, she could reach even higher. Educated, professional women form a unique group in the Chinese society. They have more employment opportunities and the potential to change gender roles (Wylie 2004). Even if none of the white-collar girls had any concrete plans of leaving the job, they wanted to experience more and were open for changes if something more interesting came up. Education gives rise to changed aspirations for women (Shu 2004). For the white-collar girls the job was even more of a functioning achievement as their challenging tasks made them develop intellectually. “*I improve in every aspect*” (Sophie). The white-collar girls had a broad outlook on life and more thoughts about the future. They wanted to travel to other countries, and were generally much reflected. Education can strengthen women’s agency and make it more informed and skilled, expand individual frames of reference and change the way they view themselves in relation to the outside world (Shu 2004).

The blue-collar women did not think much about the future or the changes taking place in society, they were too occupied with earning money and the daily life. This was maybe what Sarah, originally from the countryside, found as village-people's narrow-minded way of thinking. *"They only think about earning money to food."* She found it hard to move back to the countryside, the simple life there had become too boring and there were not enough possibilities. According to McLaren (2004), many girls migrating to the city experience this. The backward state of the countryside does not fit with them as objects of the modernization process. I found that the white-collar girls were able to think more abstract and related the changes happening to macro-structural events in politics and economy. They generally saw more negative effects of the increased industrialization, but also some of the blue-collar women mentioned pollution and the growing gap between rich and poor. Because of their weaker position in the labour market though, the blue-collar women focused more on the positive impacts of development as it provided employment and thereby access to income. The statement to one of the husbands seemed to represent what most of the blue-collar women were thinking: *"Money is the most important, whatever changes, we just hope to have more money"*. In general, the answers indicated that the women did not work for mere survival, but because the job was a functional achievement in itself and made them able to increase the living standard, or functioning achievements, of the household. This strategy has been found among married women in the Asian Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs) (Lim 1990). It also made the women able to save some money and thereby get more security.

Summary

The Norwegian company had expanded the women's employment opportunities and they had consciously chosen to work there as it was perceived to enhance their well-being. According to the women, their economic capabilities had improved; the company was more regulated and required shorter work days, paid insurance and gave a better security. This can lead to a strengthened agency and processes of empowerment, but it can also lead to a more effective agency rather than transformative. The job was also a functioning achievement as it gave the women happiness, self-worth and economic independence. Especially the white-collar girls felt they were treated better as some of them had been working in different Asian companies with strict bosses and regulations. The women might have said this because they knew I was Norwegian though. There were room for improvements concerning the working environment, general information and wages. All the blue-collar women had worked other places before and would have been in another job if they did not work in the Norwegian company. They did

not want to change; it was difficult to find better jobs with their low education, in some cases high age, and restricted mobility because of their hukou. The white-collar girls were satisfied with their job, but were open for changes. In the next chapter I turn to the contemporary household and see what functioning achievements the job in the Norwegian company has brought in that connection.

8 The contemporary household

Paid work outside the home can lead to increased standard of living and strengthen women's bargaining position in the intrahousehold decision-making. Decisions regarding use of money, the gender division of labour and daughters' education can indicate if this holds true. What has changed from their mothers' lives and the women's childhood?

8.1 The household

The legal marriage age in China is 22 for men and 20 for women, and by the age of 29, 98 percent of rural women are married (Jacka 1997). Most of the female workers who were married had been introduced to the husband by parents or relatives, at the age of 23-27. The youngest got married at 18. It did not seem like this had changed much, also the white-collar girls got married around 25. After marriage, the women moved to the house of their parents-in-law in another village, in accordance with the Confucian exogamous, patrilocal tradition. This is said to increase the husband's authority and the wife's relative insecurity, and most relationships between the spouses are characterised by reserve and distance even if there is more equity now than before the revolution (Jacka 1997). Within a year after marriage the majority of the women had a child and they quit their jobs to take care of it, indicating lack of maternity leave. All the married women, except from one, were living with their husbands who were working locally, six of them in Norsafe. As expected, most of the husbands earned a bit more than their wife, ranging from 800 (the three month trial period in Norsafe) to 3000-4000 RMB per month. The average was around 2000 RMB, and the men with highest earnings were doing some kind of self-employed business, like driving trucks for companies.

The Yuecheng women had a countryside hukou and most of them had rice-fields of between 0.7 to 2 mu. They had lost land because of industrialization and the compensation depended on the economic situation of their village. Some got a one-time amount; others got some money every year. The fields were mostly grown by themselves, but some hired help, especially during the harvest season. The fields provided enough rice for some of the families, saving them around 300 yuan per person annually. Excess rice could be sold at an average of 500-600 yuan per year, depending on the prices. Most families grew vegetables, but for some this was more about quality than the money saved.

Apart from fewer children, the composition of the contemporary household for the blue-collar women had not changed much from their childhoods. It consisted of the woman, her husband, one or two children and one or two parents-in-law. Half of the blue-collar women lived only with her husband and child; in some cases the parents-in-law lived with another son, or they had passed away. There have been an increasing number of nuclear households in the prospering parts of rural China (Sargeson 2004). Nuclear households tend to weaken the traditional patriarchal system as household decision-making has become between husband and wife and not the parents-in-law. This has led to a rise in women's status (Gao 1994). The increase in nuclear households can be seen as an unintended consequence of economic development, transforming some patriarchal structures. Two of the blue-collar women were living with their parents, one because she was divorced, the other by preference. Living with the wife's parents is relatively common (Sargeson 2004). The white-collar girls represented a more varied pattern. The two from Yuecheng had moved back to the countryside, one to her parents, the married girl to her husband and parents-in-law. The other girls lived in Jiangyin: One shared a flat with friends, one rented a room, one lived with her parents, two lived in flats with their husband and one with her parents-in-law.

The women and their husbands were the main providers in the household. Few of the parents-in-law had a paid job, but they made important contributions to the household by taking care of the children, doing housework and growing vegetables. In return, it is usually expected that the young couple take care of them when they get old, a kind of mutual aid and dependence or "intergenerational contract" (Ikels 1993, in Stockman 2000). The "utilitarian familism" has been one of the major building blocks in China's welfare system, and has made direct welfare and relief unnecessary (Wong 1998). The blue-collar women who only lived with their husbands stayed at home to take care of the child until kindergarten at six or school at seven, when they could start working again, often in another factory. Some sent their children to live with the grandparents for shorter or longer periods, especially during summer holiday when the parents had to work. The daughter to one of the white-collar girls from Jiangyin was living with her grand-mother. She went to see her once a week. The extended family has intergenerational ties beyond household boundaries (Chen 2005).

8.2 Tangible functioning achievements

Some functioning achievements can be represented by the standard of living of the household. Improvements in living standards are often the result of women's participation in paid work (Hare 1999; Lie & Lund 1994).



Figure 5: A typical countryside house. Rice grass left to dry in front (Photo: L. Rønning).

One of the blue-collar women lived in a new flat with her husband and daughter; the rest lived in relatively big houses with two or three floors (figure 5). One of the houses was 12 x 9 metres and had 10 rooms, which seemed the average size. Most of the women had grown up in one-floored houses and saw the new houses as part of the increased prosperity in the countryside. It seemed like a trend of building two-floored houses was beginning in the early 1980s, when some of the women had to start working to finance a new house for the family. Sargeson (2004) finds that these houses in the prospering provinces on China's coastline show the suburbanisation of village communities and are symbols of modernity and the capitalist society.

In the houses I visited, there was a small bathroom and kitchen (Figure 6a) on the ground floor. There was also a reception room for guests, which was used for meals or storage of bikes and had two adjacent rooms. The first floor contained living room, two to three bedrooms and a bathroom (figure 6b). The houses were generally well equipped with microwaves, fans, washing-machines and TVs, and were in many cases built by the groom's parents, and redecorated before the wedding. Durable consumer goods and furniture are often bought for the marriage (Dai 1999), but in some cases it had been changed. In other houses

the equipment was old and worn, probably because the wedding was a long time ago and the family had not replaced it, or it was dusty and seemed not to have been used for a while. Mei had a washing machine, microwave and other basic equipment, but seldom used it. Some houses had water-purifiers. In similarity with VCRs, they are often “lifestyle signifiers” for rural people and not essentials (Sargeson 2004). Use of status goods has also been observed in rural Malaysia by Lie & Lund (1994).



Figure 6: A kitchen and a bathroom (Photo: L. Rønning).

Durable consumer goods are not available to everyone in China as they require a certain income and access to electricity and piped water. These are examples of practical interests that can save the women time completing household chores (Friedman 1992). Thus, economic development can meet women’s practical interests and reduce the burden of housework. Increased prosperity can also lead to more housework as a result of higher standards of nutrition, cleanliness, comfort and fashion (Robinson 1985). Most women seemed to have a washing machine, but they normally washed by hand. According to Jacka (1997), this can take rural women half a day once or twice a week. Some of my informants did not trust the machine to wash clean enough; other reasons could be that they wanted to save water and electricity. The machine was mainly used for bedcovers and after using it, they rinsed the clothes in the river to get rid of the soap. According to Robinson (1985), there is also a belief that washing machines will ruin the clothes. Thus, cultural norms can restrict its usefulness. Sargeson (2004) found that one of her informants still washed clothes in the pond to see what was going on in the village. Some choices can have unintended consequences. Washing machines can change women’s social practice and withdraw them from the public sphere.

This reduces their time with other women, but I suggest this is outweighed by participating in the paid workforce. Through the purchase of the washing machine and household appliances, the women's agency may have become more effective. Other practical interests that had been met were improved roads and traffic conditions. Many women saw better roads as a positive consequence of economic development; the buses could reach the villages and made it easier to move around.

Different lived experiences give basis for different expectations to life and living standards. The blue-collar women tended to compare their situation to life before, or other people with the same background: *"Life is well off. I don't want to compare with rich families. It is ok for us"*. For most of the women, especially the oldest, there had been big changes materially from their childhoods. Compared to their mothers' lives, the changes had been profound. In addition to bigger houses and the ability to leave farm work, the blue-collar women felt they had a better and more convenient life in other aspects as well. In addition to earning money, many women focused on basic functionings like clothes and food, which can partly be related to the general development in society. The blue-collar women's freedom to live a valued life had improved, but most had a modest pattern of expenditure: *"It was maybe poorer before, now it is better, but not very rich"*. Some had a water toilet, a few used a bucket. The house where the divorced woman lived with her parents and daughter looked older and poorer than the other houses, but it was a big change from the youth of her mother who lived with the pigs (section 6.1.1). She would like to decorate the house if she earned more money, but in spite of the lack of money, she was happy. Well-being and the quality of life are not only dependent on work and wages. Most of the blue-collar women wanted to increase their living standard, buy new equipment to the house or redecorate it, pay back their loan, and save for the future. Tai (1980) said that if she earned more, she would like to buy nice make-up and better clothes, which indicates that a certain standard of living was achieved and the basic functionings covered. This was also indicated by others: *"I would save, not buy things. Only the essentials are necessary"* and *"No idea, maybe improve our life-conditions"*.

The blue-collar women did not spend a lot on commodities, but went shopping a few times a year in the midlevel shops, where they paid 100-200 yuan for a piece of clothing. The new shopping-centres in Jiangyin sold international brands at western prices and were too expensive.

For the white-collar girls who came from a farmer's household, the changes from their childhoods and mothers' lives were particularly big:

[My life] is happier than my mother's, we can use the internet, play games, go to the bar and restaurant, do shopping, and the traffic is more modernized. (...) (Sarah, 1978).

Sarah and Jane had internet at home. Sarah did not focus on basic functionings, but internet, restaurants and the possibilities that the urban life offered. The opportunity-structures were bigger in the cities. The white-collar girls had a much freer life economically than their mothers and the blue-collar workers and the way they spent money reflected their stage in the life-cycle. If they were unmarried they seemed to spend more on clothes and fun. Some of the girls went shopping in the expensive shopping centres, among them Sarah: *"In the walking street there are two department stores, they are expensive, but I will choose the clothes I like most"*. Ana lived with her parents and gave them 500-1000 yuan every month, the rest she spent on clothes and karaoke. Some of the girls spent money on things like mp3 players and going out. The white-collar girls had generally a more urban life-style, but reflected traditional values concerning family. The girls gave the parents money and gifts, and saved in case they or the parents-in-law got sick. Rose said she would sacrifice her career if she had to choose between her parents and her job: *"I can choose another career, but I have only one set of parents"*. She wanted to move back to her parents to take care of them. Filial piety is still strong in spite of more liberal views and cultural tastes among the youth (Whyte 1997, in Stockman 2000). The income did not only contribute to the standard of living, it could also give the married female workers a stronger position in the intrahousehold decision-making.

8.3 Intrahousehold decision-making over income

Pooling of income was normal among my informants. Pooling can make women loose control over their earnings (Ho 1995). Except from one woman who said her husband kept several hundreds for himself, this did not seem to be the case for neither of the two groups of workers. According to Jacka (1997), the husband's control over the household resources decreased and the wife's bargaining power increased when Chinese rural women started working in industry. In the majority of Chinese rural and urban families, the wife has the responsibility for the basic necessities, but decisions on major issues are made together with the husband (Stockman et al. 1995; Jacka 1997). This corresponds to my findings; the women were responsible for shopping to "daily life" and they used money as they pleased for less

expensive things and things to themselves. Only one woman asked her husband before she bought anything. Larger expenditures were discussed and decisions apparently jointly made. It is argued though that men have the final say in the big important decisions (Du Jie & Kaji 2003). Whether this was the case for my informants is uncertain. Several of the informants, including one of the husbands and a woman in the town government, claimed that it is normal in China that the wife controls the money. Compared to other countries, Chinese women have a relatively high status in the family (Prof. Jufen Wang, pers. comm. 2005). Hence, the women I interviewed did not differ from most other Chinese women in this respect, but their choices regarding into which functionings the income could be converted might have broadened.

Concerning the monthly expenses, the blue-collar women used money on electricity, water and gas in addition to food, and they varied from 500 yuan to spending both spouses' wages:

We spend around 30-40 yuan for electricity, water more than 10 yuan; we have a well where we wash clothes. We just eat one meal a day at home, so we spend around 300-500 yuan per month on food. The fuel is several 1000s per month, but this is on his bill since he drives the truck. Our daughter is in the first year of secondary school, so in the beginning of the term we have to pay 1300 yuan and then 140 for books. The food is not included, so in total we spend around 4000 per year; sometimes we also pay for private tutoring. ...we secretly save for our daughter, we want her to have education (Mei, 1968).

This pattern of expenditure seemed to be the normal, although some households spent more. It seemed like the women and the households tried to keep the expenses at a low level, and many appreciated the free lunch at the company. In addition to private tutoring, Sarah said it was common for parents to give unofficial gifts to the teacher. Most of the women bought food in the local market, but some went to the new supermarket. It was more expensive, but the food was very fresh. Almost all the women saved, using different strategies. As indicated by Mei, some of the workers had a well they used for housework, while tap-water was mainly for cooking. Dried rice grass was also used for cooking to save money on gas. One family had built an extra house they were renting out. Most of the families managed to save a substantial amount every month, in some cases one of the wages. According to one of my interpreters, all Chinese people save. Savings could serve as a buffer in hard times; if someone in the family fell ill, it could be a substantial expense if they did not have insurance. Two of the blue-collar workers had to borrow thousands of yuan because of illness in the family. The insurance from

the company covered some of the expenses for the workers, but not other family members. Children got insurance through school though. Being able to save indicates that they did not live on the margins or worked in a desperate need for income.

The women saved for old age, presents to parents or weddings, loans, and for their son's or daughter's education. The divorced woman did not have the same ability to save for her daughter because she was the main supporter in the family and had to pay back a loan of 50000 yuan her ex-husband had left her. With few support schemes for higher education¹ the family's financial capabilities becomes an important factor in addition to where you live (Turner 2006). According to the workers, university amounted to around 10000 yuan per year, more popular subjects like information technology (IT), business management and biology cost around 15000. Money is maybe particularly important today, as private institutions are becoming an alternative to the public (Turner 2006). Another expense would be the children's wedding. Some of the women saved to buy their son a house when he married, which would require quite a lot of money. As an example, one of the countryside houses I visited was built in 1994 for 150 000 yuan. A 100 square meters flat in Jiangyin would amount to at least 400 000 yuan, according to the HR manager. The parents of the bride provide some furniture and equipment and some of the women probably saved for that. There have been attempts of abolishing dowry and betrothal gifts, but there has been a revival in rural areas, partly because of increased prosperity after economic reform (Bossen 1999). According to Sargeson (2004), do many young women in China's wealthier regions claim they will only marry a man with a new mansion. According to Ming Mei can the poor men not find a wife. Hence, in a society where there are fewer girls than boys, buying a house can be a strategy to secure their son a bride and acquire prestige to the family.

8.4 Intrahousehold decision-making over domestic labour

Housework and meal preparation can be time-consuming. I have no data on how much time the women spent on housework, but they seemed to get up early in the morning to do some cleaning and make rice-porridge for breakfast. Jacka (1997) found that rural women spent between 1.5 to 6 hours per day in preparing three meals, with an average of 2.9 hours.

¹ According to Kong Yi in Yuecheng town government, poor families could get some support from a foundation for university. There was also an arrangement where rich households could aid the poor.

If the mother-in-law lived in the household she normally helped with the housework, but the particular division of labour varied. In some households she did almost all of it, in other households nothing, mostly due to high age. This was the case among both the blue-collar and white-collar workers.

I get up at 0630, before I get up, my mother in law finish the housework, like wash clothes and do some cleaning, she gets up at 0500. Then I read or learn something, sometimes a book, before my son gets up... There is not much housework to do, after we have finished dinner I will wash the dishes, my mother in law makes the dinner. She has no work now, she is only at home. She does most of the housework; she makes breakfast and washes clothes. I sometimes wash my son's or my own clothes (Susana, 1977)

The sharing of housework between the two women has not always been the case though. Traditionally, the mother-in-law dominated over the daughter-in-law. With women's entrance to the labour force after 1949 they had to share the domestic work to a greater degree (Jacka 1997). With the daughter-in-law's access to paid employment, the power relations in the household decision-making changed, affecting the traditional hierarchy within the same gender. If the woman did not live with her parents-in-law, was she able to renegotiate the traditional roles between the genders as well?

8.4.1 The husband

The majority of the women who did not live with the mother-in-law did most or all of the housework. Nuclear households tend to increase women's domestic workload (Jacka 1997). It seemed like most of the female workers, no matter age, found it natural that the woman did the housework. Guan Yin (1967) laughed and said that, of course housework was the women's responsibility and the cleaning lady (1972) thought housework had to be done by a woman. The division of labour was apparently not related to the perceived value of men's paid work versus women's paid work, as only a couple of the women considered the husband's job more important. Most of the blue-collar women claimed the jobs had equal importance as they needed two incomes to have a decent life. The result was a double-burden of work for the women. According to the public discourse, women should participate in paid employment to increase the family's living standard and at the same time be responsible for the domestic work. The husbands were exempted from housework because they had long days and hard work, besides there was not much housework to do anyway. The validity of this argument can be questioned though. Tao (1981) contradicted herself by saying that she

wanted to move to an apartment because the house they lived in was too big and took too much time to clean. This wish was uttered by other women as well. There can be some hidden conflicts in the intrahousehold decision-making.

In spite of the consciousness around their necessary economic contribution to the household, the implicit contracts still tie women's roles to household responsibilities as wives and mothers, while men are tied to market work as breadwinners (Bian & Zuo 2001). Traditional gender roles do not change simply because of women's economic contribution to the household. The women seemed to think that the husband ought to be the breadwinner; Sophie said it was not good if she earned more than her husband, and according to Tai (1980):

I hope there's a chance for a better job for my husband. Maybe his job is more important. He is the supporter of the family; he must have the responsibility to support it.

Tai finds that her husband must have the responsibility to support the family. She earned 900 yuan per month; he earned "more than 1000". Thus, her income made up almost half the household budget and she made an important contribution. Later she also said that the family could not live without her salary. Instead of hoping for a better job for herself, she wanted her husband to go outside the village to find one. He should be responsible for supporting the family, while she would stay to take care of the house. Chinese women are taught the traditional female virtue of "sharing", where they are supposed to be satisfied with sharing their husband's success while they take less challenging jobs and keep the house (Li 1995). Women should support their husband and his career and devote themselves to, and make sacrifices for, him and the family:

If the husband doesn't like to do housework, it has to be the woman's responsibility. But if he likes to share, it is better (Fang, 1971).

Whereas the husband is given a choice whether to do housework or not, the woman is imposed the responsibility. It is in her nature to do reproductive work. A normal day for the blue-collar workers started early in the morning:

I get up at 0500 am, I make breakfast; I prepare for my son. I clean the house, wash clothes, and if I have time to, I go to the field to grow vegetables. (...) After work I go home and do housework and prepare supper. I wash clothes by hand; I seldom use the washing machine. After supper I visit neighbours. If I am busy, I watch TV. Almost every day I go to the neighbours. Around 8 pm I go to bed (Yun, 1968).

The children and husband normally got up later, and he did not do any housework:

He does nothing. He just stays at home and plays cards. If I feel tired, I ask for help and he helps. But he is lazy. Before he did some housework, now he does nothing. He watered the vegetables in the field; now I am doing it. He comes back late, when it is already supper. He is a boss, he has other things to do after he finishes. I think it is ok that I do all the housework (Hua, 1957).

There is some ambivalence in the answer. Hua thinks it is ok that she does all the housework, but at the same time she says the husband is lazy and does not do any housework anymore. His laziness can be a form of passive protest and resistance (Wolf 1990) in the cooperative conflicts. It seems like Hua would like to have some help, but being socialized to be a virtuous wife and good mother, she is caught in a traditional role with few choices or alternative ways of organization. The resulting double burden is perceived as “fair” even if it undermines women’s well-being (West & Zimmerman 1987; Kabeer 1999). On the contrary, Bian & Zuo (2001) found among couples in Beijing that a sense of unfairness could be invoked by the failure to perform the culturally prescribed roles. Bian & Zuo argue that when Chinese female actors fulfil their traditional roles they do not do it as passive victims of tradition, but that it works as a resource in marriage and give the women greater bargaining power. It can be argued though, that if women’s well-being is adversely affected by the double-burden, the traditional gender roles ought to be changed.

Nevertheless, not all the women thought housework was the women’s responsibility and said that the one who was free could do it. In some cases the husband helped his wife, but she did most of it. Hong (1969) did most of the housework before, but after her husband began working in the Norwegian company a few months ago they were free at the same time and started to share. The sharing of housework was even more pronounced among the white-collar girls and their husbands, but the data is limited as only two of the four married white-collar girls lived in a nuclear household. Jane (1980) said that according to Chinese culture housework was the woman’s responsibility, but nowadays the men could take part. Still, she had quite a traditional attitude as she wanted to move into her son’s house when he married and do the housework. Traditional gender roles were prevalent:

I do most of the housework. If I can keep the family nice and the house clean everybody is happy. I think I am happy. My husband does some cooking and cleaning, but it is mostly done by me. I don’t have to ask him, he does it himself (Sophie, 1978).

Her husband's voluntary participation in housework may be related to higher education as it can lead to more egalitarian gender values for both women and men and change traditional gender roles (Gao 1994; Shu 2004; Turner 2006). Nevertheless, Sophie still does most of the housework. When she fulfils her part of the implicit contract and keeps the house clean, she thinks she is happy. Bian and Zuo (2001) found among women in Beijing that they did housework for their families to show their love and care. The capability to change gender roles through education can be limited by the hidden curriculum that reflects the dominant values of the elite in society, which the last decades have been focusing on traditional gender roles (Du Jie & Kanji 2003; Shu 2004). Access to resources can lead to a strengthened power position in the household and a renegotiated division of housework, but gender ideology and patriarchy plays a profound role in China. Domestic work is still considered women's responsibility (Bian & Zuo 2001; Chen 2005). Because the implicit contracts are based in cultural norms and part of our identity, they take time to change.

8.4.2 The children

According to Jacka, rural married women often share the housework with their daughters, while unmarried sons normally do not do any (1997). This did only partly hold true in the households of my informants. Not only did the sons not do any housework; the daughters were exempted too. The children should use the time after school to do homework and study. According to Fai (1976), all parents want their children to go to university. There had been a great change in the roles as daughter, contrasting the childhood of the blue-collar workers and the view that housework was a woman's responsibility:

My mother told me it was important to do housework and not study. I don't want my daughter to do housework or go to the field; she should learn (Jun, 1963)

There have been some striking changes in the view upon daughters and education. The way daughters are socialized can lead to changes in the taken-for-granted norms and customs, and the implicit contracts. Women's sense of inferiority comes through primary socialization, thus a change in women's experience as daughters can help redefine their roles and status (Papanek 1990; Croll 1995). As indicated, the expectations to the role as wife may not have changed that much and many of the women thought that the daughter should do the housework when she married. Jun did not share this view: *"I want my daughter to have more freedom, a better life than mine"*. In this way gender roles can change.

Why did the mother not want the daughter's help with the housework, but let them spend the time studying? One reason could be the one-child policy, as the only child becomes very precious and easily spoiled (Robinson 1985). It seemed like the women sacrificed their own well-being for that of their children, acting like altruistic mothers. They did not focus on their own well-being, but almost exclusively answered in terms of their family and children when I asked about hopes for the future in general or themselves in particular. This way of answering is normal for Chinese rural women, according to Jacka (1997). *"I never think about myself, I just hope that my daughter will have a good future"* and *"My only purpose in life is my son"*. To put the family in front of themselves can be a perceived interest response, but also a way of securing their long-term interests as sacrifices for the children now will be reciprocated through filial piety. Cultivating and manipulating the relationships with their sons has been the traditional way for Chinese women to go against the patriarchal structures (Jacka 1997). As the values of the white-collar girls indicate, there are no signs that parents will receive less economic aid in the future. Thus, giving the children the economic aid and time to gain the necessary academic skills for higher education can be seen as a strategy of the parents to try to maintain or improve the family's social position in society (Stockman 2000; Li & Tsang 2003). The mother has to invest more time and effort than the father though, doing the domestic work. It is argued that the Chinese rural women have to perceive their interests as not always coinciding with those of the family (Papanek 1990, in Jacka 1997). In the cities, daughters have become a substitute son and receive the same amount of resources as boys (Shu 2004). One of the husbands said they wanted their daughter to earn much money so that they could rely on her when they got old. Maybe the filial piety is taken a step further; they invest in their daughter's education so that she can earn even more than if she had to work from an earlier stage? Traditional gender roles might be adapted to the changing society.

The development of society has in different ways changed the expectations to girls:

I hope my son and daughter accept more education. In ancient time, if the daughters could not write and read, it was not a problem. Today it is a problem without education (Hua, 1957)

Structural changes have put more demands on women today; they are no longer just inside people, but also "outside" people who have to participate in paid work. There has also been a focus in the public discourse since the 1980s on bringing up well educated, "quality children" as a part of the modernization project (Croll 1995: 169). The value of daughters can increase because the economic development after reform has created more work opportunities for

women. In Taiwan, it was found that as development provided more income, parents invested in both daughters' and sons' education (Parish & Willis 1993, in Michelson & Parish 2000). Combined with the one-child policy, there might be more money to spend on fewer children, but the parents have to perceive the long term gains of education as outweighing the short term of a working daughter. This seemed to be the case among my informants. According to one of the male white-collar workers, fewer children and more universities have made it easier to enter universities now than 10 years ago. Poor quality of schools has been a reason some parents are reluctant sending the children to school (Brown & Park 2001), but with the economic development the schools might be improved. According to one of the workers, a new school had been built in Yuecheng as a result of the economic development.

The intergenerational changes concerning education can also take place because some mothers want to make up for their own deprivations (Croll 1995):

I hope my daughter's life can be better than mine. I don't want her to go the same way as me. She should get education and a high level school, and a good job, and then her life will be better. I don't have any hopes for myself (Ting Ting, 1973).

Education was the key to a good job and thereby a better life. For many of the blue-collar women a better life was synonymous with moving to the city, a land of dreams the countryside people have been shut out of because of the hukou system:

Of course I would like my daughter to go outside Yuecheng town, to urban areas. All of us want to move. I think there are more people in the cities, and it is well developed. There are beautiful parks, you can go there and have fun. Life in the cities is good, wonderful (Ming Mei 1973).

The women did not always have a clear perception of the difference between the city and the countryside, but some of them found the quality of schools and companies better in the cities. Through higher education the children could break free from the hukou system.

It is hard to say if the women are able to give their daughters the education they hope for as only the daughter of Hua (1957) had reached working-age. She was as a nurse in a hospital, an education that requires college. Whether her younger brother would get an even higher education is not possible to predict though. It seemed like the deep-seated preference for boys was changing, but the fact that the girl was the oldest in the two-child families, showed that it

has been prevalent until recently: *“I was happy when I heard it was a son, I got pregnant after nine years. My life is for my son”* (Guan Yin, 1967)

This woman had a daughter who was 14 and a son who was 6. Another blue-collar woman who had a daughter said she would like to have another child if she earned more money, contradicting that she earlier in the interview said she did not want more children. It could indicate that she preferred to have a son, but was prevented by economy and that some of the other women had faced the same problem, but did not tell. Bearing sons has traditionally been one of the most important ways of ensuring respect and security for Chinese women within their husband’s family (Jacka 1997). It has been one of her few sources of power. By adhering to this practice, the individual woman secure her position and gain status in the short run, but for women in general it serves to reinforce their disempowered, subordinate position. Changing this practice is a strategic interest. Even the well educated and much reflected Sarah (1978), who had been treated secondary to her younger brother by her father and grandparents most of her childhood, was disappointed when she gave birth to a girl. Because Sarah had been very clever at school, her father had accepted her and the farming parents had worked hard to give her an education. The girl was not accepted as a person in her own right, but because of her skills and capabilities. Unless women become accepted as an end in themselves, there is no social transformation. Sarah had shown transformative agency in other ways though, through marrying a boy against her parents’ wish. They did not even show up in her wedding. Education can lead to liberation and negotiated life-choices and internal strength even when they encounter a negative social environment (Shu 2004).

Summary

The living standard of the household had increased significantly from the mother’s lives and the workers’ childhoods. The houses were generally well equipped, meeting some of women’s practical interests and maybe resulting in more effective agency. The households did not spend much on commodities though, but saved a substantial amount every month through various strategies. The wife had quite a strong position in the family in terms of economic decision-making. The income was pooled and she had the major responsibility for the daily purchases and spent money quite freely. Decisions regarding bigger expenses were done jointly with the husband. There had not been any significant renegotiation of the gender division of labour, which requires a transformation of the power structures that lead to women’s subordination. Thus, they had gained power to enhance their standard of living, but not renegotiate traditional gender values. Gender norms are persistent and need time to

change and alternative discourses to that of women as virtuous wives and good mothers have to emerge. The still existing preference for sons was another indicator of traditional gender norms. There was a tendency of more equality between the white-collar girls and their husbands, indicating the role of education. As some changes take place slowly and empowerment can happen intergenerationally, what values the female workers pass on to their daughters can indicate future changes. The desire to give the daughters education can open for more transformative agency in the future.

9 Conclusion

This thesis has shown some effects of globalization at the micro level, through a case study of female workers in a Norwegian company in Jiangsu Province, China. Through interviews and observation, the general aim was to find what impact foreign industry has on the lives and capabilities of some of the blue- and white-collar workers. The focus has been on work and the household, and what position the Norwegian company has in their lives. Factors at different levels are involved and the interpretation of the interplay was done by me, a stranger to the culture and most of the actors. Some of the problems related to this were discussed in the methodology chapter. Under the umbrella of globalization and structure-agency theory, the main analytical framework was the capabilities approach, linked to the household as a site of cooperation and conflict. This was done in an effort at understanding if the female workers had increased powers in the intrahousehold decision-making.

The women were conceptualized as situated at the interface between local and global influences that serve as opportunities and constraints in their lives. The company as a global actor has relocated to China to increase its profit, partly through cheap labour. Its establishment in Yuecheng has interfered in a blend of structures at the local level. I have given a brief overview of the most important, through Confucianism, Communism and the turn to market forces after 1978. The changing discourses in the Chinese society have defined and redefined women's productive and reproductive roles in accordance with economic and ideological goals, demonstrating that gender is constructed and flexible. Confucianism has ascribed women a subordinate status. This was altered after 1949, partly through female participation in the labour force. After reform in 1978, there has been a combination of traditional Confucian values and a view that they should participate in paid work. With men in most central positions and a media controlled by the CCP, the Chinese society allows few alternative discourses to which women can turn. The deregulation, the open policy and the entrance into WTO after reform have affected women in various ways. The Chinese government's efforts at attracting foreign investments to modernize the country has brought economic growth, but led to a race to the bottom of wages and labour-standards. However, it has also led to regional economic development, which put the females in this study in a better position than women other places in rural China, and expanded their opportunities for paid employment. This has meant more possibilities to leave the stagnating agriculture and various Asian companies that offered poor working conditions. Except for two of the white-collar

girls, all the female workers had worked other places before. This makes the difference between those places and the Norwegian company central. The Norwegian company provided generally a change to the better and enhanced the women's capabilities, but their lives carried on more or less like before. The impacts varied between the blue-collar and white-collar workers though, suggesting the role of education and the need to treat each woman as a special case.

9.1 Summary of main findings

The job in the Norwegian company gave the women access to various material and immaterial resources. The women had consciously chosen to work there because it was perceived to enhance their well-being. The income was better than in former jobs and had enhanced their capabilities to live valued lives. The income was pooled, but the women controlled the money and had the major responsibility for the daily purchases. They could use money freely, but discussed bigger expenditures with their husbands and decisions were jointly made. This is the normal way of organizing the household economy in China and because the job in the Norwegian company was not the first, it is difficult to see if there have been any changes in the intrahousehold decision-making in this regard. It might be argued that without paid employment the women's position would not have been that strong. The functioning achievements into which the income was converted depended on both personal and contextual circumstances, like family situation and provision of public services. The living standard had increased significantly compared to the workers' mothers and the oldest blue-collar women who grew up in poverty in Mao's China, but also the youngest women were better off compared to their childhoods. The women did not live on the margins, but worked to increase the standard of living. They were also able to save a substantial amount every month. The women could buy different commodities, of which some met their practical interests and eased the burden of housework, potentially leading to more effective agency. The white-collar girls had higher wages and were able to spend more on functionings like computers and clothes.

The Norwegian company offered more regulated working conditions, in terms of shorter workdays and weeks, and insurance. The women's well-being and choices were enhanced and they got more freedom and control over their own lives. Health is one of the most basic capabilities and promoting human resources is important for achieving other functionings. Because the access to social services depends on where you live and has been largely

privatized, health insurance is important. Few companies offered insurance. An unintended consequence of the insurance was that it may lead to less importance of sons for old age security. Changing from arbitrary working conditions to a more stable job that offered insurance can contribute to processes of empowerment as the women might feel less of a means for other people, strengthening their self-worth. They were still cheap labour for global capital, but their relative exploitation was reduced. However, almost everybody wanted higher wage and it seemed like they lacked information about rights and the physical working environment, which some worried was detrimental to health. This indicates they were in a disempowered position. As easily replaceable labour, as dependency theorists argued, the women did not have the power to negotiate for better conditions. For the white-collar girls, good working conditions were more about the management and organization. They felt they were treated better, had more freedom in their job and developed intellectually and professionally. The job was a functional achievement in itself. For the blue-collar women, the job was more a means to achieve other functionings; they changed to the Norwegian company primarily because of the money, but also because the fixed working hours were easier to combine with their roles as mothers and wives. Nevertheless, for the blue-collar women too, the job was a functioning achievement as they met other women and it gave them happiness, self-worth and economic independence. This can contribute to a stronger sense of agency and the power within, which is important for processes of empowerment. The women have to feel they are able to make changes in their own lives. Through a stronger fall-back position they can break the implicit contracts in the household and break free from powerful others.

For both groups of workers, the Norwegian company was the best job that far. Work had been central in the older blue-collar women's lives; they had worked from an early age, first on the farm and in the household, in their adolescence many became first generation industrial workers. Now, they were workers, but also had a role as farmers as they all had some rice fields. The blue-collar women had changed jobs frequently, sometimes as a result of lay-offs or close-downs; other times because they found something better. Their low education made it difficult to find good jobs that paid well and fit with their domestic and economic responsibilities in the household. The women did not want to leave the Norwegian company, they needed a stable job. The alternatives were worse and some had problems finding jobs because of their age. Another reason could be that they had to pay insurance for 15 years to get retirement payment. The women felt safer in the Norwegian company, but this can be a false security as the company might move to cheaper places to produce. The company

probably provided more stability than local companies though. For two of the white-collar girls this was their first job, some of the other girls had been working in Asian, neo-Confucian companies that offered worse conditions. In similarity with the two youngest blue-collar women, they did not have to work or help their parents much in their childhoods. But differing from the blue-collar women they got higher education, which made them capable of finding good jobs relatively easy. They were more mobile because their education had freed them from the hukou-system. They liked the job in the Norwegian company, but were open for changes if they had the chance. The job was just a step in their career and they did different courses in the spare time to enhance their skills and capabilities. They were empowered compared to their mothers and most Chinese women, had a strong sense of agency and the power to act upon their goals.

In spite of the women's necessary economic contribution to the household, the husband was perceived as the main breadwinner. He generally earned more than the women and was exempted from housework because he had long days and important work. The gender division of labour in the household had not changed significantly between the generations, but there was a slightly more egalitarian relationship between the white-collar girls and their husbands. This can be related to the spouses' higher education rather than the wages. Power in the family is not only a question of resources like income and education, also gender and age plays a role. According to Chen (2005), the domestic division of labour is one of the most persistent forms of gender inequality in China. Traditional female gender roles of "virtuous wives and good mothers" have been emphasized in the public discourse, and they appeared to be strong in the households. The persistence of traditional gender values was also visible through the still existing, although changing, preference for sons. Expecting economic development to eradicate gender inequalities would be just a step up from the modernization theories. Gender roles constitute parts of old value systems and our identity and are resistant to change (Shu 2004). It is argued that patriarchy is still vigorous in China because the gender norms are constructed and actualized at the state and household level in a mutually reinforcing manner. The institutionalized patriarchy is the main obstacle to women's empowerment (Tsai 2002). It can be argued that practical interests are easier to meet than strategic interests as the power structures that lead to women's subordination have to change. This takes time. In connection with the gender division of labour, alternative discourses to that of women as virtuous wives and good mothers have to emerge.

Like the white-collar girls' childhoods, none of the daughters of the blue-collar women had to do housework; they should study and get an education. Although also the white-collar girls adhered to traditional gender roles, they showed more signs of having values deviating from the traditional. The emphasis on education was a great change in primary socialization from the childhoods of the blue-collar women, when they had no choice but to work from an early age. The oldest workers only went to primary school, while the younger normally finished middle-school. The women were disempowered by various economic, political and cultural structures and had a weak bargaining position compared to their brothers when scarce resources, like education, were to be divided. Structural changes in the 1980s, when the youngest female workers were born, changed this. There was a focus on education, and the economic development and the introduction of the HRS made many parents find a paid job. Combined with the one-child policy, more resources were available for the education of daughters. Increased employment opportunities, to which foreign investment contributes, have made it more valuable to educate daughters. The white-collar girls can represent the future for some of the blue-collar daughters as they got education even though some came from peasant families. Processes of empowerment and transformative agency can happen intergenerationally. The women wanted the daughters to have more choices and a better life and job than they had themselves. Many parents saved for their daughters' education, and the job in the Norwegian company made them maybe more able to finance the education. The daughters had obtained a stronger position in the household divisions. Education not only strengthens agency and makes it more skilled, it can also enable the girls to make strategic life-choices, like live in the city and choice of livelihood through a changed hukou. Economic development can lead to the building of more schools as well as other public services. The role of the daughters had changed from a labour reserve to more of a substitute son. Giving them education could be a way to secure the parents greater economic returns in the future as filial piety is still strong. Thus, the mothers' apparently altruistic behaviour might be part of a strategy to secure long term interests.

9.2 Suggestions for further research

Summing up, I have found some answers, but there are even more questions. Further research should be done on the link between foreign industry and the women in the context of the households. Due to time and language limits, there are many questions to which I have no answer. Concerning the households, more thorough research should be done on the

intra-household decision-making to identify potential conflicts and the women's actual position. I have very limited data in this area and the Chinese household is still much of a "black box". Through participant observation and spending time with the women in their daily duties, a better understanding of their total workload could be gained. Through a more thorough research, the subtle ways of going against patriarchal values and unintended consequences of women's access to paid work might be found. On the company-side, there should be more research on what the workers are entitled to, and what they actually get and what information they are given. In a context of a turn to the market-forces and less expenditure on welfare, it is important that foreign companies take their share of the responsibility and offer conditions that contribute to human development. There should also be a focus on the potential for workers to organize and enhance their political power. Collectivization, both within and outside the company, is important for structural change and for bargaining for better conditions.

The meeting between the local and the global creates a new context for the female workers. What I found in this particular meeting can not be generalised to any large degree and through the short interviews I have only touched the surface. My intention was not to find what effects global capital has on female workers in general, but what it is like for some women and as such bring some nuances and new inputs to the debate about globalization. There is no single pattern emerging, globalization can lead both to exploitation and development. For the women in my study, economic globalization had brought widening employment opportunities and generally a change to the better. They had different perceptions of the situation in the Norwegian company though, depending on what working conditions they emphasized and their lived experience. Some were unhappy working there. There is a need to differentiate between not only the workers experiences and the local structures, but also the nature of the companies as they bring elements from the culture of their mother country. Companies from other Asian countries offered worse conditions than the Norwegian. This makes it important to study each place, company and woman as a special case. As there is nothing indicating that the speed or the extent of the global processes will diminish in the future, there is a lot of research to be done on the lived realities of globalization

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interviews and observation

Time period	Activity	Informant, date of birth or position	Interpreter
August 2	Structured interview	Zhu Xiao Jun, Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations & Trade Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin	None
August 17	Semi-structured interview	The HR manager, Norwegian company, Yuecheng	None
August 2-17	Unstructured, structured and semi-structured interviews Observation: visits to the workers home and the company	Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1976 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1972 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1957 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1967 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1981 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1963	Different white-collar girls, a bar-girl from Jiangyin
August 2-17	Semi-structured and unstructured interviews	White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1977 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1978 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1978 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1982 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1983	None
September 26	Unstructured interview	Grace Liu, Secretary, Jiangyin Investment Promotion Centre	None
October 3-4	Semi-structured interviews and observation in the workers homes during the "Golden Week".	Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1968 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1980 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1971 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1973 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1973 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1969	Amy, student at Fudan University
October	Semi-structured interview	White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1980 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1981 White-collar girl, Yuecheng, 1982	None
October 14	Structured interview	Audrey Shaw, Team Leader, Investment Promotion Bureau European & American Investment, Jiangyin Economic Development Zone of Jiangsu Province	None
October 17-18	Semi-structured interviews and observation in the Norwegian company in Wuxi	Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1965 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1967 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1975 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1975 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1977 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1980 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1980 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1982 Blue-collar woman, Wuxi, 1984	Liu Fang, friend of Amy
October 18	Unstructured interview	Admin & HR Manager, Norwegian Company in Wuxi	None
October 26	Semi-structured interview	Mother of blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1948	Liu Fang
October 26	Semi-structured interview	Mother of white-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1956	Ana, white-collar girl in Yuecheng
October 27	Structured interview	Kong Yi, Alcalde Assistant, Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin	Sophie, white-collar girl in Yuecheng

Appendix 1, continued

Time period	Activity	Informant, date of birth or position	Interpreter
October 24-29	Semi-structured interview	Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1960 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1968 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1970 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1970	Different white-collar girls
December	Unstructured interview	Jufen Wang, Professor, School of Social Development and Public Policy Deputy Director of Women's Studies Centre, Fudan University	None
December 15	Follow up semi-structured interviews with the blue-collar workers from the Golden Week.	Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1968 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1969 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1971 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1973 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1973 Blue-collar woman, Yuecheng, 1980	Liu Fang
December 16	Structured interview	Ji Yan, Foreign Economic Manager, Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin, in addition to Zhu Xiao Jun and Kong Yi, both Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations & Trade Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin	Sophie, white-collar girl, Yuecheng
August-December	Informal conversations	The Norwegian Manager, Norwegian company in Yuecheng	None
	Unstructured observation	Jiangyin, Yuecheng	

Appendix 2: Interview guides

Interview guide, blue-collar workers

(Themes covered during the interviews with suggested questions. Some of these questions were used for the white-collar girls as well.)

Name

Date of birth

Present household

-Childhood

(Who did you live with? What did your parents do (occupation, housework)? What living conditions did you have? Did the children work in the house or the farm?)

-Education

(How many years did you go to school? how many years did your sisters and brothers go to school? Did you want to continue school? Did you decide which education to take yourself?)

-Work

(When did you start working? What was your first job? Why did you start? What did you earn? How long did you work there? How many jobs have you had? Why did you change?)

- Marriage

(When did you marry? How did you meet your husband?)

-Husband

(What does your husband do? Do you think his job is more important than yours? How much is he earning? If your husband earned enough money, would you prefer to stay at home instead of working?)

-The Norwegian company

(How long have you been working in the Norwegian company? What position do you have? How much do you earn? How did you find this job? Why did you quit your last job? Do you think there are any differences between the foreign companies and the Chinese? Has this job changed your life in any way? Are you satisfied with/proud of your job? What would you be doing if you were not working here? Is it easy to find a job?)

- Income

(On what do you spend the income? How do you organize the economy? Who decides what to buy? Do you spend any money on yourself? Do you save anything? What would you use the money for if you earned more?)

-The household/family and changes taking place

Can you tell me about a normal day?

(When get up, what you do etc? Are you satisfied with your day? Would you like to change anything about your life? Would you like to change job? What do you do if you have time off?)

Who is doing the house work?

(Does anybody help you with the housework? Do you consider housework a woman's responsibility? Would you like anyone to help you? What household appliances do you have?)

If you were better paid, but had to work more, what would you choose?

Do you grow any vegetables? Is that important for the household?

Do you want your son/daughter to have education?

When your children become your age, would you like them to be in the same position as you are now? (Same job and do the same thing at home?)

Would you like your children to move somewhere? When your son gets married, will you move into his house? Will you depend on your children when you get old?

In what ways has it been changing during the years? Is it changing for better or worse? Do the changes affect you or the community?

What kinds of hopes do you have for yourself for the future?

Follow-up interviews for blue-collar workers, December

Which hukou do you belong to? Would you like to have a city hukou?

How much land do you have? Does anybody else cultivate it for you?

If you did not work in the Norwegian company, what would you have been doing?

What do other people in your class or your friends do now? How much do they earn?

What do you do in your free-time? Do you have any hobbies? Does your daughter have any hobbies?

What do you talk about with other villagers or co-workers?

What makes you happy? What is the best thing during the day?

Do you worry about anything?

Human Resource Manager, Norwegian company, Yuecheng

- 1) Do you require any specific education or qualifications? Is a particular age-group preferred?
- 2) Which kind of jobs do the women get? Are they different than the men's jobs? Do the women get the same payment as the men?
- 3) Is there a lot of turnover? (Do people quit after a while?)
- 4) How do you recruit people? (Advertisements, through the workers etc)
- 5) What kind of contracts do the workers get? How long is the test-period?
- 6) Is there a lot of overtime? Do they get more paid?
- 7) How long is the working day? How many days a week do they work?
- 8) What wages do they get?
- 9) Is there a lot of sick-leave?
- 10) Are there any conflicts? Is the working environment good?
- 11) Who recruit people?
- 12) Do they have any breaks?
- 13) How young is the youngest worker? And the oldest?

Jiangyin Economic Development Zone

(Interview with the Team Leader, Investment Promotion Bureau European & American Investment, Jiangyin Economic Development Zone of Jiangsu Province)

- 1) Is Jiangyin part of a special economic zone?
- 2) How many Economic Development Zones do Jiangyin have?
- 3) Where are they located?
- 4) How big are they?
- 5) When was the first zone established? Why? (Local or central initiative?)
- 6) What kinds of industries are located within them? Is it a mixture of Chinese and foreign?
- 7) Are the zones parts of the general policy towards FI or do they have a special policy?
- 8) Are all foreign companies located within one of these zones? Why/why not?
- 9) Who administers them?
- 10) How much do they contribute economically to the city?
- 11) How many women are employed in foreign industry/companies? Which industries employ most women?
- 12) How important is FI for the city?
- 13) Are there a lot of people moving to the city because of job-opportunities?

Yuecheng Town Government

First interview, Foreign Investment

(Interview with Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations & Trade Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin)

- 1) What policy does Yuecheng have towards foreign investment?
- 2) When did this area open for foreign investment?
- 3) What kind of incentives do you offer? Are there any restrictions?
- 4) How many foreign companies are there in this area and in Jiangyin? How many Norwegian?
- 5) Are there special rules for foreign companies or do they have to follow the same as the Chinese? (Concerning insurance, maternity and sick leave etc.)
- 6) How many are employed in foreign industry? Males vs. females? What industry employs most women?
- 7) What kind of industry establish here? Is there a big turnover concerning the companies?
- 8) What does foreign investment bring to Yuecheng? Positive aspects? Negative? What is the main contribution?
- 9) Are there any problems related to the foreign investment?
- 10) Do you think the foreign investment bring any cultural changes?
- 11) How do you think the people cope with the changes? (Both in the town and working for foreign industry?)
- 12) Has the city changed since the start of the opening up? What was the city like 20 years ago? What will the city be like in 10 years time?
- 13) Is there a lot of migration to the city?
- 14) What goals are there for the development? Which achievements are made?

Second interview, Foreign Investment

(Interview with the Alcalde Assistant, Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin)

- 1) What policy do you have towards foreign industry?
- 2) Why do companies chose Yuecheng in front of other places?
- 3) Do the companies rent or buy the land?
- 4) Do the companies get additional benefits if they employ people from the town?
- 5) Are there many non-local people working in the industry in Yuecheng?
- 6) How much do the foreign companies contribute economically annually to Yuecheng? How much does the town get in tax revenue?
- 7) How is the money spent?

- 8) What is the GDP per capita in Yuecheng?
- 9) Are there more schools now than before the companies established?
- 10) How much land is used for industrial development? Do you conserve any agricultural land?
- 11) If some farmers lose their land and/or house, what kind of compensation do they get? How is this compensation distributed? (Do the farmers get the money directly?) Are there any conflicts related to this? If people have to leave the house, do they get money or a new apartment/house?
- 12) If people lose their land because of the building of a factory, do they often start working in that company?
- 13) How are people informed about the changes that are going to happen?
- 14) What is most of the population here doing? Has this changed during the last years; people changing from farmers to workers?
- 15) How many does the town consist of? Do all villages have some industry?

Third interview, Foreign Investment

(Interview with the Foreign Economic Manager, Zhu Xiao Jun and Alcalde Assistant, both Yuecheng Foreign Economic Relations & Trade Office, Yuecheng People's Government of Jiangyin)

- 1) How much agricultural and rural area does Yuecheng have?
- 2) Does everybody in Yuecheng have a rural hukou?
- 3) How many farmers are there/how many people are employed in agriculture? What is the average income of a farmer?
- 4) How many people are employed in industry? How many are employed in service?
- 5) Are there most locally owned or foreign companies?
- 6) How many women are employed in industry? How many women are employed in foreign industry? Does the foreign industry employ more women or men? Where are most of the women working?
- 7) Is Yuecheng part of the coastal development strategy? How did the first foreign company come here?
- 8) What is the average annual income in Yuecheng?
- 9) What kind of social security system does Yuecheng have? Is the welfare system the same in the whole of Jiangsu-province? If people do not have any insurance, do they have to pay expenses connected to illness themselves?
- 10) How many kindergartens and homes for elderly do Yuecheng have? (How many are admitted? Is it enough for the demand?) Do people have to pay for this? How much?
- 11) Some of the workers were talking about a warrant for the land, what is this?
- 12) Do many people not have any insurance, as all in the company said this was very important?
- 13) Was there any SOEs (or only TVEs) in the 1970s or 1980s?
- 14) If the people have no insurance, do they have to pay all the expenses themselves?