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Transcribed by Dušica Ristivojević

Part 1

DR: Ok, so we will start. Today is the 2nd of November, 2019. So should we start with the question: How would you introduce yourself?

CM: I have worked as a China researcher with a focus on people in China. Never the macro level politics, which are very predominant in China Studies in Denmark and in China studies in general, as far as I can see. I have been interested in how people in China deal with the political, economic context that they live in. Either as ordinary citizens or as activists.

DR: So we will start with a question about the details of your family background.

CM: I have noticed in some of the other interviews that they start with a question where they ask people where were they born? So I have been thinking along those lines, and what is important to me is not where I was born, because the place where I was born is in Aalborg in Jutland, but I only lived there for a few months. In terms of my family background, what is important is not where I was born but where my father's work took me. Because of him and his work, I spent the first 10 years of my life living outside of Denmark. When I was only a few months old, my parents migrated to Yellow Springs Ohio where they had planned to settle. However, they only stayed for a short time, so

that is not my place of origin either. I only found my place of origin a few years ago. Or rather I decided that Sigtuna in Sweden is my place of origin. My parents met each other in Sigtuna, which is a town near Stockholm, during the Second World War. My father was 18 years old, and a member of the resistance movement in Denmark. But he was discovered and had to flee to Sweden in order not to be captured by the Nazis. One of his friends was captured and shot. Together with others in the resistance movement they were engaged in sabotaging factories that were working for the Nazi occupiers. My mother's father was Jewish, so her family also fled to Sweden and my parents met there. Since I don't have a traditional place of origin I have decided that Sigtuna can play that role. My mother lived at the Sigtuna Foundation with her family and my father was more or less adopted into the family of the director. The Sigtuna Foundation is an institution that embraces equality and exchange between peoples within countries and between countries. After the war, the first thing my father did was to go to Germany to work in an orphanage. This was a bit special because Germany had just been the enemy that he had recently been fighting against. He went to what had just been the enemy to work for them, with them, with children in an orphanage. Maybe it was there he met the Quakers. In any case, he subsequently travelled to Palestine to work for the Quakers in refugee camps. He was also attended a Quaker college, Woodbrook College, in Birmingham in the UK. He only had seven years of schooling, but he trained as a journalist later. When we return now to when they immigrated to the US, this was because in Palestine he had met a Quaker who had a printing press in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Before becoming a journalist, my father was a typesetter so he went to work in a printing press. My parents didn't stay very long in the U.S. They returned to Denmark after one and a half years. The first time I was on an airplane was when I was one year old. They sent me back to Denmark on my own.

DR: To whom?

CM: To my grandmother. My parents stayed a bit longer. They drove from Ohio all the way down to Mexico with my father writing stories for newspapers, and then they returned to Denmark several months later. Anyway, my father then worked in Denmark for a newspaper. After that he got a job with the UN in Geneva when I was a few years old. We moved to Geneva and from there we moved to the Philippines, where he worked for the World Health Organization and, later, we moved to India. I was still kindergarten age when we moved to Manila. Do you remember when we were in Taipei,

I showed you this photo of my father shaking hands with Chiang Kaishek? That was while he was at the regional office of WHO. My schooling started in a Catholic school in Manila but we moved to New Delhi when I was about eight. I attended an American international school there. When I was 11, we left India. My parents used the term "returned to Denmark". For me, it was not a return.

DR: So many new beginnings.

CM: Yes, lots of new beginnings. In relation to doing research in China I think that perhaps the experience of being an outsider or a foreigner in one place after another may actually have helped me. I was a foreigner in Manila and in New Delhi. When we moved to Denmark, we moved to the countryside where, even though I'm a Danish citizen, I was also an outsider, because my language was my mother's middle class northern Copenhagen language. It was very different from the local language. I spoke Danish, but I could not read and write. I was so obviously an outsider and in that local Danish community I also had the experience of being really a stranger. Interestingly I have felt most strongly that I was an outsider when we moved to Denmark. Probably because there were people from all over the world in the other places. Without knowing specifically, exactly, how it has helped me, I think that these early experiences of being the outsider have helped me to do fieldwork in China. They have helped me to be observant with regard to how I should act and what my behaviour should be in this and that situation in order to fit in and adjust to a completely different culture.

DR: Do you want to elaborate more on your own family? The nuclear family.

CM: In terms of how it has affected my work as a China scholar? Yes...I mean, my daughter Tabita just mentioned to you that both I and her father travelled a lot. My first husband travelled to China because he is also a China studies person. The China studies community in Denmark is very, very small. So there have been quite a few very highly qualified China studies scholars who have never been able to make a career for themselves. My former husband, the father of my children, is one of these people. So, that has, of course, also affected my life. It has also affected my life as a China scholar that since our children were quite young, he has been ill with severe heart problems that very nearly killed him three times. In what I have read of these interviews, there's not a lot about how family and how our private lives affect our work. And of course, they do!

DR: So it was really a drastic illness. That also must have complicated your work with China throughout the years because China demands you to go away. But maybe we can talk about that later. Ok, so we will go back to your schooling. So how did the formal education go?

CM: I started school at a Catholic school in Manila, continued in India, then Denmark for five years and then, when I was 15, we moved to Scarsdale, New York. When we moved to Denmark my father worked for the Foreign Ministry as a journalist. Then he got a job at U.N. headquarters in New York and we moved to Scarsdale, which is a suburb outside of New York City. I attended high school there, but only for half a year. Then I returned to Denmark as I was not comfortable in the US.

DR: Should I ask why?

CM: I don't remember the Philippines very well, but I remember India, so I grew up in a country with obvious poverty as a white, privileged foreigner, but with a father who was very aware of inequalities in the world and was dedicated to his work for the UN, which is very much about eradicating those inequalities. Then I lived for five years in Denmark, which was, at that time, a very equal society. At this young age of 15 naively I was simply very shocked by what I saw in New York. We lived in this very wealthy Scarsdale area and I could just not cope with the contrasts that I saw between rich and poor.

DR: So you just..

CM: So I returned..

DR: Alone?

CM: Alone, yes.

DR: Should I ask again - to whom?

CM: To my grandmother's home again.

DR: So it's again, Copenhagen?

CM: Again northern Copenhagen, suburbs of Copenhagen. I lived with my grandmother for half a year, and then my father managed to move his job to Geneva. He moved to Geneva and my mother returned to Denmark. We lived here - my mother, my brother and I, and my father lived in Geneva. He would return once a month, and she would go also and visit him once a month. I attended high school here in Denmark. I remember seeing a typewriter for Chinese characters at the UN offices in Geneva – a huge machine with hundreds of characters. This was all before characters could easily be written on computers.

DR: And then you were enrolled at the university here?

CM: Yes, then I enrolled at the University of Copenhagen to do China studies.

DR: So, at the time, there was already Chinese studies program?

CM: Yes. I don't know how we would define it. To call it an actual program would be an exaggeration. The undergraduate part was a two-year period and then there was a three year postgraduate part. In one of the other interviews someone says that one of the reasons he chose Chinese studies was that there were so few hours of lectures. He says eight hours a week. I think it was something similar for me. Definitely very few hours of teaching. In 1975 when I started, I think about thirty students entered China studies and of that group five of us did the first two years, and I was the only one who completed the five years with an M.A degree. At least from my point of view, one of the main reasons that so many people dropped out was that it was a practically non-existent program. There was language teaching, but it was so minimal. I mean it was impossible to learn the Chinese language based on that minimal amount of Chinese language teaching. Then there was some history. There were some linguistics classes. There was some.. What else could there have been?

DR: Philosophy?

CM: No. I simply do not recall what the third topic was -- there was classical Chinese also. The next three years I didn't attend class in Copenhagen as I was in China.

DR: During those first two years, do you remember, did you have textbooks?

CM: We had Chinese language textbooks from mainland China. Because there was such limited teaching and because quite a few of the students were interested in the political aspects of the transformation of China under the communist party, there was a student led study group on Mao Zedong thought.

DR: And the teachers? Who were your teachers?

CM: The main language teacher was actually a very good teacher. She had been a secondary school teacher, and then done China studies.

DR: A Chinese or a Danish?

CM: A Danish teacher. She was a good teacher, but there were so few hours of teaching. You cannot learn a language based on very few hours of teaching. It's just not possible.

DR: So how did you start speaking Chinese?

DR: I left China studies and shifted to cultural sociology. Now university programs are very rigid and you have to do your exams within a certain number of years. It took me many, many, many years and two children and five years in China to actually complete my China studies. It was a very loose system.

DR: So, you at the same time went to the university, started your own family, and went to China?

CM: Yes. First, I shifted from China studies to cultural sociology. Then my first husband, whom I had met at the university because he was also a student of China studies went on an exchange program from 1978 to 1979 to China to study language at Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan. At that time I tried to visit him, but it was not possible. We were not yet married so I could not visit him. It was a completely different China, you couldn't just go to China. But then he returned and he said, 'Look, you have to at least go to China, you

have to experience China.' So then we both applied to attend language school in Beijing. In 1981 I travelled by train to China for the first time. The arrival at the Chinese border was spectacular. The carriage wheels had to be changed as the track widths were different. This was done in a huge hall and it seemed as if all the workers were women. In 1975 when I started China studies a fellow student and I joined an older group of students from China studies and The Department of History and we wrote a book about women in China.

I was at Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan for two years. When I returned to Denmark in 1983 my daughter was born, and we were here for one year. Then my first husband was employed as an export consultant for a group of Danish companies who were trying to establish themselves in China. We lived for three years from 1984 to 1987 in Beijing and I was an accompanying spouse. My son Tais was born while we were there.

DR: In Beijing?

CM: Not in Beijing, no. I could not give birth in a foreign language, so I returned to Denmark to give birth. Another picture of how things have changed is that at that time there was only housing available for foreign diplomats. All the company people, who worked for the businesses that were moving into China, lived at hotels.

DR: What was your hotel like?

CM: Our hotel was perfect. It was a courtyard house, and it had been Hua Guofeng's house. He had lived there. When we moved in it was owned by the Women's Federation and it was their hotel. We lived there for three years.

DR: This was in the late 80s?

CM: This was from 1984 to 87. That was where and when I really started to learn to speak Chinese, because even at language school, we were sort of segregated, the Chinese and the foreigners. Also, at that time, I think that's also important, we couldn't just travel. We could only travel if we had a holiday from school and then we had to go to the police station and get a travel permit. It was very restricted where we could go. It was difficult to interact with Chinese. During the two years at the Yuyan Xueyuan I went to the home of one Chinese person. He was a journalist, a Xinhua News Agency

journalist, who had been posted to the Chinese embassy in Copenhagen, and my father knew him. He had special permission to invite foreigners to his home, but otherwise it was basically not possible.

DR: Did you manage to have friends? Any kind of friends? Someone whom you would call a friend?

CM: I had one Chinese friend whom I later lost contact with from those two years at the language school. But my first real friends are from the three years when we lived in central Beijing. A very close friend, He Youxiang, worked at the hotel. She died of cancer a couple of years ago. She has been very, very important for my work in China, and opened doors for me in the strangest places. She became a friend, and then things were also changing because we could go to her home in the mid 1980s. Another friend was an old woman Lao Li. I thought of her as an old woman then - she was in her 60s - as I am now. I thought of her then as a very old woman.

DR: Yes, perception changes.

CM: Anyway, because I was studying and my husband was working, Lao Li minded our daughter for two years. Then the third year our daughter went to a Chinese kindergarten and Lao Li minded our son who was a baby. This was also a time of change. She was very brave, because this job was all informal. She wasn't permitted to work for foreigners in this way. We lived in a hutong where I was primarily known as Meilan's mother. Meilan is my daughter's Chinese name. Lao Li would take her to play with a little girl who lived across the street and everybody would notice this little blond girl. So I was known as her mother. But then I also worked as an English language teacher at the primary school in our street and the middle school in the next street. I made friends also among the English language teacher group. They were women my own age with children the same age as my children. So together with He Youxiang and Hu Tongjiang, the hotel driver, those were my first friendships.

DR: But over the years you stayed in touch with He Youxiang?

CM: Yes, she was a highly valued and very close friend until she died. When we moved back to Denmark her husband Wen Hao, a chemist working at the Chinese Academy of

Sciences, spent a year as a visiting scholar at a Danish University and He Youxiang accompanied him to Denmark. While they were here, they made friends with another Chinese couple Wu Ji and Tao Guojian, who have also been my friends since then.

DR: How have these friendships helped you?

CM: They have helped me in many ways. One way is that I don't think I would be able to understand Chinese society and culture if I had not had friends who introduced me to their lives and their families. I know their partners, and parents and children. In a way I am a different person when I am in China. I notice the same with my daughter. She learnt to speak English during three years of school in England and her whole tone of voice and body language changes when she speaks English. I have movements, mannerisms and behaviour that I use in China and that I don't usually use in Denmark except when friends from China visit. In other words, friends have provided an entry point to understanding and feeling comfortable in China.

Another example comes from a visit in 1994 when I needed to interview persons for a non-academic book. A scholar at CASS had agreed to help me, but when she was not able to, then my friend He Youxiang who was extremely resourceful, would step in. At that time sex-work was becoming visible and I wanted to interview a sex-worker. He Youxiang was, of course, able to find someone for me to interview. I have also travelled in China with He Youxiang and her husband together with my family. During the years when I would travel to China several times a year I would often see Chinese friends more often than some friends in Copenhagen, because I would see them during each visit, and often I would stay at their homes. They have simply been, and they still are, friends – the people who make life meaningful.

DR: And what was your Master's thesis about?

CM: My Master's thesis was about the historical development of population control policies in the People's Republic. Beijing was full of posters on the One Child Policy and the open letter on the one child policy was issued in 1981. So it was all over the city during the time when I was there. There was also a census. The first big census was at that time. So I became interested in the population control policy and how it had developed.

DR: And you continued to work on it?

CM: Yes, my PhD dissertation was also on the one child population control policy. It bothered me that the literature that I was reading was terribly and narrowly demographic. That there was practically no mention of the women who were the main targets of the policy. So that was my first piece of research – a study of how one-child mothers experienced the policy. But before my PhD studies I still had a year left of cultural sociology.

DR: Who were your supervisors?

CM: When I wrote my master's thesis while I was in China I had a formal supervisor at the University of Copenhagen, but there was no email at that time. If you sent a letter, then it took at least a week at that time for the letter to get from Beijing to Copenhagen, and then another week for a response to arrive in Beijing. But a Danish China studies scholar, Jørgen Delman, was working as a junior professional officer for FAO [Food and agricultural organization, UN]. He was living in Beijing with his family and he functioned as my supervisor quite informally, as a friend, for my MA thesis.

DR: And then..when you came back?

CM: I should say also that if I had not had the help of friends, during my first two years of China studies I would not have passed the exams. I managed because I was helped by friends. The five of us who didn't drop out helped each other a lot and China studies scholar Erik Baark, who married one of my fellow students and became a close friend, played a key role. He more or less acted as a private tutor.

DR: So friendships are very..

CM: Friendships are very, very important! Yes, yes, and then the next three years.. No, no, no.. I now remember.. After the two years of the Beijing Yuyan Xueyuan 1981 to 1983 I returned to Copenhagen and did all the language exams for the MA. Then what I had left were the other subjects and the dissertation. I had never written anything in an

academic context and there was no training, there was nothing! It was just sit down and write a dissertation.

DR: And how was it? (laughing)

CM: And I was pregnant

DR: Ohoho (laughing)

CM: ..So I had a deadline, which was very useful (both laughing).. So I had to finish before my son was born.

DR: So your son was born just after you finished your MA?

CM: I came back to Denmark in 1986 for the summer and gave birth to my son, and when he was about a month old, I had my final oral exam. I had my son with me in a pram and my mother took care of him during the exam (both laughing loudly). Actually, now that I think about it, it was a mess.

DR: And you must have been very capable to do so many things at the same time.. (laughing)

CM: I don't know.. I don't know.. When I wrote my thesis at the hotel in Beijing, I would say to myself that I had to write a certain number of pages each week. And if I had finished the pages by Friday, I would take Friday off (laughing).

DR: So, then, after your MA, did you immediately start with the PhD? How was it then? How would you get into the PhD program?

CM: No, no.. Then we returned to Denmark after my husband's three years of working for Danish companies, and I spent a year finalizing my cultural sociology studies. The system was: you had this five year program in one subject and then you had two years in another subject, and together they made up an MA.

DR: So, it was two, plus three, plus two years, and then comes the PhD

CM: Yes! So first I spent one year finalizing my cultural sociology studies, and then I graduated. The cultural sociology is very, very important to me because all the methodology that I used for my PhD came from cultural sociology. Without that, I could not have done a Ph.D.

DR: Did you write a thesis in cultural sociology?

CM: Yes, it was a continuation of my China studies and at the same time laid the ground for my PhD work.

DR: It must be a very, very good decision to have a degree in cultural sociology because even now, in many contexts, we don't get to learn theories and methodologies. And then? How did you enrol to the PhD?

CM: What then happened was that I graduated from cultural sociology, and that must have been in 1988, and then I was unemployed and looking for jobs. I spent half a year at the School of Journalism in the city of Aarhus, where they had a special short-term program for university graduates. What I would have preferred, what I really wanted to do, was to be a junior professional officer in the U.N. system. I applied for a job in Africa with UNFPA, the UN Population Fund (both laughing). It was a French speaking country, I don't remember which, so another friend helped me. She was a French language teacher, and we practiced French because I had to take a language exam. Someone from the UN in New York interviewed me for the job. They had this system where the Danish government would fund a certain number of Danish junior professional officers, but the UN in New York would offer the jobs. So, someone came from New York to interview me. I didn't get the job. But they decided that I was qualified to be a junior professional officer, and then the system was that they would then offer me other jobs. They offered me three different jobs. First, it was the Philippines, but something went wrong and it never happened. Then it was North Korea. The Danish Foreign Ministry said, no, we cannot send a woman with two children to North Korea. It's much too dangerous. That was what they said. Perhaps there were other reasons as well. Who knows? The third job was in Burma. I believe it was still called Burma then. I was given the job and my husband became a member of the Spouses Association (both laughing). But this was in 1989. Because of the political developments at that time, Denmark cut off its development assistance to Burma. So in the end I didn't get that job either. My life would have been completely different (both laughing).

Anyway – while all this was going on I was also applying for research funding. It was not that I wanted to do a Ph.D. At that time, we didn't really have a full-fledged Ph.D. program in Denmark. I wanted to do a research project simply because that was the other possibility I could see to find employment. I suppose I also really wanted to do the research that I had planned with my cultural sociology dissertation. I applied to three research councils for funding. The Foreign Ministry's Development Research Council and the Humanities Research Council and the Social Science Council to do the research that was to become my PhD project. What happened was that the two research councils - the social sciences and the humanities - said no, but the Foreign Ministry Development Research Council said they would give me one third of what I had applied for. So I started off with funding for the first of a three year research project and the requirement that I enroll at the University of Copenhagen as a PhD student.

DR: What did you do? How did you manage to do it?

CM: How did I manage to do it?.. I don't know, because I'm stubborn, Dusica (laughing).. I don't know.. I don't know..And because of support from family and friends.. Again! Again.. Always, always, always support of family and friends...Not being alone.

DR: Mmm...I am still.. I'm still under the impression..But..So.. This project...

CM: I started in 1990. The PhD was based at the China Studies Department at the University of Copenhagen, and I had a desk and shared an office at what was then a Centre of East and Southeast Asian Studies. It was a cross-faculty centre that existed at that time at the University of Copenhagen. I had a formal supervisor at the department and loads and loads of help and support from Hatla Thelle, another China studies scholar who was also doing her PhD and who was also based at the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies.

DR: And you were based in Denmark?

CM: Yes, with research visits to China. The first research visit was in 1991. And that's where we get back to my highly valued friend He Youxiang. When I was doing the Research Council funding applications, I had to document that I had academic contacts

in China that would enable me to do the field work. I wanted to interview one-child mothers, urban one-child mothers. So He Youxiang, who was very imaginative and creative, she had a scholar friend write me a formal letter that said that this and that, whatever institution he made up, would be the host (both laughing). And it's..just.. to me, it's just so very, very typical of my resourceful friend He Youxiang who would do whatever she could to help me. Yes, you will find a way out (both laughing). So I really appreciated what she did! But, of course, I couldn't use this false letter from a non-existing institution in my applications. Luckily my supervisor Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard had a research institution contact that he introduced me to. This institution hosted part of my project and helped me to find the people that I interviewed. What also happened was that the first time I went to China to do field work... Actually, my first research visit was postponed and again, this is another example of how different everything was - how communication was very different. The first time I was supposed to go to China was in 1991 and it was also the first time my husband nearly died. He was seriously ill and underwent a big heart operation, which meant that I suddenly a few days before my planned departure couldn't leave. But how to communicate to the people who were expecting me just a few days later? I happened to know a Danish journalist who was going to Beijing, so he hand-carried letters to Beijing for me explaining that my visit had very suddenly been postponed. It was simply a completely different world in terms of communication.

When I did travel to Beijing some months later I had in the meantime read a newsletter report about Dutch China scholar, Frank Pieke, in Leiden having hosted a visit by Zhao Kebin, who was an administrator at the Institute of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Once in Beijing I then contacted Zhao Kebin and the Institute of Sociology to ask if they would be able to host part of my Ph.D. project. There was a Family and Marriage research group which included sociologists Chen Yiyun and Tan Shen and they were interested. However, I was told that higher levels at CASS would not allow the institute to host the project.

However, Zhao Kebin (who had been to Leiden), and who is another extremely important person who has since helped me many times throughout many years, invited me to attend an international conference that was being hosted by the Institute of Sociology in Beijing in the summer of 1991. The participants were sociologists from the academies of social sciences in the various provinces as well as prominent China

studies scholars from Europe and the US such as for instance Elizabeth Croll. I don't remember the specific topic of the conference. Perhaps it was simply sociological studies of China. The most important thing in terms of my research was that Zhao Kebin helped me to make contact to a sociologist at the Institute of Sociology in Shenyang. In this way the fieldwork for my PhD took place in Beijing, where it was hosted by the institute that my supervisor had relations with, and in Shenyang, where it was hosted by Zhao Zixiang and his colleagues at the Institute of Sociology at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences.

Part 2

DR: So, you went to China..

CM: I spent five months at Beida. It was simply a question of using the available possibilities. The University of Copenhagen had an exchange agreement with Beida that had not previously been used by anyone, and the way it functioned was that Beida simply offered me accommodation.

DR: That was in 1992?

CM: Yes, this was 1992. I then carried out my fieldwork in Beijing and Shenyang, while I was based at Beida. There was no actual academic affiliation involved, but I had somewhere to live and I did meet gender studies scholars such as history professor Qi Wenying. She also introduced me to Du Fangqin from Tianjin, who is one of the first gender studies scholars in China, and to Lisa Stearns who was then a Fulbright scholar teaching law at Beida.

DR: So you did not have communication with Chinese colleagues?

CM: Not at Beida. I did have exchanges with Zhou Xiaozheng, a population studies scholar from Renmin University. A scholar from CASS introduced me to him.

DR: And you went alone? Without your family?

CM: Yes, I went alone without my family. I lived in a tiny room, it could not fit a family (laughing)..And also my.. at that point, my husband had recently had this big heart operation. So he couldn't travel anywhere. He couldn't do anything. He was slowly recovering.

DR: How was it to be there, in that arrangement, at that point? Again, how did you manage to do it? (laughing)

CM: I suppose one response is that it was harsh. I missed my family. I missed my children. They were eight and five years old. But again, there were friends. There was He Youxiang and there was Tao Guojian, and Tao Guojian had a very close friend whose sister worked at the Beida Middle School. The universities have these associated schools... This teacher became my Chinese language teacher. My Chinese was not good enough. So I took Chinese language classes, and Jørgen Delmen, whom I mentioned earlier, and his wife Susanne, who had been in Beijing in the mid 1980s, were then back in Beijing. I remember borrowing their vacuum cleaner to clean my room when I moved in. There were cockroaches in my bed. So there were people I knew, and I also met some other lovely people who were guest scholars at Beida, but not doing anything related to what I was doing academically.

DR: Did you go to Shenyang often?

CM: I think I went once, perhaps twice to Shenyang, and it was a strange situation because they were extremely welcoming but did not really understand the qualitative approach I was using. I had these questions for qualitative interviews and I also had a questionnaire and it was printed on this old printing press. The sociologists in Shenyang didn't quite understand why I needed to interview one-child mothers. They said, 'Why do you need to talk to these one-child mothers? Just ask us! We know the answers!' (both laughing) 'You don't need to talk to them! Why do you want to talk to these women?' Nevertheless, they helped me to do the interviews that I wanted to do. And some of those interviews were useless because there were so many officials present, and others were useful. I know that the first time I was in Shenyang was in freezing, cold winter. I was in university accommodation, in a freezingly cold room and the windowpanes were smashed, and there was no heating, and I cried (laughing)...I mean, it was horrible. The

only place that was warm was in the bathtub. There was a huge bathtub with boiling hot water (laughing). But then, luckily, they brought me an electric heater.

DR: They really liked you so much to bring you the heater (both laughing)

CM: Yes, but it's just I mean, it's so... It's so absurd. It's so far out crazy, I think, looking back. So completely different from present day China.

DR: Did you have regrets, or have you ever thought or considered changing the research topic?

CM: I did not consider changing the topic. That was not at all an option. Nor did I consider choosing not to stay. It may sound arrogant, but I never chose to be an academic. It was the only way I could make a living. It was the only place that would have me. When I was unemployed just after graduating, I applied for jobs at other places. And when I had finished my Ph.D., I was unemployed again. I applied for other jobs but the system in Denmark is very narrow. My impression is that in England if you have a university degree, then they will say, 'OK, this person can read and write and think, we will employ her, she can do what we will teach her. We can teach her the specifics of this company or organisation.' In Denmark, no! In Denmark they look at what you have done, and when it says China, China, China, China, they think this is a China person, we cannot use her for anything else. So I was not successful with those applications. I have a schoolfriend who studied history, became a journalist, then a diplomat and then director of a Danish company in Vietnam. So either there are exceptions or I was simply not qualified for anything other than academia.

DR: Did you try trade? (laughing) Was the Danish market at that time interested in Chinese market?

CM: Companies were beginning to be interested in entering China. And I think if I had been smart, I would have used the three years when I was an accompanying spouse from 1984 to 1987 to try to get a job in a Danish company. But I was very rigid in my thinking, and thought that I definitely was not going to work for a company. My husband worked for companies and his basic job was to make contacts for their salespeople. Actually, the products that they were selling - these were Danish medical companies -

they were brilliant products, but, I mean, it also gave me a certain insight into that world where, for instance, one of the companies was selling ultrasound scanners, very, very advanced ultrasound scanners, very expensive. But the hospitals in China didn't necessarily need that high level standard, they could maybe have bought 10 more simple ultrasound scanners for the price of one of those advanced machines. So, yes, my prejudices kept me away from that world.

DR: Prejudice related to what?

CM: Prejudices about capitalist companies whose main and only interest is to make money regardless of what is needed to improve people's lives. I should add that several of the representatives of these companies were lovely people!

DR: So you went to Academia (laughing).

CM: Because it was the only place that would have me! I started out with one year of funding and then when the one year was coming to an end, I had to apply for the next year and luckily a research council gave me the next year, and again, they gave me the third year. So I had three years of funding for research for my PhD degree.

DR: And you had to write up the entire dissertation within three years?

CM: Yes, I had three years for fieldwork and for writing up. I was mostly here in Denmark, only with fieldwork in 1991 and 1992 in China. I submitted the dissertation here at the University of Copenhagen. I wrote the dissertation in English, but the way it was in English was that I tried to write in English, but half of the words would be Danish and then gradually it became more and more English. Then another friend, Susan Young, stepped in to help language revise.

DR: And how was it at that point? How was the examination, the process of examination? Do you remember?

CM: There were two external examiners, and one of them was gender studies scholar, Lene Koch, who was a professor in social science medical research, I don't remember who the other one was, I would have to look it up. I really don't remember. Maybe the

other one was someone brought in from outside Denmark. I simply don't remember. I do remember that my twelve year-old daughter was wearing her new silver boots! The format is, there's a public defence where I was given a question, and then half an hour or however long it was to respond to that question. Then they... I think they probably asked me some questions.

DR: Was it easy for you? (laughing)

CM: I was certainly terribly nervous, but I think when you get to that stage, they don't do the public defence until they're sure that you will actually pass. It's not like the British system where you have these internal examinations and then they can ask you to revise. I have always, throughout my academic work, been nervous when I had to give presentations. But the minute I get started it becomes enjoyable.

DR: Ok, so you got officially your PhD degree.. that was in...

CM: I should mention that it took me longer than the funded three years, as I also had a period, but I don't know how long, where I was on leave because of my husband's illness...I don't remember how long... I graduated in 1995 – the year of the UN Women's Conference in Beijing.

DR: And then, let's say that after the PhD, after 1995, it was the beginning of your professional career?

CM: I was unemployed for a year. But then, NIAS, the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies had established a publishing house. Or rather they had been publishing for many years, but then they had established a more formal publishing house, and they had a collaboration with Curzon Press in the UK, and they had employed Gerald Jackson as editor of NIAS Press. He approached me and said that he was interested in publishing my dissertation. I spent a year on employment benefits with a workplace at NIAS, transforming my dissertation into a book manuscript. This was how the Danish welfare state worked at that time. Then the director at NIAS, Tommy Svensson, encouraged me to apply for European Science Foundation funding for postdoctoral research. The system was that one had to find a host institution in another European country. I didn't have any contacts to anyone anywhere, but Professor Glen Dudbridge from Oxford

University had visited the University of Copenhagen at some point, and he had been involved in a China population research project while he was at Cambridge University, so I had talked to him while he was in Copenhagen. I then approached him and asked if the Institute for Chinese Studies at Oxford University would host my postdoctoral research. He showed my published book to some of his social science colleagues and they agreed to support my application. And then I received a three-year European Science Foundation grant to work at Oxford University.

DR: Ok, and how was it for you in those three years? How the life and work were organized?

CM: How the life and work were organized?...

DR: Or not? (both laughing).

CM: Well - I think life intervenes in all people's lives, but when I look back, I think life has made a lot of intervention in my professional life (laughing). My family came with me to Oxford, and my husband had managed to secure funding for a PhD project at Oxford University from a Danish research council. In that way, because of his PhD project we became attached to Wolfson College. Otherwise, as someone with short term funding, you're often not attached to a college. We lived in Wolfson College accommodation and became part of a college community. What affected our three years there very much was that, just when we had arrived, my husband Kresten very nearly died again. He was emergency hospitalized in an intensive unit. He had been given medication in Denmark that nearly killed him. In Oxford the doctors changed his medication. But the new medication made him constantly dizzy. So he was writing, working on a Ph.D. dissertation, and traveling to China for his field work, but constantly dizzy. Of course, this was a very, very complicated and stressful situation for him and his work and also for the whole family.

I was based at the Institute for Chinese Studies where Glen Dudbridge was professor and director, and he was wonderfully, wonderfully supportive. I really appreciated his support. Then there was, of course the Gender Studies Center.

DR: Was the Center, at that time, was it already sponsored by Aung San Suu Kyi?

CM: Yes, she was their figurehead. The good thing about being at Oxford University, it was an exciting place to be....there were weekly seminars and there was a whole group of people interested in China, so, so different from Copenhagen, which is terribly tiny.. In that way, it was fascinating with really interesting seminars. Also, time consuming, or energy consuming to travel to China... My children were 10 and 13 when we arrived, and didn't speak English, and were put right into English speaking schools, and so...life intervenes. It's not just work.

DR: So did they stay all three years?

CM: Yes.

DR: I assume children were not too happy in the beginning? (laughing)

CM: In the beginning, they were not so happy, but when we had stayed for three years and had to return to Denmark they would have preferred to stay. They both ended up at the European School Culham. They have these E.U. schools located at different places in Europe and one was outside Oxford. They were mainly taught in English but also had a Danish language teacher. Anyway, one of the long-term benefits of working at Oxford University was that the name is magical – say 'Oxford University' and doors open! Oxford was also important because it was the place where I convened my first conference in 1999 on women organizing in China.

DR: So this was individual work?

CM: It was my idea to bring together activists and academics from China and academics from around the world who were studying gender activism in China. I applied to the Ford Foundation Beijing for funding, and they granted funds, and then I must have read Ping-Chun Hsiung's work. She was based in Canada, and I invited her to co-organize with me, and then at some point, Maria Jaschok turned up in Oxford. I had seen her picture in newsletters from Li Xiaojiang's organization, and suddenly, at some lecture, she was sitting in front of me, and I said, 'Hey, are you Maria Jaschok?' (both laughing), and then she joined in organizing the conference.

DR: Was it difficult to organize the conference then? Was it hard to apply for funding?

CM: One of the really great aspects of working in the UK was that there were so relatively many scholars who were interested in China and gender. I met Elizabeth Croll and Delia Davin – two of the very first European scholars to study women in China - and they were very, very supportive. They both also came to the conference. My main funding for the conference was from the Ford Foundation Beijing, but I also made some applications in the UK that Elizabeth and Delia supported. I was amazing for me to have that supportive environment of other China gender studies scholars.

DR: Was it nice, the conference?

CM: The conference was amazing! It was hard work. It's always hard work to organize a conference, especially when you're responsible for both all the practicalities, as well as the academic part of it. And we had to organize simultaneous translation. Red Chan was then doing her Ph.D. dissertation at Oxford University. She was one of the interpreters and the other one was from some professional company, but the professional interpreter was not actually skilled enough, so Red did practically all the interpreting. Which was totally, absolutely exhausting for her. But it was a very good conference. It was a really good conference.

DR: Would you say that this conference was the beginning of your new research?

CM: The project I had been doing during those three years in Oxford was on three of the first grassroots or bottom-up women's organizations in Beijing. I would call them non-governmental organizations for lack of a better word. In this way the conference related to the work I had been doing during those three years. Maria and I conceived of another research project together, and it was on organizing outside of Beijing in other parts of China. We made several applications in the UK, but we didn't succeed in securing funding. However, we ended up getting separate funding for separate projects based on the project we had planned together.

DR: So you came back?

CM: Yes, after the three years I returned to Copenhagen. But what is also, I think, important to say is that, in connection with this conference there were two additional

events. The conference was the third of three consecutive events. First, there was a Women's Worlds Conference in Tromsø in Norway, where some of the participants from the Oxford conference and I had a panel. Lisa Stearns, who was by then head of the China program at the Human Rights Centre at Oslo University, was also at the conference in Tromsø with a group of people from China working on gender and development issues, and some of them also joined the conference in Oxford. Then after Tromsø Qi Wang, who is my very good colleague who was then working at Aarhus University in Denmark (at that time we were the two gender China studies people in Denmark), and I had organized a tour of Danish women's organizations for a group of the activists and gender studies scholars from China, who were going to the conference in Oxford. We had organized the visits together with a Danish NGO *KULU - Women and Development*. I don't remember how many days of visits to Danish women's NGOs we had organized for this group of activists and scholars from China. I do remember that we rushed around Copenhagen with them for several days, and then we all travelled to Oxford for the conference. I also remember that Maria was mad at me for being away just prior to the conference being held.

DR: I want to move you back a little bit: did you go to the Beijing conference?

CM: To the NGO Forum?

DR: You did?

CM: I did, because at that time I had for many years worked as a volunteer with the Danish NGO *KULU Women and Development*. I was one of the people that the organization sent to the conference. Importantly for my academic work some of the first contacts I had with gender activists from China took place in 1994 at the UN Population and Development Conference in Cairo, where I represented *KULU Women and Development* as a member of the official Danish delegation. Mary Ann Burris, who was the reproductive health representative with the Ford Foundation Beijing, was at the Cairo conference with a group of gender activists from China to introduce them to the whole UN NGO Forum environment as part of preparations for the 1995 Women's Conference.

DR: What was the role of the Beijing conference, and what were your impressions about it?

CM: The conference was extremely important for the people who were beginning to organize in China. I suppose a main factor was that because governmental UN conferences are accompanied by NGO forums, the Chinese had to provide a NGO Forum in 1995. Precisely at that time small women's organizations were emerging, and a huge effort was made to include them in the NGO Forum. As far as I know the Ford Foundation employed Lisa Stearns to specifically work on organizing the activists and academics who were beginning to set up organizations and do gender studies to take part in the 95 NGO Forum. I believe this work started in 1992. I remember attending an event at the Great Hall of the People at which it was announced that China would host the next UN Women's Conference.

DR: So you specified that you went for the NGO Forum and not to the UN Conference.

CM: Because these are two parallel events. There's a formal conference with the government delegations and then there's a parallel NGO forum. That is simply the UN set up. You can only attend the actual governmental conference if you are a member of a government delegation or a representative of an ECOSOC accredited NGO. As I mentioned, the Danish government works very closely with Danish NGOs (at least at that time – I don't know the current situation) so NGO representatives were included in the official delegations. A number of countries do the same, but not all. The largest gathering of NGOs is the parallel Forum where meetings, activities and events take place. The intention of the NGO Forums, however, is to inform the government delegations. Accredited NGO members who attend the Governmental conference are important channels for the considerable informal and quasi-formal feed back loops between the two meetings. At the conference in Cairo, NGOs were in the same buildings as the official delegations, which, of course, facilitates interaction. This was not the case in Beijing. Despite the difficult logistics, however, NGOs were very influential in the crafting the Beijing Platform of Action.

DR: And what were your impressions? Did you feel differently in Cairo and in Beijing?

CM: In Beijing I was mostly interested in what was going on within the Chinese workshops. So they were the ones I took part in. The Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Center, one of the first women's NGOs in Beijing, held a workshop. I also remember a workshop with Liu Bohong from the Women's Research Institute at the Women's Federation on the panel, but I don't remember the details. I really don't remember the details. And there was another workshop on labour issues with Chen Yiyun as a speaker. Li Xiaojiang, who was an extremely prominent figure in starting women's studies in China, did not attend the NGO Forum. She simply issued a document saying that she was not coming, she would not attend. There were however some 35-40 "Chinese NGOs" who had workshops at the Forum. The GONGOs (government organized NGOs) at that time were a very mixed lot. Some gave space to new ideas and more grassroots input while others were definitely "unimaginative" to say the least. The Association of Women Professors and Women Students, the Capital Women's Journalist Association, and the CASS Institute of Law were among the Chinese GONGOs that had workshops. The Canada/China Young Women's project was definitely as much Chinese as Canadian but presented under a Canadian NGO umbrella for political reasons. There was so much creativity with labels and procedures by all parties.

Part 3

CM: As I said, I think I had met some of these activists – bottom-up-organizing people - at the Cairo NGO Forum and then in 1994, I also went to China to interview some of these people, not for academic work, but for a book that was published by the Danish NGO *KULU Women and Development*. Because the Beijing women's conference was coming up, and because it was to be held in China, there was a general interest in Denmark on what was going on with gender equality in China, and what was happening with women. My colleague and friend Qi Wang who was then based at the University of Aarhus in Denmark and I applied for funding to write a book together. Then Qi couldn't go to China, so I went together with photographer Kirstine Theilgaard. I interviewed Wang Xingjuan and Xie Lihua and Chen Yiyun and other people who had initiated bottom-up organizing on gender issues. Qi and I then edited the interviews and compiled the book together. I had met these activists before the NGO Forum in Beijing and I was interested in what they were doing at the NGO forum, the workshops where

they presented their work, but I can't really say anything specifically about what went on..., I don't remember...

DR: There is a book about women and gender in China in Danish?

CM: In Danish, yes, there is a book. Because photographer Kirstine Theilgaard ended up going with me instead of Qi, we also created a photo exhibition with explanatory texts that we first showed at the National Museum in Copenhagen, and then the exhibition travelled to libraries in all parts of Denmark throughout 1995.

DR: So the Danish public was interested?

CM: Yes, there was an interest because of the UN Women's Conference being held in China.

DR: And how did you decide to talk to them? How did you choose them? How did you know they were THE persons to talk to from THE organizations to approach? I ask this because I was always wondering were they the only organizations or there was a kind of selection?

CM: There were for instance workers that tried to set up organizations. As far as I understand academics and professionals had the contacts to the kind of institutions that they needed in order to register formally, whereas the workers did not have similar contacts. I did not have contact to the worker activists.

DR: Ok, so after the U.N. Conference?

CM: In 1995 I was at NIAS, but I was unemployed. And then from 1996 to 1999, I was at Oxford University. And then immediately after Oxford, I received two years of funding for a research project from the Danish Foreign Ministry's Development Research Council and I was again based at NIAS, where I continued my research on gender activism. And then following those two years, I stayed on at NIAS with three years of funding for another project. Now, those two years must have been the project that Bu Wei and I did together, which looked specifically at the Beijing based organizations that were working on violence against women.

DR: How did your collaboration with Bu Wei come about?

CM: While I was in Oxford, I attended an East Meets West Group meeting in Beijing and I met Bu Wei there, because she was one of the members of the group. This was an informal discussion group on gender issues that was set up as part of preparations for the UN Women's Conference and continued to meet after the conference. I interviewed Bu Wei for my Oxford project. We became friends and she...I think we have to check with her, I think I helped her with a visit to the UK. I had just started using email in Copenhagen probably about 1993-94...I remember very clearly that just after I had arrived in mid-1996 in Oxford, Lisa and I worked on an article together and we were communicating through email, and it was all very complicated. For us at least, it was the beginning of using email. Bu Wei was invited to a conference in the UK, and she had difficulty corresponding with the host. So, because I was based in the UK, I helped her. I remember my nine year-old son and I going to London to pick up Bu Wei and bring her to Oxford. And there is another very interesting thing – a few years later I invited Bu Wei to join the 1999 conference on women's organizing, but she declined saying that women's organizing didn't have anything to do with her work. During the years that we worked together and became friends we have influenced each other a lot. She has influenced my perspective on the importance of communication and media and together we have researched activism against domestic violence. I remember once sitting in her home and saying, I really want to talk to Professor Chen Mingxia, who's the head of the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, and Bu Wei said, 'Oh, that is very easy, she lives three floors up (both laughing). I'll just call her and ask her to come down.'" I prefer to do inductive work and not questionnaires, but for some reason, probably because I thought the funder would think it was valuable and worth supporting, I had included a questionnaire in the domestic violence activism project. Bu Wei was skilled in questionnaire work, and she became involved, and it gradually evolved to become our joint project.

DR: And it lasted for three years?

CM: Two years. We collected loads and loads of materials, and we have this huge questionnaire data. We held a workshop, a wonderful workshop, outside of Beijing with a group of the activists as well as Lisa Stearns and Susan Jolly. We probably only wrote

up ...I don't know, a tenth of all the material that we collected. Bu Wei is now using some of it to write up the history of the Domestic Violence Network.

DR: And after this research?

CM: After those two years during which I worked with Bu Wei, I had funding from the Danish Social Sciences Research Council. This was for the project that Maria and I had conceived of when I was still in Oxford. Again I was based at NIAS with external funding, and then I invited Wang Fengxian to join me, because my experience of working with Bu Wei was that it was really, really useful and much more productive to be working closely with a colleague in China. I had originally met Fengxian when I was doing interviews for my Oxford project with the Maple Women Psychological Counseling Center where she was a volunteer. I had interviewed her. She was employed at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. She is trained as a philosopher from Beida, but she was working at the Department of Sociology.

DR: So you started a collaboration?

CM: Yes, then we started our project, which was on three organizations outside of Beijing, one in Hebei, one in Xi'an (Gao Xiaoxian's organization), and one in Kunming. The funding lasted for three years. If I say 1999 to 2001 was the project with Bu Wei, and then 2001 to 2004, three years with the project with Fengxian. Then in 2005 I applied for a position at NIAS. NIAS is a Nordic institution, so at that time all the researcher positions were limited to four-years with the possibility of one four-year extension.

DR: And what is the rationale behind having the maximum of eight years?

CM: It was to have a circulation among Nordic scholars. To give the opportunity of working at NIAS to as many scholars as possible from the five Nordic countries that were funding the institution and to strengthen Nordic collaboration.

DR: But why would people want to be in such an insecure position?

CM: Most of the academics who held the positions came from tenured jobs at Nordic universities, so for them it was an opportunity to focus on their research and not have teaching obligations while they were on leave from their home universities.

DR: Ok, so you started with your job at NIAS in 2005?

CM: Yes, and then Fengxian and I continued our collaboration. Because we had collected much more material than we had been able to analyze fully during the three-years of project funding. This was really problematic for me because I had used so many people's time. But Fengxian and I were very lucky because we became part of a Norwegian funded project which was on gender and development. It was with scholars from Asia, and scholars from the Nordic countries. We joined that project and we were allocated funding to continue to work together and to attend meetings with the whole research group. Very, very, very, very useful and fruitful meetings within that research group, which included people from Thailand and India and various other countries in Asia as well as scholars from the Nordic countries.

DR: But you stayed at NIAS longer than 8 years?

CM: Yes, that was because the Nordic Council of Ministers – the 'owner' of NIAS - had all these Nordic institutions, some twenty or so research institutions spread out in all the five Nordic countries. Then at some point they decided that they did not want to own these institutions, and that each institution should be handed over to a university in whatever country it was based in. NIAS had always physically been based at the University of Copenhagen, but then the institute became an actual part of the University of Copenhagen. The University of Copenhagen discarded the four-year system. Each researcher was evaluated by an academic committee and we were given permanent employment. So completely by chance in 2005 – the year I was 50 years old - I had my first permanent employment.

DR: Was working at NIAS satisfactory for you?

CM: (laughing) What a question! (laughing) What shall I say? (both laughing) It was, of course, satisfactory to get a job that was not limited to one, two or three years. A permanent position was fantastic in terms of job security. However, the permanence

was very vulnerable. It was not permanent permanent, because then what happened was that it was, has been and is still a very turbulent period for NIAS. NIAS as an institution has not been secured. Since becoming part of the University of Copenhagen the institution has had time-limited funding contracts, so even though, in principle, I had a permanent position, the institution as such had three years and then two years and then one more year. This has gone on during all those years. It has been a very, very insecure situation for all employees. And that is not satisfactory.

DR: This year you resigned. Not retired, but resigned. So it was your decision to leave. What was the reason? Was it this insecurity, or something else that made you move out of your office?

CM: There are so many personal factors that play into what one is able to do in one's academic career. Actually I would not even call it a career. It is more appropriate to say my academic struggle! So I would put it this way, that I was burnt out, and this was due to a combination of three factors - the insecurity regarding the survival of the institution, internal and very problematic issues at the institute, as well as issues in my private life that took up a lot of energy. All this at one time was just too much. I simply lost my ability to be an academic. I could no longer carry out my academic work as well as I wanted. If I had not been supported by my second husband as well as by friends I might even have broken down totally.

I think I can put it in this way, I did not always have the support that would ideally have enabled me to do my work well. I will give you an example - a colleague from China, Min Dongchao and I applied for a three-year EU Marie Curie Fellowship for her, and she spent three years at NIAS. I then wanted to make an application together with Bu Wei for her to come to NIAS. However, she was not welcome. The director did not want her at NIAS. The explanation was that he did not find that her contribution to NIAS had been sufficient during the years of my research collaboration with her, despite the fact that she was one of my two closest collaborators. Maybe it just serves to illustrate that there were difficulties at the institute. My relationship with the director was not ideal. This happened a year after Bu Wei had hosted the fifth conference in the series of Sino-Nordic Gender Studies Network Conferences. This was a NIAS conference. She had hosted this conference in Beijing, and she had brought in the funding, so, to my mind, she had made a huge contribution. Without the support of the director, we could not

make the application. Instead, we contacted media studies at the University of Copenhagen where they were happy to support an application. They even offered institutional support for application writing. This is just one example...I don't want to give more examples, but I do think that the conflictual aspects of academia and the misuse of power need to be made visible.

DR: I absolutely agree with that.

CM: Yes, it's not just you start here, and you glide through everything. It may look good in a CV, but there are so many complications during the course of an academic life. Maybe there have been more private life interventions in mine than in other people's, perhaps less, I don't know, but I'm sure everybody encounters difficulties.

DR: The difference may be that people do not want to show vulnerability because of the whole culture of success.

CM: Exactly...

DR: You're not supposed to have problems with the boss, you are not supposed to have rejection, you are not supposed to fall down...

CM: Exactly.

DR: And we pretend. And the more you can preserve this success posture, in writing, in talking, in recollecting, the better you feel.

CM: And we are not supposed to be or culturally allowed to be vulnerable. This morning when I was reading my newspaper, there was an article about... I think it's a Terminator movie, where there's a 63 year-old woman who plays a very strong role. The author of this article writes about how fantastic it is that a 63 year-old woman can play this role. But then again, she says, is this what we want, or do we want to be able to show, to demonstrate our vulnerabilities? Is it not exactly our vulnerabilities that make us human? And I totally agree.

DR: Me too, me too.

CM: I think it's important and..Ok, I'm a China studies academic, but I'm a human being first and foremost.

DR: So, when it comes to the lack of support, what would be the most harmful for your work? Is there anything that you could identify as the main cause of these setbacks?

CM: I think I would say it's precisely the question of whether one has support, or lack of support, or actual opposition. That is simply so central to my feeling of well-being at my workplace and not least to my ability to carry out my work. This has been so central in my whole working life - whether there were people, who were supportive of what I was doing or not. At a very early stage when I was doing my PhD, there was not much interest in my topic at the university, but because I was a volunteer at the *NGO KULU Women and Development* and because this was also just exactly when there happened to be a UN Population and Development conference which was related to my Ph.D. work, and then the UN women's conference, I received a lot of support in the NGO community as well as media attention. That was important in providing a sense that what I was doing could be useful. I already mentioned the friends in China studies who have helped me, and also outside of China studies. Because the institutional support...I mean, I've been able to secure the funding, but I think I would go so far as to say that I have never worked in a... really...my workplace, the formal place where I've carried out my work, has never been...I would be diplomatic and say, the place where I found my main academic support. I have had lovely colleagues among NIAS staff, but my main academic support has always come from colleagues based at other institutions. The point when it became not just lack of support, but actual obstruction, was also the point where it became.. on top of problems in my private life, it became...I burnt out simply, and that was when I took early retirement.

DR: Would you connect it to the focus of your research or with something else? Do you think that if you would have been working on diplomatic relations between Denmark and China, and, you know, offer the answers to these trendy questions of when China will be democracy?

CM: I'm sure that there would have been more interest then, yes, and there would also have been a larger research environment, because there are many more people

interested in those topics. Yet the difference between lack of support and actual obstruction had nothing whatsoever to do with the focus of my research.

DR: And yet I want to move to a much more optimistic part of your career (both laughing) The network..

CM: Yes. The reason that the networks were established was...and this links up with the importance of the networks.. was that the networks have mainly been important for young scholars in the Nordic countries who have been working on China and gender, who have been alone at their institutions... They have often felt isolated and alone... So it has been so important, as they tell me, to know that there is a network, and to meet up with other people who have had similar research interests.

DR: That is how I wanted to start this section, because it looks to me that you had something falling hard on your shoulders, but then you made it easier for others that come after you... And how you managed to transform this lack of support into precisely the opposite that stayed for us...So how did the networks emerge?

CM: There are two networks. The first one is the Sino-Nordic Gender Studies Network, which started with a conference in 2002 at Fudan University. And it happened because Qi Wang... I've mentioned her before, she came from China, from Tianjin, to do her Ph.D. in Political Science at Aarhus University, and then she stayed in Denmark, and she was also doing gender studies research. Qi and I were both doing fieldwork in China in, I don't know, 2000, 2001, something like that. We were both meeting gender studies scholars and they were asking us many questions about gender and gender studies in Denmark and the Nordic countries. Although we were both citizens here in Denmark, and lived here, and know these societies, it was not our field of expertise. So we thought, how can we bring Nordic gender studies scholars in contact with the Chinese gender studies scholars? We decided to hold a conference. Funding for the first conference was granted by the Danish Foreign Ministry to convene a conference at Fudan University. We organized the conference in collaboration with Pauline Stoltz, a political scientist who was then based at Malmö University in Sweden. I know her through another network, which is also important to mention. We should get back to that. Pauline must have offered to convene the next conference, because it was held in Malmö three years later, and then we decided that we had a network.

The network members are simply people who have taken part in the conferences. In principle, any network member is welcome to convene whatever kind of event in between the conferences. Since then we have held the conferences every three years alternately in China or one of the Nordic countries, and three of the conferences have had a PhD course connected to them. Those courses have been held at the Nordic Centre at Fudan University. So that's how that network came about, and it's a bottom-up network. Since I was employed at NIAS it was part of my job description to facilitate collaboration between Nordic based scholars. Of course, that means also with our colleagues in other places in the world. My main responsibility as coordinator of the network was to identify conference hosts. The hosts would receive seed money in the form of very small amounts from NIAS, and they would also be granted seed money either from Fudan University or the Nordic Center at Fudan. Otherwise, they would have to find the funding and do all the work, all the practical and academic work related to convening a conference... So it's quite impressive that there have always been people, until now at least, who have been willing to take on that responsibility. We now have reached the seventh conference.

DR: What about this other network you mentioned?

CM: While I was in Oxford, I saw an announcement that there was a Nordic network on women's movements and internationalisation. Most of the people in the network were working on Nordic countries. But I applied and became a member. There were three scholars who headed this network, one from Denmark, one from Finland and one from Norway. This is once again an example of how I have sought support and possibilities for dialogue and exchange outside of the China studies environment, because it has been minimal within the China studies environment in Denmark... So it was also very, very useful for me to be part of that network that held two annual meetings.

DR: Is it still existing?

CM: No, it was a three-year project. Also very early on when I was doing my Ph.D., I think two of my first publications were with gender studies scholars in Denmark...I took part in a workshop on reproductive health and another one on methodology and gender studies... then publications came out of those events.

DR: Were there other organizations in addition to *KULU Women and Development*, whether NGOs or some policymaking offices or think tanks consultancy that you were engaged in?

CM: Oh, actually, there's something else I want to say before responding to your question. In one of the other interviews from Denmark, someone talks about how little funding there was, and how few positions... So there have been so many highly qualified China studies scholars in this country who have never found employment within their field of expertise because there were so few positions. It's been a total waste of immense resources.

DR: Actually, I was absolutely shocked to see that in Finland as well. That situation is such a contrast with the ideas that many have about the mythical heaven of the Nordics. One would really expect different life paths and destinies of the people who had to invest so much and sacrifice so much to study China... We all know what it means to start from 'hello' (laughing) And, somehow, one would expect this to happen in some, let's say, less fortunate areas of the world, but not here in the Nordics. Do you have any interpretation about how it is possible that it came to such a big discrepancy between the numbers of the people that were educated and the number of people who actually managed to work in the field of China studies? That is obviously not a new issue. It is almost an entire generation before us now facing the same problem.

CM: I don't know... I mean, someone must have made the decision that it was not financially worthwhile to have more positions. I cannot say, I don't know. But I know that then some people...there's one whose name I forget, he went to the UK where he has worked, and Erik Baark - he went to Sweden first and then he spent twenty years at a university in Hong Kong until he retired, and another who was doing classical studies - Paul Andersen - I think he went to Hawaii... And then there's Donald Wagner, who came from the US, and was here quite early. He is a highly qualified China studies scholar. He wrote one of the volumes in the Needham series, but never (to my knowledge) managed to get a tenured position in Denmark. There are others who just had to leave China studies completely and do other work. I have to say, I think it's important to mention these names, Hatla Thelle went to the Danish Human Rights Centre and worked for them on China. You maybe want to interview her as well. Tage Vosbein is

another, highly qualified China studies scholar – a true sinologist - who disappeared from China studies. And now there are highly, highly competent young people where I would mention Mai Corlin and Bo Ærenlund Sørensen - and where are they going to find jobs? I don't know. Mai has gone to Hong Kong...I just hope their amazing skills and creativity will be recognized.

Now to return to your question about the other network – the Gendering Asia Network, which was for Nordic based scholars and students working on gender and Asia, not specifically China, but also, of course, including China. It was established in 2005 by me and a couple of colleagues from Sweden, two anthropologists Wil Burghoorn and Helle Rydstrøm. We had three years of funding for this network to bring people together. Because NIAS did not have the funding, neither of the networks have had, apart from the seed money, money from NIAS.

DR: Is it still functioning, the other network?

CM: No, no, it actually stopped when the Nordic funding ended, and then there was no money to bring people together...In terms of funding, also one of the difficulties with these networks is that the way productivity is measured is in publications, and the scholars who have taken part in these networks, and maybe in particular the Gendering Asia Network, they will say that it has been very important for the young scholars, especially for their work on their PhD dissertations. But one cannot say that these dissertations have come out of network funding. So it's very difficult when you do the reporting to say this or that publication has come out of that networking. I mean, it's not quantifiable, and everything has to be quantifiable...

DR: When you think about the events or experiences that affect China research nationally as well as individually, what would you single out?

CM: Well, another reason, apart from burn out, that I have stopped my work, is that the kind of organizing that I have been studying is disappearing from China. With regard to people who are active in the parts that are not disappearing, that are in some ways still functioning, I would not feel comfortable contacting them as a researcher even if they were to accept to be interviewed by me. I would be unsure about what the consequences might be for them. If I had wanted to continue this kind of research on

bottom-up organizing, I would say it would no longer be possible. Partly I would not receive a research permit and I have never worked without a permit in China. When I started interviewing activists, sometimes people would say, 'we cannot meet at my office, or you cannot come to our offices because there's a certain surveillance at the moment. We cannot talk in your hotel room because we don't know whether there are listening devices. We can go to the park..'. You could still go to a park, but you will be monitored wherever you go. There is nowhere to hide any longer. I wouldn't feel comfortable...

DR: It sounds that there is a kind of circle, as if you started in the late 1980s in the highly controlled environment for contacts between Chinese and foreigners, and then you had the relative openness, openness or freedom of communication and collaboration, and then we are now back to the control and restrictions.

CM: Yes, yes, but now it is much more harsh, with much more harsh consequences. I keep emphasizing the people, it's always been important not just be the one who comes and interviews, but also to facilitate activities that also benefit the people that I have been interviewing and have been helping me. So, for instance, there was a social summit in Copenhagen when Bu Wei and I also organized a session on domestic violence and Chen Mingxia and Ge Youli were here on our panel. Also, I had funding one year from a Danish Democracy Fund, the Foreign Ministry had a Danish Democracy Fund, where, again, Bu Wei and I organized for the Domestic Violence Network to bring a group of police officers to visit institutions in Copenhagen, police entities here and domestic violence shelters and whatever related to domestic violence. So that kind of reciprocity has been very important for me.

DR: I wanted to ask you more about maybe we could call it methodology of your research - do you want to expand more on reciprocity, or, on giving back to the persons about whom you did your research?

CM: I've always worked inductively. I have my theories on methodology from cultural sociology, and I have borrowed seriously from anthropology. I've always approached my research topic very broadly and openly. What I have found fascinating and interesting is the way the stories people tell me, or whether it's the stories they know, probably mostly the stories they tell me without knowing that they're telling me, these stories are what is

the most interesting. Like in the work that Fengxian and I did, where what we ended up focusing on was not our plan at all, but had to do with the way the bottom-up organizing was inseparable. The work of Karen Barad, who has a doctorate in theoretical particle physics and has developed theories based on Niels Bohr's work, was very inspirational for me, enabling me to see inseparabilities and intra-actions between three entities that are otherwise viewed as separate: the activists, the party state organizations and the foreign donor organizations. Seeing that this form of organizing could only happen as long as those three entities were working closely together. I think what's happening now shows precisely that when the party state not only withdraws support but controls and obstructs, then a form of organizing that was very, very beneficial to Chinese society is eliminated.

And it's been important for me to... I've already said this, but, I've interviewed people for hours and hours and hours, and gone to meetings, and they have welcomed me. This means that it has been important to engage in activities where I thought of myself as in some way facilitating something that could also benefit them...Like the visit to Copenhagen, to organizations here, or panels where I have presented my work and activists and gender studies scholars have presented theirs, Bu Wei and I have convened such panels at conferences together.

DR: Is there something that you would want to address before we go the final question about China's future?

CM: Yes, there is one thing in terms of the publications - when Fengxian finished the book in Chinese that came out of our joint research, we had to remove mention of the Ford Foundation from the text. This is just an example of how the very inseparability that we described in the book was no longer legitimate. Also, in terms of my self-perceived contribution to views and theories on China and Chinese studies, there's something that I would like to say...I cannot say that I have systematically studied this, but I have been astonished to see publications coming out of the US on gender and activism in China that are not familiar with the work Bu Wei, Fengxian and I have written. I find that since there are so few scholars working on this topic, that it is peculiar.

DR: I totally agree.

CM: So there are strange things going on in citational practice. I have never been good at promoting my work, but I think that is not the only reason. I believe that work on China should be read more broadly beyond the field of China Studies. For instance in the concluding words of my *Accepting Population Control* book, as far as I recall, I say something about the fact that we in the West could learn from the way one-child mothers were willing to put aside individual interests for the benefit of their country and the whole population. I realize that they were under severe pressure and subject to extreme violence as well. This is of course not an aspect that I condone. Nonetheless in terms of the climate crisis, this is exactly what we have to do – put aside individual interest in order to maintain our planet as a place where our children and grandchildren will be able to survive. I still believe we could learn from China in that sense without adopting and practicing the coercion.

There is one more thing also..I mentioned my friend He Youxiang, but also it's very important to me and has been important not only in terms of research to work with Bu Wei and Fengxian, but they are also among my very closest friends. So that is something that I personally have gained from doing this China studies work - very close friendships.

Then there is the question of being part of an academic precariat. I really identify with Guy Standing's notion of a precariat. I have met so many colleagues who were in teaching positions, permanent teaching positions, who said, 'Oh how I envy you, you don't have teaching, you have all your time available to do research.' However, first I worked on time-limited grants and then at an institution that was on time-limited funding and that time limit puts an extreme pressure on you. You cannot continue the work you are doing, because then you have to move into more applications and new projects. There are too many interruptions. I have made hundreds, maybe not hundreds, but it feels like hundreds of applications. NIAS has moved offices twice within the past five, six years, and with each move I have sorted through immense amounts of saved documents - including printed and documents from before electronic archiving. I was overwhelmed by the number of applications that I have made. The stress of not being in a permanent position also means that you have to leave one project, and leave the data to go on to the next project...I find that deeply problematic. It has been stressful.

DR: Shall we close our conversation with the final question (laughing)?

CM: Views on China's future?..Yes..

DR: What do you think and how do you hope that will happen?

CM: What I can say is that I read and I hear that China studies scholars who are working and have worked for many, many years on power relations in China, and on power relations between China and the rest of the world, say that we do not need to be afraid of China, that this is hysterical and an overreaction. I can only say that this astonishes me, I am scared stiff. Simply. Just one small example, but I think it illustrates a disturbing relationship between China and Denmark. At my little zoo - I call it mine because the Copenhagen zoological garden is five minutes' walk from my home, and when I walk in the park that's next to the zoo, I have a view now of a huge panda house, or panda building - a facility for two panda-diplomacy pandas given to the queen of Denmark as a present from China. It is a peculiar 'present' which the Danish zoo pays a fortune to rent. The facility that has been built for the pandas has cost 16 million Danish kroner. Sixteen Danish companies have each donated one million, because they were put under severe pressure by the former prime minister after the gift was accepted. They tore down a beautiful old building that was totally dilapidated but could have been renovated. Next to these pandas, who just lie there and don't do anything, if they're visible at all, there is this big store that sells panda this and that and everything. I find it is an imposition of China on me. I mean, I have close Chinese friends that I would not be without. This is not a question of the Chinese people, but the current political power elite I think is just frightening. Absolutely frightening. The way they impose themselves on other countries, and this is just a small rather innocent example in comparison to much of what goes on in many other places. Nonetheless, it is an example of the way they have immense power, because of all the many Danish companies who are producing in and selling to China. They are probably making a fortune. Moreover if Denmark, if the government were to criticize China for this or that or whatever, then China would block Denmark like they did Norway in connection with the Nobel Prize, or Sweden and the conflict related to Gui Minhai (the Swedish citizen who had a bookshop in Hong Kong and was kidnapped and is imprisoned in China). My newspaper today has a special section with oral histories from people in Xinjiang. It's an America, is he an anthropologist? Ben Mock, who has collected these oral histories? I

have just read the introduction. I don't want to read the stories of torture and kidnapping and control and separation of families. I think it's hideous. I think a country that can do this to its citizens is scary - is something to be seriously afraid of. Perhaps here your first question about my family background plays a role. My parents met in Sweden in 1943 when they had fled from the Nazi occupation of Denmark. My mother's family fled to avoid the killing of Jews in concentration camps. My mother's cousin was in a concentration camp. She survived, but was traumatized for the rest of her life. I don't know precisely how that family history plays into my fear, but I believe it does.

DR: So, how would you address upcoming China scholars when it comes to their relating to China?

CM: I think that's really, really difficult. We haven't yet talked about the workshop that we held in Beijing at the Danish Cultural Center in March this year (2019). It was on gender and welfare. Some of the participants wanted to talk about the way China uses the notion of welfare in relation to what they're doing in Xinjiang. There was at least one of the Nordic China studies participants who nearly withdrew from participation at the workshop because of the suggestion that this should be discussed. Of course, this particular scholar and other scholars are dependent because they are employed to do research in China. They are dependent on being able to go to China. They have to be very, very careful about what they say or they don't get their next visa. We know that this is what happens. It's a very vulnerable situation. I'm not the one to say what they should do in that situation. No, no, I don't have advice, I just see it as a terribly vulnerable situation for them. Their livelihoods are dependent on doing China research. So what can they do? It's up to the individual person to decide how to deal with the situation. I personally, would not be comfortable being very critical of China and still going to China. I would simply be scared. Maybe I suffer from paranoia, I don't know, but I would rather be careful than be naive. But this comes from someone who has been really naive through my whole life (laughing).

DR: How would you close this oral history interview?

CM: Yes, how would I close it?

DR: For now (laughing).

CM: I have emphasized how happy I am to have worked with Bu Wei and Wang Fengxian, but I have also had conflicts with colleagues from China and elsewhere. I haven't talked about that. But there have been conflicts and collaborations that have not at all worked. I think that is also important to recognize. I deeply appreciate the friendships that I have made, both the very close friendships and other friendships that are not nearly as deep. One example of a friendly relationship that ended happened after I was invited by a donor organization to do an evaluation of a project that one of the women's organizations was doing. There were many problematic elements of how the organization was functioning and there were leadership problems. I pointed this out in my evaluation report. My choice was not to make the problems invisible because of my relationship with the head of the organization. I reported what I was told by many people who were doing voluntary work or paid work with the organization and who were very frustrated. I chose to be open about the problems, but that meant that my relationship with the head of the organization came to an end. She was very, very angry at me. Nonetheless in 2015, when Fengxian and I had published our book, we held a workshop with people from the three organizations we had studied as well as from other organizations. This person came to that workshop, and she had read our book, very, very closely. She gave a whole very precise and generous summary of the book. I was happy that she agreed with our analysis. And I was happy that she came to the workshop, but I don't think that it meant any change in her understanding that I had betrayed her.

DR: Do you regret that you did that?

CM: No, I don't regret, no... Many years earlier in 1996 Lisa Stearns and I wrote an article together about the early organizing efforts. At that point we were asked not to publish because one of the organizations thought it might be dangerous for them that we publish in English about their work. We didn't publish. That was fine with me then, to follow their request and not publish. I mean, we described the work they were doing, but it was just the fact that we were openly talking about what they were doing that made them not want the publication. Li Xiaojiang then said to me, 'Stupid you (both laughing), you should do what you need to do! Don't be so wishy washy!' (both laughing). She thought we should have published. My point is that my intention has never been to harm an organization. In one case I chose not to publish. In another I chose to write about

issues that were revealed to me. I have also had other disagreements with fellow scholars and collaborators that have come to an end less elegantly with angry words said and shouted. I am not proud of this, but again I think this aspect of many years of collaborations also needs to be visible.

Finally, I would mention that the one-child population control policy posters that I collected while I lived in Beijing in the 1980s have been included in the Westminster University poster collection where they are now available for other researchers to use.