Roots and Routes

Identification of young Chinese women in a world of globalisation and mobility

Karst mountains in Yangshuo

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Master Multiculturalisme in vergelijkend perspectief

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Foreword

This thesis is the result of research on the effects of globalisation on the identification of young Chinese women in the town of Yangshuo, China. It was written in order to conclude the Master 'Multiculturalisme in Vergelijkend Perspectief' at the University of Utrecht.

China aroused my interest during my first visit in 2005. I became fascinated by its culture, people, food and scenery. I knew I had to go back to see, discover and experience more. The research and writing process didn't come easy. I felt it was hard for me to stay focussed and sometimes take some distance from the whole process. All in all it was a great learning experience which I most definitely enjoyed.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Anne Gordijn and Marjolein Hooiveld for their feedback and supervision during the process. They held me on track and were always able to encourage me when I was floundering. I would also like to thank my parents, Ying, Meike and Mathijs for their help and support. But above all I would like to thank all the wonderful people I have met in Yangshuo. Owen College, Yuan and Julie for their hospitality and the young women I used as my informants. They opened up to me and shared their stories with me. I will cherish and remember them with great warmth and friendship.

Anne Wijers,
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1   Introduction

"I am Claire and I come from a small village in the south of Guangxi province. My parents are farmers and have quite traditional ideas. After finishing my middle school when I was 15 the whole family helped in the field to cut the rice. A manager from a factory, who is from my hometown, came back to look for girls who wanted to work in her factory. I didn't have a lot of opportunities in my hometown so I moved to Dongguan, an industrial city near Hong Kong. The city is very crowded, dirty but has lots of opportunities. I started working at the assembly line in a sweater factory, where I sometimes had to work 13 hours a day! I managed to move myself up into the office and three double my salary by changing jobs and learning new skills! Because I had to take care of myself I became very independent. Now I'm 25 years old and a few months ago I quit my job to study English in Yangshuo. I thought this decision could change my life! In Yangshuo studying is fun and the environment to learn is very special. I love it here, because I've met many new people from different cultures. The Western people in Yangshuo taught me to enjoy my life more and to be myself. On the other hand I think they have some views on life I cannot accept. When I'm done studying English I want to go back to Dongguan to find a better job. Working in the city and studying in Yangshuo really changed my view on life. However I still see myself as a traditional girl. I think some ideas shouldn't be changed. Maybe one day I will return to my hometown."

Claire's story is typical for the lives and experiences of young women in contemporary China. The lives of these young women are influenced by the effects of globalisation. In a world of massive mobility, they come in contact with different people and different ideas. In this thesis I want to examine what these global processes mean at a local level for young Chinese women. My research focused on Yangshuo, a small tourist town in the southeast of China, where I studied the way young women identity with different worldviews and discourses.

Yangshuo (阳朔县) is a very beautiful, interesting and fascinating place in China where globalisation has taken on a specific form. Yangshuo is famous for its extraordinary

scenery. The town is surrounded by hundreds of karst peaks and bordered on one side by the Li River. Yangshuo used to be presented as a small traditional and authentic town with houses in original style, cormorant fishermen in the Li River and a mainly rural population. But is this still most characteristic about Yangshuo?

Restaurants and coffee bars in the centre of Yangshuo

This small town is now proclaimed as the centre of tourism by the government. Since the 80s, when Yangshuo was first mentioned in the Lonely Planet, it became a famous travel spot for backpackers. Since then a lot has changed. Yangshuo is included in almost every Dutch organised trip in China, is still very famous amongst travellers and backpackers and it has become a famous destination for rock climbers. Recently, more and more Chinese tourists come to visit Yangshuo thanks to the economic progress in China. The town has adapted itself to all these foreign and Chinese tourists. McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken and loud nightclubs are now a part of the street image and you can pay money to take a picture with a cormorant fisherman or a lady in traditional Chinese cloths near the riverbank. Several times a day, ladies come up to tourists to sell postcards, souvenirs, a bamboo raft or a ticket to the impression of Sanjie Liu, a lightshow with over 500 dancers on the Li river. Yangshuo is now called a 'foreign village' and the 'English corner' of China. These names refer to the many foreigners who visit Yangshuo every year and the many private

colleges that teach English to students from all over China, because this is the place to practice the English language with 'real' foreigners. Still, you are able to see old tuck tuck's riding around town and women carrying baskets with fresh vegetables on their shoulders. When you go take your bicycle in the villages surrounding Yangshuo you will see the more traditional Chinese countryside where people cultivate rice and vegetables and keep animals. In the houses you will still see pictures of the communist leaders Mao or Marx hanging on the wall, who despite the economic changes, continue to be cherished. Thus, Yangshuo is becoming the place where old China, new China and the West come together. However, many young women move (temporarily) to the cities, where they expect to have more opportunities. These characteristics aroused my interest and I wanted to know what these effects of globalisation mean for real people.

1.1   Theoretical framework

Globalisation and its effects

I suggest that these characteristics are effects of the process of globalisation. Globalisation is one of the most popular, but also one of the most complex processes of our time. Scholars examined three dynamic processes that have driven the development of globalisation: time and space compression, global consciousness and disembeddedness (cf. Giddens 1990; Harvey 1989; Robertson 1992). I would like to refer to the term globalisation as "the intensification of global interconnectedness, suggesting a world full of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and persistent cultural interaction and exchanges" according to Inda & Rosaldo in their reader *The Anthropology of Globalization* (2008: 4). Since the 80s, China has opened up to the world thanks to reforms by Deng Xiaoping. In 30 years we have seen massive changes: China has become the country with the largest population in the world, the fastest economic growth and it has a rapidly growing role in world affairs (Guthrie 2006: 1-5). The emergence of international business, trade, tourism and international politics have created a strong interaction, exchange and interconnectedness with the rest of the world.

There are different opinions about the effects of globalisation. Some scholars suggest that globalisation will lead to homogenisation and westernising (Barber 1992; Latouche 1996; Ritzer 1996) whereby terms like cultural imperialism, *McWorld* and *McDonalization*

are used to describe the hegemony of Western culture. Other scholars see the appearance of fragmentation or a Clash of Civilizations (Huntington 1993). I suggest that these theories are too narrow minded and simply incorrect. Cultural imperialism is based on a number of discourses of domination of the West over the Rest, of the core over the periphery, of the modern world over the fast-disappearing traditional one, of capitalism over more or less everything and everyone (Tomlinson 1999: 80). The success of South-East Asian countries like China and its distinct Chinese culture is a good example of its failure, because Westernisation also assumes a penetration of some Western core values into a local culture, which I will challenge in this thesis. The theory of fragmentation also fails because it is based on an essentialist image of culture. In Yangshuo I have seen the influence of Western culture, but this is limited in my opinion and will often come to exist next to other and older local forms of culture. Yangshuo has introduced some Western and city features, but it is by no means a Western town and it doesn't look anything like a big Chinese city. So what is happening here? The town and the people adjusted to the influx of tourists to improve their own lives. Are these people not influenced by all these tourists? I would like to suggest that they are, but only to some extent. City culture and Western culture definitely have influence on Yangshuo, but it is accepted in a typical local form. It results in some intermixing whereby traditions are not thrown overboard but preserved next to these new cultural forms (Eriksen 1993). I argue that culture is, of its nature, fluid, dynamic and ever-changing and at no point in history fixed, established and static. I will build on the theory that globalisation will lead to deterritorialisation (Inda & Rosaldo 2008; Tomlinson 1999). Globalisation has radically disconnected culture from place. The link between our mundane cultural experience and our location is transformed at every level. Culture can afresh meaning in a new context of time and place. Cultural flows do not just circulate around the world. They are always reinterpreted in a new cultural context, in this case Yangshuo. This is what we call reterritorialisation (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). The idea that globalised culture is a hybrid culture has a strong intuitive appeal, which follows directly from the notion of deterritorialisation. This is because the increasing traffic between cultures that the globalisation process brings, suggests that the dissolution of the link between culture and place is accompanied by an intermingling of these disembedded cultural practices, producing new complex hybrid forms of culture (Tomlinson 1999: 141). The most basic component of the idea of hybridity is that of simply mixing – intermingling, combining, fusion, melange (Pieterse 2004; Tomlinson

1999). However, we should keep in mind that this process, just like deterritorialisation and globalisation in general, is an uneven process. It involves winners and losers and it reproduces many familiar configurations of domination and subordination, but above all is the sense that the cultural experience it distributes is highly complex and varied (Tomlinson 1999: 131). Globalisation always creates possibilities and challenges, advantages and disadvantages, which I will show in this thesis.

How do people construct their identity in this globalising world? I use the concept of identity as the search for the meaning of the individual in relation to the self and to the society. I, amongst many others, suggest we should not use a primordialist approach to the concept of identity. This approach takes the sense of self and belonging to a collective group as a natural given, characterised by fixed, supposedly objective, criteria. "The globalisation of mundane experiences makes a stable sense of local cultural identity increasingly difficult to maintain, as our daily lives become more and more interwoven with, and penetrated by, influences and experiences that have their origins far away" (Tomlinson 1999: 113). As is proposed nowadays by authors as Featherstone (1995), Jameson (1991), Gergen (1991) and others, the notion of the 'core' of the self loses its significance, giving way to the new definitions of identity as fluid, incoherent, unstable, constantly in flux and changing. This implies that identity can no longer be fixed and this contradicts with the way identity was perceived before the debates on globalisation became so widespread. In this thesis I will use a constructivist approach to the concept of identity. In following of Hall (1992, 1996) I want to treat identity as a process which takes into account the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience. I will use the idea of identification, whereby identity is perceived as made up of different components that are identified and interpreted by individuals. The construction of an individual sense of self is achieved by personal choices regarding who and what to associate with. Such approaches are liberating in their recognition of the role of the individual in social interaction and the construction of identity. Questions of home and belonging are still relevant, but should be regarded as more fluid and changing instead of fixed. Meanings are equally generated by people 'on the move' and in the flows and connections between cultures (Tomlinson 1999). In Yangshuo, Chinese people come across many different people and cultures. This thesis will show that young Chinese women are not passive in their interaction with foreign, Western product, ideas and ideologies. They should always be understood in a certain context (Boelstorff 2003).

According to Bauman (1998) we can also speak of a 'new world order' in which mobility is the major stratifying factor. In China this reflects in the emergence of the floating population (*cf.* Gaetano & Jacka 2004; Guthrie 2006; Solinger 1999). We mainly see migration from the countryside to the city, from underdeveloped to developed and from Western and Central China to the Eastern coast provinces. Yangshuo is often a step between the countryside and the city. For some of my informants it is a step up to more opportunities and for some it is a step back from the chaotic city life. Through mobility across local borders, my informants come in contact with other people and other ideas. In a world of globalisation and mobility I analyse their own views, expectations and discourses and that of others regarding to their mobility, work, education, family life and relationships amongst other things. During my research, I realised that these discourses are often multiple, complex and sometimes contradicting. My thesis revolves around the question *how young Chinese women construct their identity in a context of multiple and contradicting discourses under influence of processes of globalisation?* I will argue that the young women are not passive in their interaction with modern, foreign but also traditional views. I suggest that the agency of these girls lies in the fact that they can choose and balance between these different identifications and discourses. The young women in my research will show that they have the ability to choose between different worldviews that appeal to them. On the other hand my thesis will show that they have to deal with social pressure, expectations from their surroundings and the uneven character of globalisation. I will show that different people (have to) deal with these complex situations in different ways, because of their background, degree of agency or personality.

Roots and routes

For a brief moment I would like to turn to the concepts of 'roots' and 'routes'. Many scholars have used these concepts to analyse the relationship between place attachment and mobility (cf. Clifford 1997; Friedman 2002; Gustafson 2001). I would like to interpret these concepts a little different and take a more figuratively perspective next to the literal perspective. I conceive roots as the - more traditional - values and ideas people grow up with. These roots still are, for the most part, attached to a particular place. Routes are the life trajectories or paths people choose/follow in their lives. These life trajectories are not fixed and may change when people come in contact with different ideas, worldviews and

discourses. However, roots and routes are both subject to transformation in a world of globalisation and mobility.

Some scholars stressed the importance of changing the focus from roots to routes (Clifford 1997; Hall 1996). I suggest that we use both concepts and analyse their relationship and influence. There are different ways you can look at the relationship between roots and routes. Some, indeed, regard it as a contradiction and feel that they had to make a choice. Some regard place attachment and mobility as opposites but try to find an equilibrium. Some consider them as complementary and value both. Other ways of combining or contrasting place attachment and mobility are also conceivable (Gustafson 2001). I would like to analyse the relationship between and the influence of both the roots and changing routes in the lives of young Chinese women. I will do this by means of the identification with different worldviews and discourses.

Debates and aim

In this thesis I want to show what global processes mean for real people, so I can make it small and personal. This way I can describe the triviality, complexity and sensitivity of this kind of processes and let the imagination speak. With my thesis I want to contribute to societal and scientific debates regarding to globalisation and mobility and regarding to identity construction. I argue that there are multiple globalisation processes at work. When you simply tie up globalisation and modernity, globalisation will equate with westernisation. According to Robertson "it is not a question of either homogenisation or heterogenisation, but rather of the ways in which these two tendencies have become features of life across much of the late twentieth-century world" (1995: 27). Tsing (2000) argues that we should not see globalisation as inevitable, inescapable and overpowering. We should rather see it as a very complex and heterogeneous process with global and local diversity. Therefore I will take a critical stance and nuance, which is essential when it comes to investigating the effects of globalisation. Few scholars have attempted to include the experiences of migrants themselves into their research. Also, little attention has been paid to gender and specific experiences of women in studies of migration and globalisation (Davids & van Driel 2005; Gaetano & Jacka 2004). I will stress the importance of both agency and constraints as a result of uneven globalisation. I want to know how young women construct their identities when they come in contact with many different images, worldviews and discourses. We can

distinct people according to dichotomous labels like traditional and modern, Chinese and Western, city and countryside and young and old, but often these dichotomous and polarising labels are not helpful and they may create stereotypes and prejudices.

My research concerns an anthropological research and my role as an anthropologist is to make big processes come alive through small stories and real life experiences. By talking to people, 'hanging around', 'being there', observing and participating we can make big theories small and personal. This way cultural anthropologists are able to take a critical stance, nuance and show the diversity and complexity of the effects of globalisation. In this thesis I will illustrate that these processes of globalisation and its effects are about real people, real lives and real experiences.

1.2   Research population

Waitresses and students English
My plan was to focus my research on waitresses who work in the Western bars and restaurants of Yangshuo. My initial focus appeared to be a good choice: I saw countless Western restaurants with Western menus where you can order a pizza, hamburger or a shepherd's pie. All the young women who work here could speak English to a greater of lesser extent and adopted an English name for the foreign customers. Soon I realised it was hard to ignore another important feature of Yangshuo: the numerous English schools where students from all over China come to learn English. The importance for young Chinese women to learn English was hard to ignore. Sometimes, I was approached by some students English who wanted to practice their English with me. That is why I chose to add this important feature of Yangshuo to my research and focus on the English students as well as the waitresses. In the appendix (I) you will find a list of my informants and more information about their home provinces and the place they work/study. Now, I will use two of my informants to introduce you to my research population.

> *"Hello, my name is Leanne, I'm 24 years old and I come from a small village near Yangshuo. When I finished my middle school I moved to Yangshuo to work. I like to work here because the salary in my hometown is very low and here I can practice my English and get more work experience. I work in a small restaurant in*

Yangshuo where we serve Chinese and Western food. I learned English by myself by talking to foreigners every day. I really enjoy talking to foreigners and showing them around! I've worked in Shenzhen for one year in a factory, restaurant and as a nanny. In a few months I'd like to find work in Shanghai, because of the higher salary. If I can't find a good job I will come back to Yangshuo, where I would like to become a tour guide in the future."

Emmy and Leanne in their working outfits in front of Reyleys

The young women who work in the bars and restaurants of Yangshuo face the effects of globalisation, because they work in the tourist industry. Every day they come in contact with foreigners, the English language, Western food, manners and customs. Most of the young women who work in the bars and restaurants come from the countryside around Yangshuo and they are between the age of 16 and 25 years old. There are also some students English who temporarily work in a bar to improve their oral English. Most of the girls work as waitresses to earn some money, improve their English and to get more work experience. The education of these girls is relatively low. Most of them only finished middle school (until 15 years old) and some high school (until 18 years old). Some of them have already worked in

Guangdong, one of China's most prosperous provinces on the southern coast of China, for a while or have plans to do so in the future.

"Hello, I'm Betty. I'm 26 years old and I come from a town in the province of Jiangxi. When I finished my high school I went to university in Shenzhen. The big city is very modern rich and fast. I like this! It's a window to the world! I've been working as an accountant in Dongguan for many years. A few months ago I quit my job to study English in Yangshuo. I want to improve my job opportunities and my salary. I study hard but it also feels like a holiday in this beautiful scenery. When I finished my study I'd like to go to Shanghai to find a new job in an international company."

The students in the English colleges are very motivated to learn English. I would say this is an effect of globalisation, because English is becoming a global language in international communication, politics, trade, business and tourism (Crystal 2003). Every day the students come in contact with foreign teachers and volunteers and Western customs. The students come from villages, towns and cities all over China and their age divers from 15 to 40 years old. There are some students who study English instead of going to high school, but most of the students quit their current jobs to improve their job opportunities and salary by learning English. The education of these students is relatively high. Most of them have a university degree and have some years of working experience in the economic centres of China.

1.3 Research methods

Doing fieldwork

I decided to move to Yangshuo for more than three months from February until May 2010. I collected my data mainly through informal conversations, observation and participation. I also collected other material like news paper articles and relevant literature. During my fieldwork I had to make choices concerning the demarcation of my research. First, I chose to focus my research on women, because there is a lack of research about the experiences of mobile women and because they generally have to deal with different expectations (Gaetano & Jacka 2004). I chose to focus on the experiences of girls and young women

between the age of 18 and 28 years old. Personally, I was very exited to focus my research on Chinese girls my own age and soon I realised that we have more in common than I expected regarding to becoming independent and finding your own path in life. Second, I focused on young women who could speak a reasonable level of English. I realise this affects my results, but I chose not to use an interpreter, one case excluded, because I wanted to have a more personal contact with my informants. 'Being there' and 'hanging around' were important methods for me to become a familiar face, gain trust and to be able to get a look into the world of my informants. I will give you an insight in the way I have found my way in Yangshuo and the first contacts I have made.

When I first arrived in Yangshuo I thought to myself: where and how do I start? The first week in Yangshuo I stayed in a small hotel in the centre of the tourist town. During the day and at night I walked around town and visited coffee bars, restaurants and bars. I also walked around the tourist shops in West Street and along the Li River bank. I worried about how I was going to come in contact with my informants. Fortunately, my worries were short-lived. I visited the owner of a small restaurant next to my hotel, Yuan, whom I had met years earlier in Yangshuo. It was a pleasure to see her again and she invited me to have diner with her and her staff every evening. Obviously I took her invitation because it gave me a good starting point for my research and it gave me an opportunity to get some insight in the working place and environment of the girls who work in the restaurants. For almost 3 weeks I had diner with Yuan, her staff and her friends and they got to know me and my reason to be in Yangshuo. It really felt like I was not 'just another tourist' to them. During Chinese New Year Yuan invited me to eat with her and her family and later I was also invited to the homes of the two girls who worked in her restaurant, Sunnie en Lu Xiao Hui. This restaurant continued to be a place for me to relax and talk about my struggles. They really made me feel at home in Yangshuo and made sure I never felt lonely. There was another event during my first week of fieldwork which had a big influence on my research. A few days after I arrived, I was strolling around the tourist centre at night when a man approached me. We started talking and he asked me if I was interested in being a volunteer in an English college where he

was a student at the moment. The next day, I called the school and the owner was interested in meeting me the very same day. We talked and I agreed to become a volunteer for Owen English College. They offered me a nice apartment close to the school and lessons started three weeks later. I regularly had breakfast, lunch and diner together with the staff and the students and I would sometimes organise activities in the evenings or weekends. This way I was able to see the life in and around the schools and it gave me an opportunity to come in contact with the students. The school, the staff and the students also gave me a good starting point and network to build on and made me feel even more at home in Yangshuo.

In the beginning of my fieldwork I did a lot of observations and I tried to get to know Yangshuo and the world of my informants. I walked around Yangshuo, observed and talked with a lot of people around town, in the restaurants and the schools. I tried to become a familiar face for my informants and it turned out they were very happy and enthusiastic to help me with my research. Most of these conversations were rather informal. Generally, these young women were very open to me and shared their experiences and lives with me. My advantage was that they were always glad to be able to practice their English with me and to know more about me and my own country, Holland. Sometimes I felt their level of English was a problem and some girls had trouble expressing themselves. Fortunately, it was not a problem for most of my informants. I talked to my informants during their work, in and around school, but also in bars or during school activities. Some local girls were happy to show me their home(town) and with others I went cycling or bamboo rafting outside of Yangshuo. This gave me the opportunity to spend more time and hang around with them and talk about different subjects. They were my informants, and some also became my friends.

1.4   Outline

In this thesis I will give you an insight in the lives of my informants and the way they identify with different worldviews and discourses in a world of globalisation and mobility. Different people deal with complex situations in different ways as I said before. The young women I

have met have different backgrounds, different characters and different worldviews, but I will also try to show that there are definitely some similarities in their stories. I will integrate concepts and approaches from the literature with empirical data from my research. I chose to organise my empirical chapters on the basis of two different themes, which play an important role in the lives of my informants and therefore also in my research. The relationship between the global and the local and the role and effects of mobility will cover the first two empirical chapters. In my third empirical chapter I will discuss the ways in which young women identify with different images, discourses and ideas. The different discourses they come across in different situations and places in their lives and their degree of agency will have a central role in all chapters.

My first empirical chapter, about the global and the local, will include the way my informants relate to the other, especially the foreign. I will discuss the transformation that Yangshuo is subject to as a result of globalisation. In Yangshuo, young women come across many foreigners, tourists, Western ideas and products. I will describe their experiences of meeting different people and different ideas and stress the importance of agency when it comes to dealing with these images. These young women become more aware of themselves in relation to other people and other worldviews. They also become aware of the uneven effect of globalisation. Some young women also have to deal with cultural and social expectations or pressure from family. But, their relative independence and contact with others makes them more conscious and open-minded than the young women who 'stayed behind' in their hometown. Thus, what is the relationship between the global(s) and the local(s) in Yangshuo and what is the impact of this relationship on the worldviews of young Chinese women?

In my second empirical chapter I will focus on the role and effects of mobility. Young women are on the move, because they expect to improve their lives as a result of migration. Moving to the city means having more opportunities and may be a window to the world. The degree of agency of my informants will play a central role in this chapter when it comes to facing limits and constraints regarding to their mobility, for example when it comes to the *hukou* (household registration) system and visa. Working and making a living in the city is not easy and some young women have to deal with hard living conditions, social immobility and even discrimination. However, moving to the city results in more independence and autonomy. There are different discourses and expectations that dominate the countryside

and the city and it often feel like an opposition for these young women. Moving between the countryside and the city often appears to be a dilemma for my informants. Thus, in what context does mobility of young Chinese women take place and what are the effects of migration on their worldviews?

My third and final empirical chapter will discuss the identification of these young women with different discourses and worldviews. I will discuss their self-image and the way they deal with their own dreams, expectations, pressure and constraints. Young migrant women often regard themselves as being different from the girls who 'stayed behind' in their hometown and from farmers. They also regard themselves as being different from city people and foreigners. Questions of home and belonging will also be discussed in this chapter. Being in contact with other people and being on the move may have changed their views on life. Some young women will face resistance and dilemmas when it comes to act upon them. Moreover, some discourses are very resistant to change. The agency and the effects of the uneven character of globalisation will occur in varying degrees in the lives of these women. Thus, what is the effect of living in a world of multiple discourses on the identification of young Chinese women and does it lead to sociocultural change?

Between some of the chapters I will add an interlude with some more background information regarding tourism and the English language in Yangshuo and China's floating population. In my last chapter I will synthesize my findings and I will give a conclusion on how young women in Yangshuo identify themselves with different worldviews and discourses under influence of globalisation and mobility. This chapter will furthermore give my final view on the importance of both roots and routes in the lives of young Chinese women.

Interlude

Tourism and English in Yangshuo

Globalisation has taken on a specific form in China and especially in Yangshuo. One of these effects is the emergence of tourism. Yangshuo has a long history of 1400 years and is a county with about 300.000 residents (including all the surrounding villages) in the autonomous province of Guangxi. With beautiful mountains and rivers, Yangshuo is recognized and recommended by the World Tourism Organization as a tourism destination. In 2005 Yangshuo hosted 3.535 million tourists from home and abroad, a year-on-year rise of 10.4 percent, according to local tourism authorities. The total number included 638,000 overseas tourists, a year-on-year rise of 65.7 percent. This is why Yangshuo has the reputation of a foreign village in China. As you can see is the number of Chinese and Asian tourist much higher than the overseas tourists, but this number is growing rapidly. Tourism-related service industries contributed 51 percent to the county's total revenue income in 2005, a total of 550 million Yuan, around 65 million euro's according to The Guilin Tourism Organization (Xinhua News Agency, January 26, 2006).

Because of the relatively big number of foreigners in Yangshuo this became a famous place in China for learning and practicing English. In the early 90s the first English college was opened. Now there are at least 20 different English colleges with approximately 2000 to 3000 students every year from all over China. This is why Yangshuo is now called the biggest English corner of China. It is the place to find foreign teachers and to practice the English language with 'real' foreigners in the street or in the bar. In 2020 China is expected to be the most popular holiday destination in the world with an estimated number of 137 million tourists according to the World Tourism Organisation (Xinhua News Agency, November 4, 2005).

2   Yangshuo: A changing locality

Every day I walk from my apartment to the tourist centre of Yangshuo. When I walk slowly it takes me about 30 minutes to get there. On my way there I use my eyes and try to record everything. There are small noodle shops and Chinese barbecue restaurants around the corner of my house. In the street I see women selling fruit and vegetables. Just when I turn around into the main street, there is an internet bar on my right hand, which is always full of young people playing online games. I pass some beauty and clothing shops. A lot of boys and girls are inside these shops, looking for fashionable jeans and sneakers. The traffic is very busy with a lot of motor cycles and cars. Before I arrive in the centre of town, I pass the local market. People sell all kinds of vegetables, fruits, fish and meat. It scared me a little when I bought some chicken for diner and a woman slaughtered the animal in front of my eyes and chopped it into pieces. In a corner of the market you can see roasted dogs hanging upside down. The smell on the market can be very penetrating. When I arrive downtown I immediately pass the Kentucky Fried Chicken and the newly arrived McDonalds. Walking further, I pass the tourist coffee shops, bars and restaurants. They sell hamburgers, spaghetti, shepherd's pie and I even came across a 'patatje oorlog' from Holland. Nearby, there is a street with exclusively real Chinese restaurants with wheat noodles from the Northern provinces, Canton dumplings and some local dishes like 'beer fish'. Along West Street I see authentic houses and look at all the tourist shops where they sell (fake) North Face clothes and 'traditional' Chinese paintings, amongst many other things. I also pass the clubs, which become very noisy and crowded at night, with mainly Chinese tourists. When I keep walking, I end up at the Li River bank. A lot of tourists and local people enjoy the beautiful weather and scenery here. You can take a bamboo raft on the river, or you can take a picture of the cormorant fisher who is waiting for spectators. I sit down at the river bank, relax and enjoy the view, when a Chinese girl comes up to me and introduces herself as Ellen. She would like to have a talk.

This little tour shows that Yangshuo is a very divers place with specific characters. Young Chinese women are very interested in learning more about foreign people and cultures. Globalisation promotes much more physical mobility than ever before, which I will discuss in the next chapter. Yet, the key to its cultural impact is in the transformation of localities themselves (Tomlinson 1999: 29). In this chapter I will show the changing locality of Yangshuo due to globalisation and the new views and ideas young Chinese women come across thanks to this process. They will become more conscious of themselves in relationship with others (Eriksen 1993). I will show that there is some tension between the global and the local. How do these young women mediate the global and the local? I will start this chapter with some rural and traditional ideas which are still of great importance. Then I will further explain the concept of de/reterritorialisation in the context of Yangshuo. Furthermore shall I explicate the new and sometimes contradicting discourses they come across and we will see if they can relate to these ideas or not. Finally, I will discuss an important feature when it comes to communication with foreigners: English. The use of this language is also an effect of globalisation and has a lot in common with the way culture is transforming due to globalisation. So, how is Yangshuo transforming and how do these young women relate to the new people and ideas they come across?

"Why should I become a farmer like my parents when I can do something else? The work on the land is very hard and the salary is very low. My parents are very old fashioned, traditional and poor. They want me to find a stable job and settle down, but I would like to see the world, meet different people and learn new skills. This is possible in Yangshuo. I can see the world and different cultures passing by every day." – Smiley

2.1 My hometown, my family

Most of the young women I met have a rural background and they occasionally return to the countryside when visiting their families. There are certain ideas and discourses that still dominate the countryside even though these discourses are also subject to transformation. I would like to refer to this life and these discourses as the ´roots´ of my informants. However,

these young women chose to leave the countryside for the town of Yangshuo, where there are more opportunities.

Rural life and traditions

China's general cultural orientation has been described as collectivist, in contrast to the individualist orientation, believed by some to characterize Western societies (e.g. Triandis 1989). Family life is essential in Chinese society. Young Chinese women are expected to accept their role as a daughter and as a woman. They should support and respect the family and eventually marry and have children. Moral systems in hierarchical collectivist societies revolve around strict adherence to duties and role obligations, maintenance of the existing social order, and inequality among persons based on status (Helwig, Arnold, Tan & Boyd 2003). Boys are still more wanted in the countryside, because they will stay in the parental house, support and take care of the parents.

> *"After me, my parents wanted another child, because they wanted a boy. I was raised with the idea that boys are better than girls. People in the countryside still think like this, because a boy will continue the family. I always felt inferior to boys, because my family threats boys better than girls. I want them to be proud of me, so I need to study harder, and get a better job than my brother. I think girls can do better, so I keep learning! After five years I want my parents to stop working. I would like to be able to support them. I should pay them back for what they gave me. That's the natural way." – Sara*

Chinese family life is often described as modelled after traditional Confucian notions of filial piety, or the fostering of strict obedience and respect for parents and elders (Dien 1982; Pye 1992). The 'ideal' rural woman does not challenge patriarchal gender and kinship norms and roles (Sun in Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 7). If these young women do challenge these norms their parents may 'lose face'.

> *"I think traditionally to be a good woman you have to get married, respect your husband, old people and young children. You should support your family and husband and sometimes you can give them suggestions. You should have no sex*

before marriage, to protect yourself. In the countryside and my hometown they expect you to be a traditional woman. The husband tells you what to do. You have male dominance and female submission. The wife does all the chores and takes care of the baby. The males are real chauvinists. To change their minds is almost impossible." – Claire

In some characterizations of Confucian philosophical perspectives, the family is portrayed as a fixed hierarchy, with elders - especially fathers or other male adults - held in high esteem and obedience toward parental injunctions viewed as ''an absolute requirement that exists without regard to the quality of parental behaviour'' (Pye 1992: 93).

"My parent's don't support me and my decisions. I cannot share my opinions with them. I tried before, but they didn't accept it. They think my opinions are childish and unrealistic. They think I should listen to their advice, because they know how the world works. After I talk to them I always feel sad and confused." – Lucy

Parents often have special wishes or put pressure on their daughters when it comes to their life decisions. The opinion of their parents is very important for these young women and they often accept their interventions. Parents are motivated to give their children a good future with economical security and status and without social exclusion and poverty. My informants attach great importance to these cultural traditions and the opinion of their parents. On the other hand, they feel that some ideas should be changed. They would like more freedom and less pressure from their parents. Lau, Lew, Hau, Cheung, and Berndt (1990) found that family harmony in Chinese families was related to greater warmth and less control by parents over children.

Marriage

Marriage is one of the most essential and important events in the lives of Chinese women. For young rural women, who have traditionally always married out of their own village, the question of marriage looms large on the horizon and is connected to fundamental issues relating to separation from their natal family and the search for a new place in society, their aspirations for the future, and their life trajectories (Beynon in Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 8).

There is hardly any social security in China, so marriage means securing your future. Thus, marriage is not only about love. It is about social and economic security, social mobility, respect and status in society. Unmarried women have a significant lower status in society and are the subject of gossip.

> *"When you're 25 and not married, people will think there is something wrong with you" – Sara*

Betty argues that when you are 25 and not married you are being left on the shelf. Marrying a good and rich man will improve your life, status and possibilities.

> *"My parents want me to find a rich husband. They think I don't have to work so hard and life will be easier for me" – Lucy*

Many parents worry about their daughter until she is married, especially when she is already reaching marrying age. Some parents will pressure their daughters to think about getting married, because of these worries.

> *"My parents expect me to get married as soon as possible. Every time my parents call me they tell me that I must find a boyfriend. This year my parents expect me to find a boyfriend and get married. My age is 24, but in my hometown this is old" – Ellen*

Some of these young women are being introduced to men by their family or friends. Most of them except it and go on a date with this man. Yet, if he is not interesting they don not let themselves be forced into anything. Marriage can be disempowering for rural women because it usually results in them having to abort their wage work and thereby decrease their economic mobility, limiting their opportunities for autonomy and agency and forcing them to rely on their husband's wages for improving the household's wellbeing (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 11).

"I don't want to get married, because I love my freedom. If you're married, you can't do whatever you want" – Betty

Escape the countryside

Life as a farmer is not regarded as an attractive life for my informants. They have seen their parents working very hard and hardly making any money. The countryside is relatively poor and traditional. Knowing their generation has more options and possibilities, they choose a different life. Staying in the countryside means being left behind in the march of progress. Rural gender and kinship roles, daughters' relatively marginal roles in rural production and the loss of autonomy, that will likely result from marriage, further strengthen women's desires to 'escape' the countryside, even for a brief period of time (Gaetano in Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 5). All my informants know girls who stayed behind in the countryside, got married and already have children. My informants like to postpone marriage, so they can enjoy their freedom, see the world and experience new things.

"Some of my classmates stayed in the village and already have a baby. For me this is way too young. I first want to see the world and experience new things before I start a family" – China

However, expectations surrounding marriage, norms of gender propriety, and popular stereotypes associating women's mobility with immorality are also of concern to young women considering migration to the city (Ibid.).

Thus, we can see certain ideas and discourses regarding the role of women, which continue to dominate the countryside. These discourses, but also the wish to see more of the world than their hometown, make them move to Yangshuo. Yet, these discourses from the countryside continue to play an important role in their lives.

2.2   Mao and McDonalds

Yangshuo has some interesting characteristics as made visible in the tour at the beginning of this chapter. China is a country full of contradictions, which become especially visible in

Yangshuo. According to Tomlinson (1999: 29) the transformation of culture is not grasped in the trope of travel, but in the idea of deterritorialisation. This means that complex connectivity weakens the ties between culture and place. These contradictions are a result of reterritorialisation when culture is adopting new meaning in a different locality (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). Cultural flows are always reinterpreted in a new cultural context like Yangshuo. The food culture in Yangshuo is of course one of the most clear examples of reterritorialisation. I would like to offer you a better context of Yangshuo and give you two examples of this process. When you walk around this tourist town and talk to people, you will see a lot of 'misplaced' features which obtained a place in this society, on the one hand. On the other hand, you will still see a lot of 'typical' local or Chinese features around town. Yangshuo became a mix of all these different features which obtained a new place in this locality.

McDonalds in Yangshuo

> I walk around town together with Betty, a 16 year old student from Owen
> College. We walk up to the McDonalds that arrived in Yangshuo a few months
> before I did.

McDonalds in Yangshuo

Just in front of the McDonalds I see an old woman who sells pictures and paintings of non other than Mao himself. Betty explains to me that Mao is still of great importance for most Chinese people. They know he was not perfect but they love him for what he has done for the country and its people, in terms of giving them back hope and pride. We enter McDonalds and order an ice cream. I am surprised that the girls behind the counter speak English. Betty tells me working in McDonalds has a relatively high status and salary. When I look around, I see mostly young fashionable, and in my opinion relatively wealthy, Chinese people. It becomes clear to me that the McDonalds in Yangshuo has a significantly different status than in Holland.

Belly dancing in Yangshuo

In my favourite restaurant I met Grace. Her name represents who she is. She is a young, graceful, 25 years old woman. She worked as a cooking teacher, but would like to start her own business. She loves to dance. She loves to go to a bar or club at night and dance all night. One day, she shows me some video's from the internet. Video's of belly dancing. She once saw belly dancing on TV and immediately loved it. Now she is watching internet videos all day to copy and learn the different moves. For a moment I join her practicing arm movements. She tells me she would like to go to Egypt or India to take a belly dancing course. After this course she would like to give belly dancing lessons to local Chinese girls and women. There is one place in Yangshuo where local people can dance. It is a small dance school where they teach jazz dance and hip-hop dance. During my last week in Yangshuo Grace gives a belly dancing lesson at Owen College, where I volunteered. All the students: boys and girls, old and young, shake their hips to the Arabic music. They love it! Grace does a wonderful job teaching and has attracted her first student.

These examples show that young Chinese women often come in contact with different cultural features in Yangshuo. They also show that it can lead to strange, funny and sometimes contradicting combinations. This is thanks to the mobility and reterritorialisation

of companies and people, but also because of cultural images, for example through TV and internet. Yangshuo is changing because of globalisation and its effects. Being in contact with different cultural features also means you come in contact with different people and ideas, which I will describe in the next section.

2.3   Different people, different ideas

My informants have contact with foreigners on a daily basis in Yangshuo due to globalisation. Most waitresses and students English are very curious and interested in learning more about their culture. We should keep in mind this not only entails communication from the West to the rest. We can not simply speak about westernisation without addressing the importance of agency. What takes place is that foreign cultural forms have a tendency to become customized. They are interpreted, translated, and appropriated according to local conditions of reception (Inda & Rosaldo 2008). Communication with others is not always without problems and sometimes creates irritation, conflicts or miscommunication. On the other hand this contact may result in friendships and relationships. But above all, their contact with others makes them more aware of themselves and their own lives. That is why the construction of identity often takes place in relation to others (Eriksen 1993). "Globalisation can engender awareness of political difference as much as an awareness of common identity; enhanced international communication can highlight conflicts of interest and ideology, and not merely remove obstacles to mutual understanding" (Held 1992: 32).

Western ideas
In Yangshuo, young women come in contact with foreigners and Western ideas. Most of them are very curious and interested in learning more about Westerners and their culture.

> *"I love to meet a lot of different foreign people so I can learn about their country, culture and ideas." – Sara*

Given their personalities and cultural background, they have certain views regarding these different discourses. Some ideas are regarded as very attractive to them.

"In China, the family is very important. Parents often tell you what to do about work, study etcetera. In the West people do what they want and their parents don't tell them what to do. I think that is good" – Sara

Independence and freedom are often regarded as attractive to my informants.

"In Western countries adults leave their parents and become independent. In China many adults are often not independent. They depend on their parents to help them and give them money when they need it. That is not a good thing. 'There is no such thing as a free meal.' If you want something you have to work for it. I learned that the divorce rate in Western countries is so high. I was so amazed! They also have an open mind about sex. Some girls change boyfriends many times. For me that is not good. Some traditional ideas I want to keep, like the opinion about sex. About other things I think we should be more open-minded, like equality between men and women." – Claire

Foreigners are also regarded as more open-minded. My informants hold the view that some ideas should not be changed. Western people are regarded as less family orientated, which results in more freedom, open relationships and a high divorce rate. My informants are more open-minded and more free than their parents' generation, when it comes to marriage. Still, most of them can not accept the idea of loose relationships or divorce.

"In China you can't be too different. People won't accept that. There are some ideas you can copy, but other ideas you just cannot change." – Rabbit

Connections

Contact with foreigners can result in valuable relationships. For some young women their contact with foreigners is very refreshing. For a moment, they can escape social expectations and traditional views. On the other hand it can also result in conflicts. I would like to illustrate this using the experiences of three of my informants.

"I don't want to stand for the general opinion. I am too different than most Chinese girls. Most of my Chinese friends don't understand my opinions and views. I do feel like I can share my opinions with foreigners I meet. They motivate me, encourage me and don't think I'm strange. We can have very interesting conversations about a lot of things. I love to learn more about their culture" – Lucy

"I am dating a guy from the United States. He's working here in Yangshuo as a climbing guide. I like to hang out with foreigners, because they never talk you down like Chinese people can do. They always encourage me to be myself and to do the things that I really want to do. Around Chinese people I feel more pressured about my life. They always concentrate on problems and limitations. Some of my Chinese friends and family think my boyfriend is not good for me. They think foreign guys only want to have fun and are not interested in a serious relationship or marriage. My parents want him to marry me, but they would rather see me with a Chinese man. I'm afraid to introduce him to my parents. If we will not marry eventually they will lose face and so will I. Some foreign boys promise a lot of things and then disappear. My boyfriend doesn't promise me anything. I think this is good. We are happy right now and we will see whatever the future will bring" – Grace

"I think some local foreign men are very bad. They say Chinese girls are bitches and easy to get. They are just here to find some Chinese girls. I hate it when men talk like that about Chinese girls! I feel very insulted, because most Chinese girls are not like this! – Cannie

Contact between these different cultures can have different effects as you can see in these three different quotes. Some women, like Lucy and Grace, are very open to contact with foreigners, because they have good experiences with them. However, this might also cause them some slanted looking eyes or gossip. Others, like Cannie, have had some bad experiences with foreigners, which may result in prejudices against them.

Thus, contact between these young women and foreigners is not always positive. Still, they are very interested in learning more about them, their ideas and their culture. Some Western ideas are very difficult to understand and others seem very attractive. In their contact with all these foreigners, these young women become more aware of their own lives and the ideas that dominate their lives. Most of these women think that some ideas they grew up with should not be changed. On the other hand, they regard some Western ideas as valuable. They would like to add some of these ideas to the set of meanings they maintain. However, this contact and exchange of ideas could not exist without a common language.

2.4   A global language

Language is of great importance when you talk about contact between cultures. The linguistic side of globalisation has so far received relatively little attention (de Swan 2001: 2). Thanks to globalisation, the use and influence of a language is no longer described purely in terms of geographical territory. Technology, global trade and communication present a linguistic landscape that did not exist previously (Fischer 1999: 205). Languages, just like cultures, do not exist in isolation and are also subject of transformation.

English as a global language

Some scholars, like David Crystal, see English as a global language. According to Crystal, a language becomes an international language when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country. Why a language becomes a global language, has little to do with the number of people who speak it. It has much more to do with who those speakers are (2003: 3-7). English has become a priority in China's foreign-language teaching, even though this language has no official status. English is being taught from primary school until high school and there are an estimated 300 to 500 million users and/or learners of English in the People's Republic of China (McArthur 2002: 45). A language has traditionally become an international language for one chief reason: the power of its people, so there is a close relationship between language dominance and economic, technological and cultural power. We could say that English was simply 'in the right place at the right time'. The availability or the technology of modern communication and the technology of advanced mobility provided the circumstances needed for English as a global language to grow. People have

become more mobile, both physically and electronically. This, however, does not mean that English is becoming a hegemonic language. More and more people are learning Chinese, for example. I have seen many foreign people speaking or learning Chinese in Yangshuo. The need for mutual intelligibility is only one side of the story. The other side is the need for identity. Language is a major means of showing where we belong and of distinguishing one social group from another. All over the world we can see evidence of linguistic divergence rather than convergence. These two functions can be seen as complementary, responding to different needs, according to Crystal (2003: 22). Furthermore, language has no independent existence. It only exists in the brains and mouths of its users and is therefore also an object of hybridization and customizing. One consequence of a language becoming a global language is that nobody owns it any more. Or rather, everyone who has learned it now owns it and has the right to use it in the way they want to (Ibid.: 5-13). In China, we can see the emergence of 'Chinglish', which refers to spoken or written English which is influenced by Chinese (Xiao & Zuo 2006). My informants often use English in an instrumental way. It is not regarded as a goal, but as a means to accomplish other goals. Language does not have to be about cultural domination. We can also regard it as a bridge between cultures.

"Through language you can share opinions and learn from each other. Language is a bridge" – Lucy

Motivation and desire

People in China recognize the importance of English as a global language and desire to learn this language. There is great variation in the reasons for choosing a particular language as a favoured foreign language: this includes historical tradition, political expediency, and the desire for commercial, cultural or technological contact (Crystal 2003: 5). As I mentioned before, my informants use language in an instrumental way. They like to learn English so they can communicate with foreigners. Another important motivation is that it improves their job opportunities in Yangshuo, or in the economic centres of China. If you want to be a waitress in a Western restaurant in Yangshuo, you have to be able to speak a reasonable level of English. Many of my informants work or are planning to work in the big coastal cities of China. International companies and companies who do business or are trading with foreign companies are booming in these regions. Working in these companies is very

popular, because they have a higher status, better working conditions and at best the possibility to go abroad. Knowledge of English in order to deal with customers, if you want to work for these international or trading companies, is thus essential. All my informants see English as an important skill whereby they can increase their opportunities.

Almost 20 years ago, Owen came as a young man to Yangshuo. He was one of the first people who could speak English, because he wanted to communicate with foreigners and he realised that if he knew what the foreigners wanted and needed, he could do good business. He was the first person in Yangshuo, for example, to offer international calling, internet and kayaking to foreigners and he opened one of the first Western restaurants in Yangshuo. Therefore, he became a famous businessman in Yangshuo.

He opened the first English school in Yangshuo in 1992, now owns Owen College and he is the president of Buckland International Education Group which promotes cultural and linguistic exchanges. Every year he gives motivation speeches to inspire students all over China.

"Some students are graduated but can not speak English. They realise that the farmers in Yangshuo can speak with foreigners. Why go to college and study four years to learn English? I give you the opportunity to learn English in six months!"

According to Owen you have to be face to face with foreigners to learn English.
"You need to be in an English environment if you want to learn English."
Second, you have to know their cultural background.
"If you don't know their background you have nothing to talk about."
Third, good communication is essential for doing good business.
"We have things they don't have, and they have things we don't have. Find it out and you can do business!"

Enjoy losing face

Most local girls who work as waitresses have learned English by themselves and by talking to foreigners during their work. Sometimes their English is better than people who went to university.

> *"I've studied English in university, but my oral English is very bad! That's why I chose to work in Yangshuo for a few months. This way I can get more work experience and improve my oral English" – Ella*

All students in China learn English in school, but oral English is often a big problem. The Chinese school system focuses on examinations, which means they only focus on the writing and reading of English. Another problem is the fact that Chinese people are often afraid to talk, because they don not want to 'lose their face'. 'Losing face' is a returning concept in Chinese culture. When somebody loses face, their reputation in the eyes of their peers has been reduced (Ho 1976).

Zhuo Yue English College in Yangshuo

In the many private English schools in Yangshuo, the students are being taught that trying and making mistakes is essential in learning a new language. 'Enjoy losing face' is a

frequently used phrase in the schools. The way of teaching in these private English schools is essentially different from Chinese schools and the Chinese school system. Consistent with its collectivist characterization, the educational system, just like the family systems in China, have been described as highly hierarchical and oriented on obedience to authority. For example, the educational system in China includes, among its salient features, a uniform nationwide curriculum, standardised college entrance exams, and an emphasis on rote learning, group routines and respect for the authority of teachers (Breiner 1980; Chen & Su 2001; Wu 1996).

"Many young people copy from authoritative people, like their parents and teachers. This is the safe way. It is also very common in the Chinese education system. You are not being taught to give your own opinion. You should copy what is presented to you. I always want to give my own opinion. If you copy everything, you are very impressionable. I think you should always be able to see your own views and the views of other people." – Lucy

Authority does not play a mayor role in the English schools. The relationship between the teachers and students is much more equal and relaxed. Examinations and tests play a marginal role in the English teaching. It is all about improving yourself and your skills. The methods that are being used here, are also essentially different than methods that are being used in the Chinese school system. For instance, the Chinese school system is focused on copying and repeating facts and authoritative people, whereby students English in Yangshuo are not only taught from books. Teachers often come up with interesting topics and encourage students to give their opinion, debate and discuss. The distance between teachers and students is very small. Some students really enjoy these new learning methods and others have difficulties adjusting to these new demands, because they are not used to give their own opinions and to discuss and debate about different topics.

Thus, language plays a very important role in the lives of the young women I met. Speaking English means being able to communicate with foreigners and it means you have more opportunities on the job market. In Yangshuo, it plays an essential role because of the tourism and in the big cities it is essential because of the international business and trade.

Studying English in Yangshuo and being in a 'foreign environment' is hard work and a unique experience for many students. For the waitresses it is often a matter of commitment, but for both waitresses and students it is important to overcome timidity and the fear of losing face. Curiosity, interest and the will of improving themselves need to prevail if they really want to be able to communicate. In the future, English will continue to become more and more important in China. But does this communication expose some unevenness between my informants and the foreigners they meet?

2.5   Vagabonds vs. tourists?

I would like to discuss an important argument for the unevenness of globalisation. According to Bauman (1998), the 'new world order' of new speed and new polarisation creates both vagabonds and tourists. Globalisation creates mobility for some (tourists) and mainly immobility for most (vagabonds). "Vagabonds are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise [...] The tourists stay or move at their hearts' desire [...] The tourists travel because they want to and the vagabonds because they have no other bearable choice" (Ibid.: 92-93). Are my informants vagabonds and are the foreigners they meet the tourists? I will try to investigate if Bauman's theory is accurate in the case of the young women I met in Yangshuo.

Access to mobility
"Nowadays we are all on the move [...] but most of us are on the move even if physically, bodily, we stay put" (Ibid.: 77). First I would like to discuss the fact that vagabonds are always pushed from behind when they participate in mobility. My informants are being pushed into mobility because of the few job opportunities, the low income in their hometowns and also the traditional discourses that dominate the countryside. Yet, I suggest that pull factors often play as great a role in the decision to become mobile. These pull factors, but also the constraints and limits will be discussed in the next chapter. It is the access to global mobility that is often denied to my informants. Most young Chinese women, as most Chinese people, are still unable to meet up to the current visa requirements for international travel or settling. Seeing the tourists pass by and even settle in Yangshuo

makes them aware of the fact that their opportunities are not the same. Most young Chinese women have a great desire to go abroad and travel around the world. Even though they do not have to opportunity now, they do continuously hope and believe that someday they will get the chance.

> I meet Meghan (19) in a bar I regularly visit. She works there every night as a waitress and also studies in Xijie English College during the day. She loves to talk to foreigners, practice her English and to joke around with them. She has one big dream.

> *"I wanted to learn English because it is good for my future and I want to travel around the world. I don't want to read it in books. I want to meet people and see and experience it myself! If I save enough money I first want to go to Cuba. I used to work in a bar called Havana where I learned some things about Cuba that sounded very interesting to me"*

Their dream to go to a certain place often has to do with imagination: images they have seen on TV, from people they have met, or in Meghan's case, it is because of a place they have worked. These dreams are often unrealistic. Even though some of them will succeed, most of them probably will not. They think it is a pity and not fair that they can not travel wherever they want. However this does not mean that they feel envy against the foreigners and tourists they meet.

> *"Maybe I cannot travel but I can still learn about other people, countries and cultures, because I come in contact with them every day" – Sara*

They think meeting and learning about different cultures and people makes up for the fact that they cannot travel out there themselves. This gives them the opportunity to learn more about the world. They are on the move even if physically, bodily, they stay put.

Being a consumer

"Our society is a consumer society […] but not everybody can be a consumer" (Ibid.: 79, 85). China is a society where consumption becomes increasingly important, but it is also in this case, that not all people can participate. This is especially true for the waitresses, who see tourists with their consumption pattern every day. They see them buying souvenirs, having breakfast, lunch and diner in a restaurant and drinking beer and coffee all day. Again, this makes these young women aware of the fact that they do not have the same opportunities. I would say this image can use some nuance.

> After a month in Yangshuo I choose to buy a bike so I can move easily across and outside of town. I buy a second hand bike at a small local shop. When I tell some of my students that I park my bike downtown they tell me this is not a good idea because it can easily get stolen. Then I hear Betty say:
>
> "Well I think you don't care if your bike gets stolen. If they steal your bike you just buy another one."
>
> This is not the first time that I hear her say something like this. I try to explain to them that this is not the case. I paid 25 Euros for my bike and I don't intend to spend that money once again. I explain to them that I borrowed money from my parents to come to China and that I have to pay every cent back. Then I show her that she has an expensive laptop, another computer at home, a digital dictionary and a mobile phone. I tell her that I borrowed a crappy laptop from a friend, because I don't even have one. She understands my point.

This being said, I know there is a big difference between the students in the English schools and the waitresses who work in Yangshuo. The students have more opportunities than the waitresses, because of their relatively higher education. They have more opportunities to be mobile and they have more opportunities to participate in a consumer society. Seeing all these tourists definitely makes young women aware of their own situation and limits, but I suggest that the theory of vagabonds and tourists is way too black and white. In the next

chapter concerning mobility to the city, I will return to some of the arguments made by Bauman.

Summary

Yangshuo has accommodated different cultural features. They have gained new meaning in the local context of Yangshuo and it is a place where young women come in contact with people from all over the world. Through a common language they exchange ideas and worldviews. The traditions these young women grew up with and the Western values that they come across are often contradicting. Some ideas seem attractive, others repulsive. It makes them become aware of their own lives and worldviews and meeting foreigners makes them conscious of other possible lives. However, it also makes them aware of the global unevenness, which I will further discuss in chapter four.

Interlude

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China's floating population

There is another big development in China as a result of globalisation and modernisation which has affected Yangshuo and my informants. I'm talking about the 'floating population' of China, a growing number of migrants without an official status (*cf.* Gaetano & Jacka 2004; Guthrie 2006; Solinger 1999). This phenomenon is partly put in motion by rapid commercialization, an exploding urban economy and the gradual relaxation of state policies on migration. These are mainly people who migrate from countryside to city, from developed to underdeveloped and West and Central China to the Eastern coastal provinces. This floating population has grown from 20 million in 1990 to 80 million in 2000, according to the Chinese Population Census (Liang & Ma 2004: 468). Some scholars think this number is much higher and are talking about 130 million migrants (*cf.* Gaetano & Jacka 2004; Guthrie 2006). China's floating population of migrant workers reached a record 211 million in 2009 and will hit 350 million by 2050 if government policies remain unchanged according to The 2010 Report on the Development of China's Floating Population. Although the number of long-distance migrants decreased in 2009 as a result of a weakened demand for labour caused by the financial crisis, the long-term overall tendency of people moving to eastern coastal areas and key traffic hubs would not change, said the 2010 Report (Xinhua News Agency, June 27 2010).

China has always restricted internal movement in various ways. Official efforts to limit free migration between villages and cities began as early as 1952 with a series of measures designed to prevent individuals without special permission from moving to cities to take advantage of the generally higher living standards there. During the cultural revolution this policy was strengthened and large numbers of urban people were sent to the countryside for political and ideological reasons. Relaxation of the policy during the reforms under Deng Xiaoping were only short term. In May 1984 new measures strengthened residence regulations and reinstated official control over internal migration. The central government attempted to control movement through the household registration – *hukou* - system and promote development of small cities and towns (Cheng & Selden 1994). Lately there are sounds that indicate the relaxation of the *hukou* system by the government.

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3   Leaving for the city

I had set up a meeting with four female students from Owen College, where I worked as a volunteer. The conversation took place in my own apartment and the atmosphere was very relaxed. We talked about their lives and experiences, for example, regarding to mobility. One of the women was Sherry, a single woman of 28 years old. Her hometown is in the province of Jiangxi and she has worked as an accountant in Shanghai for several years. I asked her why she decided to move to the big city.

"In my hometown I had a job and sometimes I would think about the future. I thought: in a few years I will get married and have children. That seemed terrible to me! If you get married in a small town or county and have children, all your hopes and wishes will never come true. You dream of going to Shanghai, but you will never do it. I didn't want that life. I imagined what would happen, so I decided that I must go somewhere different. I had only seen my hometown and the capital of my province. I had not seen the world, so I decided to go to Shanghai. In our eyes Shanghai is very beautiful and modern. I wanted to see it for myself!"

Sherry's story is typical for the motivations of many young women in China. They want to see the world and experience new things. Modernity and changing your life seems very attractive to them. As Chang argued in *Factory Girls* (2008)

"Moving to the city meant changing your fate."

Spaces and identities intertwine or clash in many ways, not least in times of great mobility (Hannerz in Hedetoft & Hjort 2002). Moving to the big city means entering a different life with a different look, speed and lifestyle. Meanings are equally generated by people 'on the move' and in the flows and connections between cultures (Tomlinson 1999). In the previous chapter, I described the relationship between the global(s) and the local(s) and the impact of these flows and connections between cultures on the worldview of young Chinese women.

In this chapter I will explore the impact of migration on their values, identities, worldviews and discourses that inform them. We can surmise that the experiences of rural-to-urban migrants in China will have a major impact on those individuals' worldviews, sense of identity, and relationships with others, and on social relations in general (Gaetano & Jacka 2004). I will analyze the context, motives and experiences regarding mobility of young women in China. The agency of these women will play an important role. I will describe the push and pull factors that drive them to move and I will further elaborate on the discourse of modernity that pulls them towards the cities. Are these images and dreams realistic? The city can be a window to the world, but most of the young women face several constraints. For some there is a future in the city and for some there is not. Furthermore will I describe some ideas and discourses that live in the cities. Finally, I will describe the impact that migration has on the worldview of these young women. I suggest that young women who have worked in the city are often empowered and more independent than the women who stayed behind in the countryside.

3.1   On the move

There are several motives and reasons for young Chinese women to move to the big economic cities. I would like to return to the theory of Bauman, concerning tourists and vagabonds. According to Bauman (1998) there are mainly push factors that cause vagabonds to move. "They are on the move because they have been pushed from behind – having first been spiritually uprooted from the place that holds no promise, by a force of seduction or propulsion too powerful, and often too mysterious, to resist" (Ibid.: 92). I would like to suggest that this is only partly true and therefore I would like to add more agency to the story.

Leaving the countryside for the city
Gaetano and Jacka have given a significant contribution with their reader *On The Move* (2004), in understanding the motives, experiences and impact of migration in contemporary China. They suggest that outmigration of young women is a way to escape gender oppression or violence (Ibid.: 2). In a way they may escape control and their roles as young women and thereby escape their outlined future. In their choice to migrate to the city they

are often motivated by a desire, conditioned by a powerful discourse of modernity, according to which staying in the countryside equals being left behind in the march of progress.

Living room of Smiley's parents home in a small village near Yangshuo

This became clear in Sherry's quote about her motivations to move to Shanghai. Rural gender and kinship roles, daughters' relatively marginal roles in rural production, and the loss of autonomy that will likely result from marriage, will further strengthen women's desire to escape the countryside, even for a brief period (Ibid.: 5). Yet, most responses to the question about their motivations to move were:

"I want to see the world!"
"I want to broaden my horizon"
"I have more opportunities in the city"

Most of these young women have not traveled a lot or seen much of China. Moving to the city gives them the opportunity to see and experience more than their hometowns. These young women often come from small and more traditional places and so the big city seems like 'a window to the world' to them. There is also a big economic reason to migrate to the

city. The wages are much higher in the city, so many girls decide to work in the city for a few years to earn and save more money. Their work often results in financial contributions to their parents and hometown. In this and the previous chapter you will find several push and some pull factors in their motivation to move to the city. Louise Beynon (in Ibid.: 8) suggests that migration should be conceptualized as a 'motive path' through life space, as well as geographical space, whereby women migrate in search of work that will give them a sense of independence and accomplishment. However, expectations regarding marriage, norms of gender propriety, and popular stereotypes associating women's mobility with immorality are also a concern to young women considering migration to the city.

> Ellen (24) has been working as a sales consultant in a shoe factory in Dongguan.
> Her hometown is a small village in Hunan.

> *"My parents want me to return to my hometown and get married. They want me*
> *to be more close to them. I don't want to move back. I like living in Dongguan*
> *because I have a lot of freedom here."*

Expression of agency?

The question can be raised if this mobility is always an expression of agency. Many young women are initially opposed in their decision to migrate by one or both parents. Despite hardships that the journey and city life promise to present, certain young women are quite insistent in their efforts to win parental support and in their determination to leave the village. Young women's effort to overcome parental opposition, as well as their own fears and feelings of homesickness, suggest that the decision to migrate is ultimately an expression of agency. Young migrant women clearly conceive of themselves as active initiators of migration (Ibid.:45).

> Lu Xiao Hui is a young girl of only 17 years old. When she was 15 she moved to
> the industrial city Shunde in Guangdong to work in a cosmetics factory together
> with a group of friends.

"My parents didn't want me to go to Shunde to work in a factory. They thought I was too young. I managed to convince them it was very important for me to go."

Social network

My informants don not migrate blindly and uninformed to the city. They respond systematically to information channeled to the villages, mainly through social networks comprised of kin and co-villagers. Most labor migrants follow relatives or co-villagers in migration. Kin and co-villagers can be relied upon to supply information about job opportunities prior to migration, but also assist in finding work and accommodation. (Ibid.:24-25).

Claire (25) is a student in Zhuo Yue English school. She is 25 years old and her hometown is in the south of Guangxi province. She only finished her middle school and has already worked in Dongguan for 8 years. I asked her to explain the conditions under which she left for the city.

"After finishing middle school the whole family helped in the field to cut the rice. There was a manager from a factory in Dongguan who is from my hometown. She came back to look for girls who wanted to work in her factory. My cousin was thinking about this and asked me to go with her. My scores in middle school were not so good so my parents were disappointed. I was sad because my parents work very hard. I thought I had to find a job to release some pressure for them so I went to Guangdong to work in this factory."

These personal connections are particularly important for young women migrating to the city. When they have already settled in the city, they can choose to go their own way, but they rarely migrate without any connections.

Thus, young women have different motives for migrating to the city. Most of the times it is a set of motives and push and pull factors that drive them, rather than one motive. Agency is of significant importance in this decision process, but it is often their own personal choice to move to the city and they always migrate informed and with help of a social network. Some

young women however faced severe push factors which made them migrate to the city, but I suggest that this is an exception. Pull factors and especially the discourse of modernity constitutes an important reason for mobility.

3.2   A window to the world?

Imagination is an important pull factor when young women decide to move to the city. Appadurai (1991) also stresses the significance of 'the imagination' in the production of culture and identity in the contemporary world. Mass media and the imagination play an increasingly significant role in the mobilization of identities (Appadarai 1996). Media has changed the balance between imagination and lived experience. Imagination becomes a major social practice, as more people are aware of alternative possible lives. Young Chinese women receive images of the city through mass media and other people. The image of living in a big city with a modern lifestyle attracts them, because "this is where the action is [...] The center has what 'home' lacks: risk, excitement, anonymity, opportunity. Village tales suggest that going to the big city could be the way of becoming someone else, accomplishing a personal transformation. A more desirable identity, a more fully realized you, would come about only through escape – permanent or temporary" (Hannerz in Hedetoft & Hjort 2002: 221).

Modernity

The big cities in China are very modern and nothing like most of my informants are used to. These cities accommodate millions of people and the facilities are endless. The modern appearance seems very interesting for my informants. This discourse of modernity constructs a deep rural/urban difference. The city is an object of fascination. It offers the excitement of high-rises, superhighways and multilevel shopping malls. Going to any large city is a chance to see the world. Young women from the countryside willingly brave the potential dangers posed by migration, because going out to work offers the chance to participate in China's quest for modernity, while remaining on the farm does not (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 46). A desire for modernity, associated with urban living, move young women out of the countryside. Distanced from village and kin, earning wages, acquiring skills, and navigating the urban landscape, migrant women forge new, modern identities. They also

face other constraints and limitations which I will discuss in a later paragraph of this chapter. Most migrant workers are limited by their finances, employment conditions or education level from pursuing extra-work activities in a methodical manner. Nonetheless, nearly all agree that even the city itself can be a classroom that imparts new knowledge about modern life. Given the complex urban environment, managing to find one's way around the capital city is educational and confidence-building (Ibid.: 68-69). Finding your way in the city, symbolizes being able to find your way in the world.

Betty is one of the women who loves city life.

"I come from a very small village in Jiangxi. After my high school I went to college in Shenzhen. At first the change was a little bit scary. Now, I love this city because it's a window to the world! The city is very rich and the life is really fast. I like this because it's very exciting! It makes me feel on top of the world and able to do anything I want."

Moving up

Really changing your fate and moving up is only possible for young women who are very motivated to improve themselves and their lives. Some of them settle for one job where they can make some money. The most motivated women started at the assembly line and by learning new skills and changing jobs, they managed to work themselves up into the office and triple their salary.

Claire (25) was one of the young women who were very motivated to move up. I asked her if this motivation is typical for most young women who move to the city.

"This has to do with my personality. Some girls are satisfied with a common life and an income of 1000 Yuan. They don't want to change. They are just looking for a rich guy to marry. If you want to move up you have to quit your job to learn new things. When you have experience you can move to a new factory. They will

think you are very useful and they will give you a higher salary. I was lucky. I left

the factory. Many other girls still work in the same factory."

Getting help and information from a social network is essential. The road to intellectual success is difficult and only a few are able to achieve these objectives. Whatever the course of study and the sacrifices it entails, most young women see great value in acquiring modern skills that they believe will be useful in their village or country. Many dream of setting up their own business, such as a tailoring practice or beauty salon (Ibid.: 67). Despite limited opportunities for upward economic and social mobility, these migrant workers continually strive to better their lives in the city. Young rural women share information that allows them to springboard to higher-paying or less-stigmatized jobs. Others set their sight on earning diplomas and certificates in their spare time, in order to improve themselves and achieve future employment goals (Ibid.: 68). Learning to work with the computer, or learning English, are important skills that are useful for getting a better job in the city.

Another good example of a young woman who managed to achieve social mobility is Sophie. Sophie is 20 years old and comes from a small village in the province of Shaanxi. For 4 years she has been working in Guangdong.

"When I was 16 I moved to Guangdong. I found work in a cable company at the assembly line. I became friends with one of my co-workers and she taught me how to use the computer and encouraged me to learn English. I quit my job and started working in another cable company. Because of my experience they gave me a job in the office. Now I'm working as a waitress in Yangshuo to improve my English. When I go back to Guangdong I will look for a job as a sales woman."

Running back home
Some young women move to the city with the idea of it being a window to the world, but soon they realize they hate city life. Sometimes they move to visit kin or friends, to travel and/or look for a job. Some just want to give working in the city a try.

Emmy is a young woman of 24 years old and works in Reyleys, a Western restaurant in Yangshuo. I ask her if she has ever worked in a big city.

"Two years ago I went to Dongguan to travel and to work. 15 Days I worked at the assembly line in an electronics factory. Some relatives work in this factory. They told me they liked working here, but I didn't like it! I didn't like the work and I didn't like Dongguan so I moved back to Yangshuo."

Emmy, like some other young women I talked to, can not handle the chaotic life in the cities. They know they can make more money in the city, but they choose to move back. They are not motivated enough to endure the hardship of the city, where I will further look into in the next section.

So, the cities are seen as attractive for many young women. Imagination plays a significant role in creating a discourse of modernity with an image of a 'window to the world'. Some young women, like Claire and Sophie, are able to climb up the ladder and realize a part of the modern dream. This is not easy and it takes a lot of work and perseverance, which some young women can not handle. Women like Emmy choose to return to the more easy and safe a life at home. However, they will go home with an insight in the modern city life. In the next section I will further elaborate on the constraints and limitations of mobility.

3.3   Constraints and limitations

Besides opportunities, these young women realize that modernity also has its downsides. If they had not realized it before, they definitely will when they start to make a living in the city. Most of the cities, like in Guangdong, are big industrial migrant cities. The streets are crowded, polluted and the people are hasty and often unfriendly. Women with little or no education will have to start at the margins. "Contemporary cities are sites of an 'apartheid a rebours': those who can afford it, abandon the filth and squalor of the regions that those who cannot afford to move are stuck to" (Bauman 1998: 86).

Hukou

There is a big separation between the rural and urban people in China. This is partly due to the *hukou* system, a household registration system which has been described as 'China's apartheid'. In this system, which was developed in the 1950s, people are classified according to place of residence and as belonging to either agricultural (rural), or nonagricultural (urban) households (Chan & Zhang 1999). Recently, the central government has moved further towards relaxing issuance of urban *hukou*, or the privileges associated with it, in certain contexts and to migrants who meet particular criteria. Yet, despite all the new reforms and regulations in the early twenty-first century the household registration system and the division it maintains, between those who have local, urban nonagricultural registration and those who do not, remain influential. The majority of rural-to-urban migrants remains unable to transfer their *hukou,* which means that they face extreme difficulties when integrating into the urban community and it limits their opportunities for social mobility (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 19-20). It is possible to move up from a rural to an urban *hukou* by obtaining a college degree and gaining employment with a corporation or the government. For some of my informants, especially the students English, who have had good education, it will be possible to get an urban *hukou*. Most of the waitresses I met in Yangshuo are young women without any education. It is unlikely they will ever be able to settle in the city. Rural migrants who live in urban area's have less access to education and government services and in several respects occupy a social and economic status similar to illegal immigrants. The millions of peasants who have since left the countryside, remain stuck at the margins of urban society and have been blamed for the growing crime and unemployment. Under pressure from their citizens, city governments impose discriminatory rules (Cheng & Selden 1994). However, some scholars claim that although the *hukou* system is discriminatory, it is not worse than the passport system keeping people from developing countries from resettling in the West, a system which has been called global apartheid (Yang 2007).

Living conditions and working in the margins

Especially low skilled young women face hard living and working conditions in the cities. Most of these cities are new industrial cities such as Dongguan. These cities are filthy

because of all the factories and the crime rates are enormous. Many young women have to begin at the margins, working at the assembly line in a factory for long hours.

"When I first arrived in the city, I felt very miserable. A few days I walked around to look for a job in a factory. At that time, I once slept in a park. I found a factory opposite of a high school. Every day I saw the students and it made me feel really sad. I had to work up to 13 hours a day at the assembly line. We had to sleep in one room with four girls from the factory. The whole environment in Dongguan is very bad. The air is dirty and it is very unsafe. You always have to be careful nobody robs you." – Sophie

Discrimination

Young women who move from the countryside to the city, often face discrimination from local urban residents. Just like in Western-European countries, the people in the economic centers often have a negative attitude towards rural and low skilled migrants. They are blamed for the rising crime rates and the insecurity in the cities. There are also many discourses which generate discrimination of immigrants, which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter.

The evening I talked to four students from Owen College, we also talked about discrimination in the city. They all work in Guangdong or Shanghai and have experienced discrimination more or less.

Sherry: *"Shanghai people don't like people from other cities. They think that they are the best. If you can not speak the Shanghai dialect they will treat you differently. One time I can remember. I wanted to buy a battery, but I thought it was not good, so I didn't buy it. The man cursed at me and said I was rubbish. It was because I spoke Mandarin. If I could speak Shanghai local language to him he wouldn't do that to me! I spoke Mandarin, so he knew that I'm not local. Even if you don't dress well, local people will think you are poor and they will discriminate you."*

> Potato: *"Shanghai people even don't like Guangdong people. In Guangdong people speak Cantonese. Some people will discriminate you if you can only speak Mandarin."*
>
> Sherry: *"If you go to the shopping mall or go with the bus people will look down on you if you can't speak the local language. They see a lot of people every day."*
>
> Ellen: *"If you look shabby they will look down on you and be rude."*

Appearance is a big issue for some young women and they often feel inferior when it comes to their height and their 'dark' or 'yellow' skin. When they have this more rural appearance, they will have trouble finding a job, especially if it is a representative job. Particularly the lower skilled and uneducated rural women will face discrimination by local people. They are often recognized by their appearance or dialect, but even for educated young women, like these students from Owen College, being a non-local resident can result in difficulties and unpleasant situations.

Urban ideas of superiority

City people hold certain views regarding to rural people. Young women who move from the countryside to the city, run into urban ideas of superiority which create prejudice and discrimination against rural people. In the eyes of urban people, a peasant lacks the moral quality to advance modernity. Rural women are seen as traditional and backward. Harriet Evans notes, "as China negotiates modernity coupled with global capitalism, the modern women is constructed through images of subordination and exclusion, most notably of the rural, uneducated and poor" (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 41). As I have shown earlier, city people look down on people from the countryside. They are regarded as poor, uneducated and they think that all people in the countryside are farmers with old and dirty clothes. They think these people have no knowledge, no good manners and they also think living in the countryside is very inconvenient.

> Claire told me a lot about the division and discourses between rural and urban people, because she has lived in a city for 8 years as a countryside girl.

"Some city people think that countryside people will make them lose their face, so they are afraid to invite their rural relatives. They look down on their countryside relatives and they are regarded as dirty and rude. City people are afraid to take them to good places or introduce them to other people. They are afraid about their appearance and don't want to lose their face by being seen with poor and rude people from the countryside."

Farmers and rural people are being stigmatized by people from the city, yet there are also some discourses rural people hold towards city people. Many rural people hold the view that people from the city only think about money. There is nobody to support you, so you have to do everything by yourself. When you do something friendly for somebody in the city, they will think you want something from them. They are often suspicious and unreliable. People in the city are never satisfied according to rural people. If they have a house, they want a bigger house. If they have a car, they want a bigger car.

For the most part Bauman (1998) was right about the 'apartheid a rebours' in contemporary cities. Especially lower skilled and uneducated rural women will have to start at the margins and face discrimination and exclusion. However, China is developing fast with a growing number of educated women who are able to participate in China's quest for modernity. Even the uneducated young women can move out of the margins, by learning new skills and being perseverant. Still, the *hukou* system contributes to the rural-urban separation and it creates urban ideas of superiority and discrimination.

3.4 Impact of migration

Moving away from home to a large city can have a major impact on young women. For the first time they have to find their way in the big world by themselves. Some women really succeed in the city and are able to move upwards, while others are stuck in the margins. Yet it is a big learning experience for all and for some it will definitely change their lives.

Autonomy and empowerment

The experiences of rural-to-urban migrants in China will have a major impact on individual worldviews, sense of identity and relationships with others and on social relations more in general. These young women often experience and are empowered by a degree of autonomy from the patriarchal authority of parents and a broadening of horizons when they migrate to urban areas. Migration will give them a sense of independence and accomplishment. Women who migrate make more independent and informed decisions, differing from how to spend their hard-earned wages, to when and whom they will marry and in regard to issues of sexuality and reproduction (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 2).

China is a 22 year old women who works in the Minority bar. She has been working in Guangdong for almost 3 years as a nanny, in a restaurant and at the assembly line of a factory.

"My little sister still lives in my hometown and is already married. For me this is way too young! I think it is good to date more man instead of marrying the first one. I had a boyfriend in Guangdong, but he did not suit me. When you date more men, you can make a better choice regarding to which man is best for you. People in the cities marry later than people in the countryside. I think this is good! I would like to wait another five years before I want to get married. First, I want to enjoy my freedom and experience new things."

China shows us that her expectations have changed since she has experienced the city life and its different discourses regarding to relationships and marriage. During their time in the city, these young women experience freedom and autonomy. When they return to their hometown, most of them are not willing to give up all their acquired freedom. They left home to gain independence, but most of them cannot create a secure life in the city. Fan (in Ibid.: 11) argues that urban work experience can empower women migrants and enable them to become potential agents of social change in rural areas, which I will discuss more deeply in the next chapter. Having been influenced by urban ideas on love and marriage and having experienced a degree of autonomy in the city, most of them are unwilling to settle for a traditional rural husband. These young women like to postpone marriage for as long as

possible, because they see it as a constraint on their freedom, but they know that this is a dangerous strategy, as marriage is necessary to secure a stable future. Their agency and ability to contribute to the village and foster social change is limited by deep-rooted traditions and institutional constraints (Ibid.: 9, 11). In the next and final empirical chapter, I will concentrate on social change and continuity and the way these young women struggle and deal with these dilemmas of contradicting discourses.

For the first time far away from home, finding your own way in the big world by yourself. This has a big impact on the lives and expectations of young women and it gives them a sense of empowerment, independence and accomplishment. Their attitudes towards rural life and relationships and their own identities have undergone significant change in the city, but new expectations are hard to realize.

Summary

There are several push and pull factors that cause young Chinese women to move from the countryside to the city. There are also some push factors in the form of traditional kinship roles and marriage pressure, but the choice to move to the city always comes from the women themselves. Imagination and the discourse of modernity are important pull factors. The city can be a window to the world, but young rural women are also faced with multiple constraints, like the *hukou* system and discrimination. Some of them are able to achieve social mobility while others remain stuck in the margins of city life. In any way, being on the move has a great impact on their lives. Young women experience empowerment and autonomy when they live in the city. Furthermore, women who migrate make more independent and informed decisions and create new expectations in life.

4   Multiple voices in the Self

Who am I? What do I want? Where do I belong? In a world of globalisation, modernisation and mobility, these questions are becoming more and more important. Through these processes we come in contact with other worldviews and ideas. They influence the way young Chinese women look at themselves, the world around them and it influences their expectations and dreams in life. For these young adults it can be difficult to balance their own, sometimes multiple and contradicting, wishes and the wishes of other people.

Grace and Lucy are two young women who want to break free from the wishes of other people. I met Grace (25) in the restaurant where I, and she, often spend our time. She is a beautiful and smart young woman full of dreams and ideas. Grace grew up and studied in Guangdong. She got a good job in an international company and her parents thought it was time for her to find a good husband and get married. However, she was not happy. When she visited Yanghuo on a holiday, she felt so good she did not want to leave.

"Some girls follow the wishes of their parents. Some girls choose to go their own way. The more my parents push me, the more I want to go my own way. I want to find peace and I want to be myself. I do not want to be caged like a bird. You can't change the world, but you can change yourself."

In her hometown Grace feels like she can not be herself. In Yangshuo she feels free. Free from pressure. Lucy (21) is a little bit younger, but her story is quit similar. She grew up in the neighbouring province of Hunan and studied in the capital city of her province. I met her in a Dutch guesthouse just outside of Yangshuo, where she works as a waitress. Lucy is not like other Chinese girls, as she says herself. She has a strong and often different opinion and she is interested in different things than her peers. Now she has finished her study, her parents have certain expectations of her.

"My dream is to live a harmonic and peaceful life. The natural way. Enjoy life. I don't want to be a copy. I want to be myself. Some things can't be changed by other people. My parents want me to find a good job in the city and make a lot of money. I don't care about boys, cloths or money. I feel happy when I am close to nature and when I can help other people. That is most important to me. Sometimes I feel guilty towards my parents, but this is my life and they cannot control it any more."

For these young women it is not easy to go their own way and to be themselves. They often face pressure and judgements from other people, whether it is from their peers or their parents.

In a globalizing world society, individuals and groups are no longer located in one particular culture, homogeneous in itself and contrastingly set against other cultures, but are increasingly living on the interfaces of cultures (Appadurai 1990; Raggatt 2000; Spiro 1993; Wolf 1982). So, what kind of images do these young women identity themselves with in a changing world of globalisation and mobility? In this chapter, I will discuss the way these young women deal with different and sometimes contradicting discourses and the degree to which they are able to act out on them. I will discuss the way they see themselves and the way other people would like them to be. They will face different obstacles and resistance regarding their identity construction. Traditions and social pressure may hinder these young women to live their lives the way they want to. It will become clear that there are some new and some old and more traditional features that play important roles in their lives. Questions of home and belonging continue to play a significant role when it comes to people on the move and in contact with other people. Expectations about their lives are influenced by this contact, mobility and by their 'roots'. Their 'routes' are influenced by both agency and restrictions, whereby the question of the unevenness of globalisation will rise again. Will their routes eventually lead to sociocultural change, or will we witness continuity?

4.1   Identification: Who am I?

We especially begin to think about this question when we come in contact with other cultures, people and other ideas (Eriksen 1993). It makes us aware of our own identity. I would like to refer to this complex concept with a constructivist approach, whereby identity is seen as fluid, incoherent, unstable, constantly in flux and changing (Featherstone 1995; Jameson 1991; Gergen 1991). In following of Hall (1992, 1996), I want to treat identity as a process which takes into account the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience. I will use the concept of identification, whereby identity is perceived as made up of different components that are identified and interpreted by these young women. The construction of an individual sense of self is achieved by personal choices regarding who and what to identify with. This approach is liberating in the recognition of the role of the individual in social interaction and the construction of identity. "Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about. If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves" (Ibid. 1992: 277). There are multiple discourses young Chinese women identify themselves with. These can be rather new or more traditional discourses. When it comes to these multiple and/or contradicting discourses and ideas, I would like to stress the importance of agency and the influence of social expectations and pressure.

Multiple cultures within the self
The increasing interconnectedness of nations and cultures does not only lead to an increasing contact between different cultural groups, but also to an increasing contact between cultures within the individual person. Different cultures come together and meet each other within the self of one and the same individual. This process may result in multiple identities. The focus here is on intercultural processes that lead to the formation of a multiplicity of cultural positions, or voices coming together in the self of a single individual (Pieterse 1995). Such positions or voices may become engaged in mutual negotiations, agreements, disagreements, tensions, and conflicts.

Betty (26) grew up in the province of Jiangxi and has been living and working in the city of Dongguan for many years. Her mother is a housewife and her father works in the post office.

"In my mind I am a traditional woman. I am traditional, because I want to love a man, get married, and have children. I do not want any other men and I hate divorce. I can not believe the divorce rate in the West is so high. This is not good! Now, only a few girls are still traditional. Many Chinese girls do not care about love. They only want a man for the money, for example an old man. A lot of girls become mistresses, especially in the cities this happens. I can't accept me doing this! Yet I do not want to be a housewife. I want to work and have my own space and my own friends. I want to be independent."

Claire (25) has also been working in Dongguan for many years. Her parents are farmers in a village in the south of Guangxi.

"Traditionally to be a good woman you have to get married and have children. You should respect and support your husband and your family. You should have no sex before marriage to protect yourself. Some things and ideas are changing, but I cannot change this view. I want to be a perfect. I want to be a good girl. I think marriage is forever, just like my parents. I do want equal rights! I don't want a husband who tells me what to do. I don't want to be the wife who does all the chores and takes care of the baby. I hate this! I like my freedom."

The two examples of Betty and Claire make clear that they hold on to some important values regarding to marriage and sex. On the other hand there are some new views. They do not want to be the subordinate woman. They do want more equality, autonomy and independence. In my opinion, this has to do with the fact that these women have their own career and have experienced a great amount of freedom. These examples have in common that different cultural voices, involved in various kinds of dialogical relationships, produce positive or negative meanings in fields of uncertainty. In other words, the global-local nexus is not just a reality outside the individual, but is rather incorporated in the self.

The globalising society is characterized by strong cultural differences, contrasts, and oppositions. As Marsella (1998) observed, cultures and nations are competing for survival as life in contemporary society pits secular, religious, humanist, and scientific cultural traditions against one another in seemingly irreconcilable struggles, because of fundamental differences in cultural practices, worldviews, and ideologies. Fundamental differences in an intensely interconnected world society do not only require dialogical relationships between people to create a liveable world, but also a self that has developed the capacity to deal with its own differences, contrasts, tensions, and uncertainties. When the world becomes more heterogeneous and multiple, the self, as part of this world, also becomes more heterogeneous and multiple. As a consequence, increasing differences in the social milieu result in increasing differences in the self, whereby some parts of the self become more dominant than other parts (Callero 2003).

New discourses

I would like to discuss some of the rather new discourses young Chinese women have incorporated. These discourses change the routes of these women. They become more and more mobile and aware of alternative possible lives. Their expectations and dreams are changing because of all these new experiences.

"I want to follow my heart"
"I want to be myself"
"I want to enjoy my life"
"I want it to be natural"
"I want to follow my dream"
"I want to see the world"

These are some of the statements I heard on a regular base during the conversations. These values probably would not fit into the mind of their parents when they were their age. They represent some 'new' values, which become visible in the lives of the young Chinese women I have met. Conceptions of personal autonomy and freedom are present and meaningful to young Chinese adults (Helwig, Arnold, Tan & Boyd 2003). Most young women long for the freedom to live their own lives. They know that they will have to give up a lot of freedom

when they marry and have children. The loss of autonomy that will likely result from marriage, strengthen these women's desire to enjoy their lives and experience new things while they are still young (Gaetano in Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 5). This is the time they can be mobile and do what they want. A lot of my informants indicate that they want to enjoy this period as much a possible before they settle down. When it comes to settling down, these young women also have some new expectations regarding their future husband.

> *"I want a man who accepts me for who I am"*
>
> *"I want to have an equal relationship"*
>
> *"I want to find a man I really love"*
>
> *"I want to be able to communicate with my future husband"*

However, the question is to what extent these young women are able to act upon these new ideas and expectations. They are restricted by both social pressure and by social immobility, a result of the unevenness of globalisation which I will discuss in a later part of this chapter.

Old discourses

Now, I would like to discuss some old discourses that continue to be of significant importance when it comes to life decisions. They involve the roots of these women. There are some core values which are still very present in their lives.

> *"Family is most important to me"*
>
> *"I believe marriage is forever"*
>
> *"I believe women should protect themselves"*

Family is still one of the most important things in the lives of the young women I have spoken with. Almost all the young women said family comes first in their life. These are the people they can always rely on and who make them feel warm. They attach great importance to the opinion of their parents. Next to the importance of family, there are some other core values that they maintain. Most of them also believe in marriage and in protecting yourself as a woman. This means you should not have loose sexual contacts.

Balancing discourses

The distinction between collective and individual and between traditional and modern is not always helpful and accurate. Still, the notion of traditional and modern plays a role in their lives and I suggest that most young women show both features. As I have shown in the previous chapters, these women have to deal with multiple and sometimes contradicting discourses, for example, between the 'modern urban women' and the 'filial rural daughter'. I argue, in imitation of Gaetano (in Gaetano & Jacka 2004), that their agency lies in their ability to balance the contradictions between these discourses. Through agency they have the ability to decide for themselves which values are important to them. Some values and ideas may be regarded as traditional, some may be seen as new and more modern. Many of my informants see themselves as traditional women even though they have many new ideas and expectations regarding to certain subjects.

Dealing with social expectations

Young women may face social pressure when it comes to realizing new ideas and expectations as a result of contact with other cultures and mobility. In previous chapters, I described pressure to be a good woman, to marry and have children and the pressure to succeed. How do these young women handle this social pressure? Few of these women choose to follow the expectations of their parents. Others may choose to keep distance from their parents, because they can not agree on their life decisions. Grace and Lucy are two women who had to break free from their parents to be able to do what they really want in their lives. Most of the young women I met do not let their parents control their lives and their decisions. They listen to their parents and try to persuade them when they have different opinions. Studies of parent-child relations in China are also beginning to raise doubts about some of the traditional characterizations of Chinese family structure as being based on strong notions of filial piety and rigid obedience to adult authority. A review of research by Chinese scholars has suggested that Chinese children resent strict and authoritarian parenting (Lau & Yeung, 1996: 33). Consensus is seen as ideal to the family context. Most of the young women will try to lead their own life and convince their parents that this is what makes them happy. Unfortunately this is not always possible.

"My parents want me to find a rich husband. They think I don't have to work so hard and life will be easier for me. I told them I can support myself, with hard work and effort. I asked them not to push me too much and give me some time to let it go the natural way. This is my choice. They can't control my life." – Lucy

Thus, young Chinese women come in contact with different cultures in a world of globalisation. These different cultures with their different discourses are also incorporated in the identity of the young women themselves. Their identity is made up from different ideas, values and discourses they identify with. These may be rather new or more traditional. I suggest that the identity of the young Chinese women I met is often multiple and made up from different cultural values. The agency lies in the fact that they are able to balance these multiple and sometimes contradicting discourses. They may face social pressure and expectations regarding to their identity. Again, they have to try to find a balance between these expectations and their own wishes.

4.2   Home and belonging

Questions related to our identity also involve questions of where we feel at home. Especially when people are on the move, they begin to ask themselves this question: Where do I belong? In a world of globalisation, questions of home and belonging are still relevant, but should be regarded as more fluid and changing, instead of fixed. Both concepts are semantically interdependent. "Our home is where we belong, territorially, existentially, and culturally, where our own community is, where our family and loved ones reside, where we can identity our roots, and where we long to return to when we are elsewhere in the world […] It circumscribes feelings of 'homeness' and it is a significant determinant of identity […] Home is where we *feel* we belong" (Hedetoft & Hjort 2002: vii).

Where do I belong?

'Home' is a complicated concept. Notions of home involve meaning, practices and symbols distinctive to particular human groups. People think about home more acutely when they are away. 'Away' is travel, tourism, migration, pilgrimage, escape, exile and diaspora (Hannerz in Ibid.: 218). My previous chapter shows that many young women in China are

very mobile. "Belonging constitutes a political and cultural field of global contestation, summoning a range of pertinent issues concerning relations between individuals, groups and communities. It raises questions about cultural, sociological and political transformative processes and their impact on imagined and real boundaries, notions of citizenship and cultural hybridisation, migration and other forms of mobility, in a world seemingly turning more fluid, aided and abetted by increasingly transnational flows of speculative capital, information, entertainment and ideas" (Ibid.: x). Some, especially uneducated, young women are unable to build a life in the big city. Women who have studied or who have worked themselves up, have more possibilities to make a living in the city. The big social, cultural and environmental differences and the political constrains, make it hard for these young women to feel at home in the city.

"I don't feel at home in Shanghai. Maybe if I can afford to buy my own house I will feel more at home. Now, I only feel at home in my hometown." – Sherry

In my opinion there are only a few women who really feel at home in the city. Even though they do not feel at home, they might stay because of different reasons. First, they want to improve their lives and experience new things. Second, they also think the city is more convenient. All the women I have spoken say they will return to the countryside (or a small city/county) one day. Some say they will return in a couple of years after they earned some money. Some return when they get married or have children and some say they will return when they retire. This often has to do with the (economic) possibilities they have, for example, to stay and raise children in the city.

Home is where the family is
Family is very important when it comes to 'feeling at home'. Many young women feel at home in the countryside, in their hometown, because this is the place they feel warmth. However, it is still common for married women to move away from their family, into their husbands' family. Even though they would like to postpone their marriage, there is not a single young woman that does not want to marry and have children. Eventually, they still regard having a family of your own as the only possible way to become truly happy.

Potato (24) thinks that 'having your own family' is the essence of what Chinese women want. This is the real home.

"Sometimes you feel lonely. When you feel lonely I think you are hoping for a home. Not your parents home. A home for yourself, your husband and your children. I think this is a Chinese women thing. Every girl or women wants to have her own family. I think most people will say: 'I enjoy single', but in their hearts I believe they are very lonely. They all hope for a family"

These young women are not sure where and with whom this home is going to be. Many depends on the man they are going to marry. Therefore, the choice of marrying a man from the city or from the countryside is an important decision in their lives, because this will decide their future home.

Thus, home is where the family is. These young Chinese women want freedom and independence, yet they also want security and warmth in their lives. I believe that most of these young women want to enjoy their lives and experience new things in the city. However, most of them are not able to realise a stable life in the city. This partially has to do with the unevenness of globalisation which I will discuss in the next section. The city is not the place where they feel they belong. The place where they feel most at home is the countryside, together with their families. One day they will create their own family, which will become their new home.

4.3   Unevenness of globalisation

When it comes to mobility and the balancing of discourses, I would like to stress the importance of agency in this thesis. However the unevenness of globalisation puts some restraints to their opportunities, which I have discussed in the previous chapters. Some women are more able to use their agency than other women. Their background, surrounding, education, social and economic status play an important role when it comes to their opportunities. Here, I would like to analyse to what extent young Chinese women can use agency in a world of uneven globalisation. "Globalisation in all its aspects is an uneven

process: privileging some, disadvantaging others, reproducing old and introducing new patterns of domination and subordination. This is to recognize that globalisation has a basic applicability to most people living in the world today" (Tomlinson 1999: 132). I would like to discuss this unevenness and also add some remarks to it.

Winners and losers

We tend to say that the West is the winner of globalisation. When it comes to mobility, we have seen that most Chinese are excluded from global mobility (Bauman 1998). When we look at the Asian Tigers and the exploding economic growth of China this statement seems false. However, this economic growth has caused a widening of the income gaps. The areas which have gained the most of these developments are concentrated in the coastal cities and provinces (Griffin & Zhao 1993; Atinc 1997). Those that were able to participate in the new, globally-linked economy, prospered faster than ever before, while the rest in the hinterland were left behind, or at least enjoyed less economic success. The pronounced surge in inequality is dominated by the rise in urban-rural and coastal-hinterland gaps, not by widening gaps within any given locale. This pattern suggests that China's inequality has been raised by differential access to the benefits of the new economy, not by widening gaps among those who participate in it, or among those who do not (Williamson 2002). I do not entirely agree with the idea that there is mainly inequality in the access not among and not those who participate in it. It is true that there are very limited possibilities for young people in rural areas, so there is a massive mobility to the coastal provinces where young people take jobs in factories and companies. In this migrating group there is also inequality, for example, between the opportunities of the waitresses and most students English. Both may come from rural areas in China, but students English with college degrees will have much more opportunities to make a living in the city, than the waitresses without any education. These women are more likely to suffer discrimination and exploitation in the cities (Gaetano & Jacka 2004: 3). I do suggest that young women without any education are able to realize social mobility, by learning new skills and perseverance, as I have described in the previous chapter.

Domination and subordination

When it comes to domination we can refer to different issues. I would like to discuss two types of domination: Western and patriarchal domination. "Ask the vagabonds what sort of life they would wish to have, given the chance of free choice – and you will get a pretty accurate description of the tourist's bliss 'as seen on TV'. Vagabonds have no other images of the good life – no alternative utopia, no political agenda of their own" (Bauman 1998: 94). To some extent this statement is true. A modern, free and mobile life is highly admired and wanted by some of the young women I have met. They see it in the tourists passing by and in the media. However, they are definitely capable of placing remarks when it comes to this utopia and they are able to create other images of the good life. These young Chinese women are not passive in their interaction with Western ideas. They are always interpreted in their own social context (Boellstorff 2003; Inda & Rosaldo 2008), as you have seen in an earlier section of this chapter.

Patriarchal domination has played a significant role in Chinese culture for many centuries. Globalisation and broader movements of social and cultural change have ameliorated many aspects of patriarchal domination (Young 2004). Through contact with other cultures and through mobility, women become empowered, generate more autonomy and independence, even though patriarchy is still of significant importance in Chinese society.

Thus, patterns of domination may be reproduced or introduced in the lives of young women, but they may also dissolve as a result of agency and empowerment. For some young women, the effects of globalisation will lead to social change and new identifications. However, some of them are not able to realize this change of opportunities and ideas because of inequalities and the lack of social mobility. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the sociocultural change or continuity as a result of globalisation.

4.4   Sociocultural change and continuity

In the end, all societies are involved in a process of social change. Since society and culture are interdependent, I will use the concept of sociocultural change. Certain ideas are picked up or change, as a result of flows between cultures and mobility. This, however, does not

have to mean that societies and cultures become a copy of other cultures, like Western culture. Some 'attractive' sociocultural practices are copied from other cultures, but the grammar of a culture is much more resistant, even though it is also subject to transformation.

Nothing remains the same

Societies are characterised by change: the rate of change, the processes of change, and the directions of change. Global trends like globalisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and mobility, can lead to significant sociocultural change. In this process of sociocultural change opportunities, challenges and difficulties face the society, its institutions and individual actors. As a consequence of this change, the need for tradition and stability can increase. Social continuity cannot simply be defined as the absence of social change, meaning that things will remain the same, because social change is a continual process in all societies. Nothing remains the same (Durrschmidt & Taylor 2008). In chapter two, I have discussed the sociocultural changes in Yangshuo as a result of globalisation. Young Chinese women come in contact with different people and worldviews when they become mobile. These people, discourses and worldviews influence the course of their life trajectories, or their routes. New expectations and new values of a good life will result in sociocultural change.

Change resistant

However, within societies there are structures which are inherently resistant to change and in this sense, we can talk about them as being social continuities. Social and cultural continuities can be likened to individuals' habits - comfortable patterns of behaviour that give individuals a sense of security and personal control - a haven or a respite in a world of social and cultural change (Durrschmidt & Taylor 2008). These social continuities, or roots, keep influencing the lives of the young women I have met in Yangshuo, like the more traditional discourses that still dominate the countryside. These young women have been brought up with these rational values. Even though we call them continuities, roots are, just like routes, subject to transformation. When these young women return to the countryside with their new ideas and worldviews, they may be able to forge change. However, when people are not willing to change their ideas, the young women may face exclusion when they return to the countryside.

Thus, society is always changing. The lives of young Chinese women are changing because of globalisation and mobility and its effects. This leads to new expectations and the adoption of new discourses, as you have seen in the first part of this chapter. Their life trajectories, or routes, change. We can refer to this sociocultural change. However, some essential values of Chinese culture are very resistant to change. We can talk about these core values as being social continuities even though these core values are also subject to transformation.

Summary

The young Chinese women I have met in Yangshuo live in a world of multiple and sometimes contradicting cultures, worldviews, values and discourses. I argue that this multiplicity of voices also becomes visible inside these young women themselves. It is often a struggle to balance these different voices within the self. On the one hand they identify with new, more Western, discourses, while on the other hand they identify with more traditional discourses they have grown up with on the countryside. These young women are all trying to find a balance between these discourses. Meanwhile, they also have to deal with the social expectations and limits of their possibilities. These young women are not always able to act out on all their new expectations in life.

5   Conclusion

I began this thesis with a quote from Claire. As a young girl she moved from the traditional countryside to the modern city to work at the assembly line. Through perseverance she managed to work herself up, but not without difficulties and challenges. She became more aware of her self, her background, her possibilities and alternative lives. Deciding to move to Yangshuo to study English, she had no idea that this choice and the people she would meet, would again change her view on life.

In this thesis, I suggest that processes of globalisation and mobility will result in the complementarity of roots and routes in the lives of young Chinese women. Meanings are generated on the move and in flows and connections between cultures. Being in contact with other cultures and discourses and being on the move makes these women more aware of themselves and what they want in life. The world around them consists of multiple and sometimes contradicting cultural features, worldviews and discourse. When the world becomes more heterogeneous and multiple, the self, as part of this world, also becomes more heterogeneous and multiple. The process of identification with different discourses will create new expectations, identities and routes. However, their roots continue to be of significant importance, even though they are also subject to transformation. It is the balance between their roots and routes that is of significant importance and that balance will enable them to survive in this uncertain and newly globalised world.

There have been many scholars who executed research on the effects of globalisation. It is a heterogeneous process, which creates both opportunities and challenges for people. So, we should be careful when we generalise the effects of globalisation. With this thesis, I tried to connect to the current debate and interpret this process based on a number of key issues. First, I stressed the importance of looking at globalisation as a highly complex and varied process. Second, I stressed the importance of seeing it as an uneven process. Third, I stressed the importance of agency in this thesis. These three issues are in my opinion essential when it comes to analysing the effects of globalisation, like mobility, multiple discourses, opportunities and life trajectories.

The young women I have met in Yangshuo are able to form an opinion when it comes to traditional, modern and Western discourses. Some seem attractive, others repulsive. By meeting foreigners and travellers and by being on the move, they become more aware of themselves. In their contact with other people they may change some views on life. Discourses of freedom have great influences on their dreams. They would like to be more free of expectations, pressure and they would like to travel around the world. Unfortunately, most of them do not have the opportunity to participate in global mobility, but they certainly do have agency when it comes to their own mobility. These women choose to leave home and 'see the world' when they migrate to the cities. Here, they experience independence, autonomy and empowerment. Thus, being in contact with other people and other places will change their identities, expectations and routes. But, there are some restraints to this agency to create new routes. Young women may face resistance such as traditions, social pressure, or social immobility as a result of uneven globalisation. Traditional discourses regarding the role of women, family life and marriage are still of significant important, especially in the countryside. Many of these women experience dilemmas when it comes to newly adopted values and more traditional values. There is an internal and sometimes external struggle for independence and adventure on one hand, and the struggle for security and a home on the other hand. This struggle became visible in my conversations with these young women. Some women feel an urgent need to live by new values, because they would feel miserable if they would follow the wishes of others. Other women feel more safe when following the life trajectory that is expected of them. In the end, they will try their best to balance these values.

Since the young and inexperienced Claire left her hometown, her view on the world and her own life has changed. These changes made her aware of possible new routes, but as she said about her roots: "some things I don't ever want to change."

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Appendix I. List of informants

Name and age	Province	Work/School

Waitresses

- Alice (22)	Guangxi	Senior Leader Hostel
- Cannie (22)	local	Rosewood Inn
- China (22)	local	Minority Café
- Ella (23)	local	Reyleys
- Elle (23)	Jiangxi	Minority
- Emmy (24)	local	Reyleys
- Grace (25)	Guangdong	Yangshuo Cooking School
- Leanne (24)	local	Reyleys
- Lucy (20)	local	East & West Music Bar
- Lucy (21)	Hunan	Giggling Tree
- Lu Xiao Hui (17)	local	Mimosa
- Panda (23)	local	7th Heaven
- Rabbit (18)	local	Giggling Tree
- Smiley (22)	local	Reyleys
- Sophie (20)	Shaanxi	Reyleys
- Sunnie (22)	local	Mimosa
- Sara (22)	Shaanxi	Reyleys
- Sara (20)	local	7th Heaven
- Wendy (23)	Guangxi	Outside Inn

Students English

- Betty (26)	Jiangxi	Owen College
- Christina (29)	Hubei	Zhuo Yue College
- Claire (25)	Guangxi	Zhuo Yue College
- Ellen (24)	Hunan	Owen College

- Fiona (19)	Guangxi	Xiije College
- Helen (30)	Guangxi	Xiije College
- Lily (28)	Guangdong	Owen College
- Maria (24)	Jilin	Owen College
- Meghan (19)	Guangxi	Xiije College
- Melody (18)	Guangxi	Xiije College
- Potato (24)	Henan	Owen College
- Rain (27)	Guangxi	Xiije College
- Rita (26)	Shandong	Zhuo Yue College
- Sherry (28)	Jiangxi	Owen College
- Vanessa (25)	Sichuan	Xiije College

Various other informants

- Owners of bars and restaurants

- Teachers and staff at the English colleges

- Women with other occupations like tour guides

- Tourists or foreigners living in Yangshuo