Liminality and Belonging in Refugee Resettlement: An Ethnographic Case Study of Bhutanese Refugees in the UK

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The paper is based on qualitative, ethnographic research with Bhutanese refugees who resettled to the UK via the Gateway Protection Programme. In this context, borderland is not a physical space, but a state of mind, in which stateless refugees attempt to negotiate between different identities: whilst seeking to 'integrate' in the British host society, they identify through their Nepali ethnicity, and seek to maintain their cultural heritage through establishing community organisations and retaining strong ties with relatives and friends in other resettlement nations. In addition, they suffer from the emotional impact of being exiled from Bhutan, their home country, without the possibility to be repatriated. The refugees' everyday life is characterised by a perpetual struggle to negotiate their multiple belongings in a multi-cultural setting such as the UK, in which co-presence and co-existence are ever-present. The paper examines the Bhutanese refugees' state of liminality, in which they may feel a sense of belonging to three nations (Bhutan, Nepal and the UK), cultures and values, whilst being citizen of none. Ethnographic research has the advantage to provide in-depth knowledge of the experiences of one particular community of refugees, and this research serves as a useful, comprehensive case study to illustrate the impact of involuntary migration and migration policy on individuals' sense of belonging.

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Methodology

My PhD research was conducted in Greater Manchester (UK), as well as Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford over a period of 14 months. Anthropological research is based on participant observation – the long-term immersion into the field - living with informants, participate in their day-to-day lives, and observe their behaviour and experiences. Anthropologists aim to collect in-depth qualitative data, in order to gain a detailed, thorough understanding of the lives and experiences of our informants.

During my fieldwork I worked with 30 key informants on an almost daily basis. However, I collected data about 300 Bhutanese refugees, which I met on several occasions, normally on a weekly basis. The very tight focus on a particular refugee group – in this case, Bhutanese refugees – allowed me to gain a deep insight and understanding of their lives and experiences with refugee resettlement.

Moreover, in course of the Bhutanese Refugee UK Film Project (BRFP), which was initiated by one of the Bhutanese refugee organisations and me, I conducted 23 semi-structured interviews in Nepali, the refugees' native language. I also attended several events throughout Greater Manchester, aimed at refugees and asylum seekers resident in Greater Manchester, such as the Refugee Football World Cup in June 2013, several diversity events in Salford, and cultural programmes hosted by Bhutanese refugees in Manchester, Sheffield and Bradford. Furthermore, I talked with service providers, such as Refugee Action UK (which organises refugee resettlement in Manchester) and community centres, which provides English language and IT classes to refugees and immigrants, as well as interviewing Nepali translators and case workers working with Bhutanese refugees since their arrival.

Last, but not least, I am part of a global group of researchers working with and on Bhutanese refugees in resettlement, currently headed by Dr. Michael Hutt at SOAS, London. The aim of this global project is to gain a deep understanding of refugee resettlement for one particular group, in order to record their experiences, and in the future advice policy makers on refugee resettlement.

The Making of Bhutanese Refugees

In order to understand the experiences of refugee resettlement for Bhutanese refugees, I have to provide a brief outline of the 'making of Bhutanese refugees' – that is, how they became refugees in the first place. However, this element of the refugees' experience has been analysed and written about by several researchers, and thus is

merely referenced in my own work (see Evans, 2010; Hutt, 1996; Hutt, 2007 [2003] and Joseph, 1999, as well as several referenced from service providers such as the UNHCR and the IOM). Due to financial constraints and very strict visa regulations, I have not been able to visit Bhutan or the remaining refugee camps in Nepal, but I hope to do so in the future, perhaps during a post-doc. Nevertheless, here I provide a brief historical outline of the circumstances leading to the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees.

Bhutan – a small, landlocked country between India and China, only slightly larger than Denmark, with a population of only about 750,000 – gained recent fame with its unique development strategy Gross National Happiness, which emphasises human wellbeing over economic development. However, what is less known and rarely talked about in the media and international politics, is the fact that in the late 1980s and early 1990s, more than 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese have been forcibly removed from the country, their citizenship revoked and their properties impounded by the Royal Government.

Bhutan has always been a diverse country, having a steady influx of settlers from Tibet, Mongolia, India, China and Nepal. Joseph (1999) notes: "*Like other countries in South Asia, Bhutan is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious country"*(ibid: 23). Nepalese settlers arrived in the 18th century, and settled predominantly in the South of the country.

Until the 1980s, the Bhutanese government treated all citizens equally: for example, Nepali was taught in schools in the South, people were allowed to worship their respective religions, regardless if Buddhist, Christian or Hindu, and there were no restrictions of cultural expression. For various internal and external political reasons (refer to Hutt, 2007 [2003]; Joseph, 1999; and Aris, 2005 [1994]), the Bhutanese government adopted a more nationalist stance in the 1980s, under the heading 'One Nation, One People'. Nepali and any other language besides Dzongkha (the language of the aristocracy) and English were taken out of the school curriculum, non-Buddhist were not allowed to congregate and worship in public, and it was made compulsory for all citizens to wear the aristocracy's traditional dress – the gho and kira. Government officials, with the help of the army, moved into South Bhutan, and forced Nepali-speaking Bhutanese to 'prove' their citizenship – for a country which was largely illiterate until the 1970s, this often proved impossible.

Under the threat of murder and rape, most Nepali-speaking Bhutanese were forced to leave the country and leave behind their property. As land-owning, agricultural-based communities, many people left with nothing but their clothes on their back. The Indian army – which is a close ally of Bhutan – quickly ushered the displaced people on across the Nepali border, where most of them settled along rivers in East Nepal. After disease and famine killed thousands of these refugees, the Nepali government requested the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (henceforth UNHCR) to step in and establish refugee camps. Since the early 1990s, more than 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese arrived in Nepal, and where settled in 7 refugee camps in East Nepal.

One of my informants, an elderly gentleman in his mid 70s, who was a large-scale landowner in Bhutan, summarised the events leading up to his exile in Nepal:

> "*My great great grand father was born in Bhutan. We lived in Bhutan for five generations. In 1992, the government of Bhutan told us that we will not be allowed to live in Bhutan any more, and that we are not the people of Bhutan. The government deployed the army to evict us. Some people were paid compensation of land. They* [Bhutanese government officials] *brought video cameras and forced us to smile and took photos*" (translation from Nepali, BRFP, August 2013).

The following 15 years were marked by political unrest and protest by Bhutanese refugees, and several attempts to return to Bhutan. Moreover, the UN hosted bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan, in order to resolve the refugee issue. The UN attempted to find a so-called 'durable solution' for Bhutanese refugees. The first option was repatriation to Bhutan – something the Bhutanese government did not accept. The second option – settlement in the country of first asylum (which would be Nepal) – was not welcomed by the Nepalese government .

In 2007, the UNHCR together with the International Organisation for Migration (henceforth IOM) suggested the third durable solution: third-country resettlement. The US offered 60,000 places for Bhutanese refugees, an other countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands were quick to respond by offering more places for resettlement.
In the beginning, resettlement was not popular amongst Bhutanese refugees: it has been regarded as resignation, and in turn, the final abandonment of the possibility to return to Bhutan. However, once resettlement was agreed and started, many families – especially with small children – were quick to sign up. For example, a Christian refugee in her mid-30s outlined the different views on resettlement whilst in the camp:

> *"Before we processed and came here, some people used to say that it is not good in foreign countries, people will scold and beat us.* […] *People in Nepal used to say that our women are discriminated against in foreign countries, which isn't true. But women are discriminated against in Nepal. People here are respected regardless of age. Old-aged people and children are respected and well-looked after* […] *All people are treated equally here: even the highly educated people treat the illiterate people equally"* (translation from Nepali, BRFP, August 2013).

The quote also exemplifies the refugees' view of England, or in general of what they regard as 'the West' – which in this case means Euro-America. This view or perhaps even real experience of what it is like to live in the UK (or any Western country) demonstrates the refugees' positive attitude towards resettlement. Another refugee who arrived in Manchester with his family only in early 2013, explained why most refugees decided to be resettled:

> "[M]*any people took it negatively in the beginning. But I took it positively. It would be fine if we were in Bhutan, but we had to leave Bhutan. If there had been programmes for repatriation to Bhutan from the refugee camp, then we would be happy to accept it as our first priority*" (translation from Nepali, BRFP, August 2013).

Third-country resettlement began in 2007, and to date, almost 90% of Bhutanese refugees have been resettled to Western countries.

The UK entered the field fairly late: only in 2010 did the British government offer about 500 places (in total) for Bhutanese refugees. According to my informants, most aimed to resettle in the US, where to date about 70,000 refugees resettled in. However, the process and documentation to come to the UK was popular, because it was reasonably fast: within three months from the application date, my informants found themselves in a plane from Kathmandu (Nepal's capital) to Manchester. The process is ongoing, and more refugees arrive in three to six months intervals.

According to data published by the Himalayan Times in April 2013[1], more than 80,000 refugees have been resettled to the eight resettlement countries[2]. The latest numbers available for Bhutanese refugee resettlement are from 2013. Because the resettlement is ongoing, these numbers have most certainly increased, and here I provide an estimate:

Resettlement Country	2013[3]	2014
USA	66,134	~ 70,000
Canada	5,376	almost 6,000
Australia	4,190	~ 4,500
New Zealand	747	~ 750
Denmark	746	~800
Norway	326	~ 350
The Netherlands	326	~ 380
UK	**317**	**400 - 450**

The first Bhutanese refugees arrived in the UK in August 2010, and to date, about 450 Bhutanese refugees arrived in the UK. Note that the number of refugees is debatable, because children born in the UK are still categorised as Bhutanese refugees. Therefore this number may not be accurate. All refugees were resettled to Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford, due to availability of services and accommodation.

The Gateway Protection Programme – Refugee Resettlement in a Nutshell

Refugee resettlement entails the organised migration of (UNHCR) recognised refugees "*from their country of first asylum*" (in this case, Nepal) to "*a third country for permanent settlement*" (Wright et al, 2004: 6). This means, refugees are not asylum seekers or regular migrants, or are categorised as such. The distinction is relevant insofar as it entails vastly different rights and duties[4].

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[1] From:http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=+100%E2%80%9A000+milestone+for+Bhutanese+refugee+resettlement&NewsID=374165&a=3 [Accessed: June 2013].

[2] The numbers mostly serve to exemplify the numbers of refugees in different countries.

[3] As mentioned above, the 2013 numbers were obtained from the Himalayan Times (see above for reference).

[4] Refugees have many rights, whilst asylum seekers do not: in fact, the latter are classified as 'illegal' immigrants, until they are able to prove their refugee status. For example, recognized refugees have (such in my informants'

In 2004, the UK initiated the Gateway Protection Programme (GPP), which facilities refugee resettlement to Great Britain. The GPP is funded by the British Home Office, and operated by the UK Boarder Agency in cooperation with various organisations, such as the UNHCR, IOM, Refugee Action (RAUK), and other governmental and voluntary organisations. Each financial year, British Ministers set a quota, depending on international resettlement needs and available national resources. Initially, the UK limited resettlement places to 500 people, but has since increased the number to 750 per year (RC, 2004; Platts-Fowler et al, 2011: 4; Wright, 2004: 13-4; UNHCR, 2011: 2-3). Similar to other resettlement nations, the UK conducts interviews, as well as security and health screenings prior to offering individual places to refugees[5].

On arrival, resettled refugees receive the Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), which allows them to stay in the UK indefinitely. The ILR status means that resettled refugees enjoy the same rights to live, work and study in the UK as any other resident (except the right to vote), as well as claim benefits and welfare payments[6]. Moreover, the ILR allows individuals to apply for citizenship after five years of permanent residence in the UK (UNHCR, 2011: 8-9; Wright et al, 2004: 15). In 2015, the first set of refugees who arrived in 2010 are elegible to apply for British citizenship. Until then, they are 'stateless', and as such, only possess restricted travel documents, which allows them to travel to a few EU countries.

The UK adopts a Front-End (or Front) Loading (FEL) approach, which aims to provide support and resources only during the first stages of resettlement, "*in the expectation that less support* [….] *would be needed in later stages as (economic) self-sufficiency is attained*" (Duke et al, 1999: 166). After approximately six months after arrival, organisations implement an exit strategy, in which support is gradually withdrawn and support is outsourced to mainstream (public) services, voluntary organisations and local communities. However, since 2008, many of these NGOs and community centres suffered from severe budget cuts and lack of funding, which lead to a reduced provision of services for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, impacting on their daily lives and ability to gain self-sufficiency.

In between borders – Bhutanese refugees & the state of liminality

Gloria Anzaldúa (1999), a well known mestiza writer, noted in her famous work 'Borderland – La Frontera', that "*borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy*" (ibid: 19). She argues that living on borders entails shifting identities, multiple belongings – what she calls a 'process of

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case) the right to be unified with their family (in their country of refuge), a right to housing and a right to receive an Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK. In the UK, asylum seekers are normally arrested on arrival, are housed in detention centres, and have no right to live and work in the UK until their status is approved or they are send back to their country of residence (UNHCR; UNHCR, 2013; Mitchell, 2006).

[5] In addition to being a 'recognized refugee' according to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, the individual may not (a) be in a polygamous marriage (relevant for examples below); (b) committed political or non-political crimes, and (c) have a dangerous medical condition, although the latter has been relaxed in previous years (UNHCR, 2011: 8; Wright, 2004: 14-5).

[6] Most Bhutanese refugees in the UK are entitled to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), which is a state-benefit for people who are out of work (but able to work), and meet several conditions, such as demonstrating an active interest in looking for employment.

synchresis', through which people learn to cope "*by developing a tolerance for contradictions* […], *ambiguity* [….], *learn*[ing] *to juggle cultures* [….] [adopt] *plural personalit*[ies], [….], *operat*[ing] *in pluralistic mode*[s]" (cited in Bromley, 2000: 4-5).

I argue that borderland is not necessarily a physical space, but may be a 'state of mind', in which voluntary and involuntary migrants find themselves, and in which they have to negotiate their sense of identity and belonging. In such a state, my informants have to undergo aforementioned 'process of synchresis' through which they learn new ways to accommodate conflicts, contradictions and uncertainties; and adopt multiple personalities or labels, which they readily apply depending on specific situations and environments, in order to gain an advantage. Moreover, rather than 'victimising' refugees, I follow the anthropologists Liisa Malkki (1996) and Dawn Chatty (2010), who argue against treating refugees as victims, "*persons knowable only through their needs*" (Malkki, 1997: 224), but rather regards them as "*active agents whose strategies produced distinct patterns of migration*" (Chatty, 2010; cited in Marfleet, 2013: 305).

These ideas fit neatly with my anthropological explorations of notions of liminality. Here I follow well-known anthropologist Victor Turner's (1967 and 2002 [1969]) discussion of liminality in rites of passage. Turner uses Van Gennep's (1960) tripartite model of rites of passage as any process which requires a "*change of place, state, social position and age*" (2002: 359). Refugee displacement and resettlement can be understood as phase of transition, and thus go through the same stages.

Separation

Firstly, in rites of passage individuals undergo a phase of separation – the "*detachment of the individual or group* […] *from an earlier fixed point in the social structure and set of cultural conditions*" (ibid). Bhutanese refugees underwent this phase twice: firstly when they had to flee Bhutan, and leave behind their belongings and social hierarchies. Secondly, refugees experienced a phase of separation when leaving refugee camps in Nepal. Once more, they had to leave behind their bamboo huts, relatives and friends, and move to a new country. According to my informants, they were only allowed to bring one piece of luggage (approximately 23kg) each. Deciding what to bring, and what to leave behind was a difficult decision, as many of my respondents recalled. Other literature concerning migrants and refugees highlight that this phase is often accompanied by emotional separation and trauma, sometimes with far-reaching consequences.

Liminality

The phase of separation is followed by a 'liminal' period – a phase in-between, in which systems and hierarchies become ambiguous, and in which an individual "*passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or future state*" (ibid). In the liminal phase, persons are 'neither here nor there', and their social and cultural environment is questioned and significantly restructured. Again, Bhutanese refugees underwent this phase twice. Research conducted in refugee camps often regard them as a state of 'limbo', and is mirrored in the accounts of my informants. Resettlement itself is a state of liminality.

As mentioned above, my informants are currently in a state of liminality – somewhere in between borders and citizenship, located somewhere between Bhutani-ness,

Nepali-ness and British-ness[7]. During the liminal phase, the status quo and traditional hierarchies are being questioned, and new affiliations come forth. By being classified as Bhutanese refugees, a sense of egalitarianism and solidarity emerged. For example, even if some refugees where high status, land-owning individuals in Bhutan, they could not be distinguished from poorer, lower status individuals once in the camp. As one of my informant's put it: "*We were all the same in the camp, whatever we were before*" (fieldnotes, October 2012). During the time in the camp, their common aim to be repatriated to Bhutan led to the creation of what Turner called 'communitas', in which old political, legal and economic differentiations disappeared in favour of creating one unstructured community with equal individuals, "*submitting themselves to the general authority*" (ibid: 360) of service providers, such as the UNHCR and later the IOM. Again, after resettlement, this communitas continued to be relevant and hierarchies are severely restructured in resettlement.

From a practical perspective, this phase of liminality and emergence of communitas is played out in several ways. Most Bhutanese refugees are Hindus. As such, they would normally follow the strict rules attached to caste ranking – this was something I expected to find before entering the field. However, due to the unifying experience of exile and resettlement, most of these hierarchies are hardly visible. Rules such as higher casts not being allowed to share food with lower casts, or prohibitions to participate in rituals and events with other casts, lost importance, and are barely upheld in the UK. Many Hindus converted to Christianity in Nepal and in the UK, and the general notion that Hindus should never mingle with these converts and not welcome them to their homes is not followed in resettlement. Caste as a determining factor for marriage also lost relevance, although acceptable marriage-partners are still exclusively sought within the refugee community. That is, although there are cross-caste and a few cross-religious marriages, Bhutanese refugees do not seek partners outside of the Bhutanese refugee community. However, marrying a Nepali (i.e. ordinary citizen of Nepal or descendent) would still be acceptable, and is often highly encouraged.

Moreover, the process of questioning the status quo during liminal phases is also emphasised. Through the availability of Western education both in the camps and in the UK, about two thirds of my informants under the age of twenty-five, question their religious affiliation and social hierarchies. Except for the Christian community – about 30% of Bhutanese refugees in the UK – religion or Hindu rituals are often mere Kodak-moments, with emphasis on the sharing of food and the coming together of the community. Although children are shown how to, for example, apply *tikka* (mark on the forehead) and how to sing a few ritual songs, they are not initiated in religious scholarship. Most young informants emphasised their desire to become what they call 'civilised', which they assume to mean being 'atheist' and anti-caste. In comparison, the Christian community places significant emphasis on religious worship and scholarship. Particularly young members, who embrace religion in everyday life, follow an evangelical mission, which may lead to some issues with the Hindu community. Nevertheless, I observed several Christian teenagers drifting away from

[7]Or English-ness – it is relevant to note that although there is a difference between Great Britain and England (the latter only being a part of Britain, which also includes Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), my informants did not make a distinction between England or Britain in their everyday conversations, and used England and Britain interchangeably.

their religious community as they accessed British education.

Furthermore, most of my young informants feel somewhere in between three different cultures and senses of belonging. They simultaneously attempt to describe themselves as distinctly Bhutanese – something they only know through stories and recollections of the older community members, as they were either too little to remember Bhutan, or were born in the refugee camps – whilst proudly arguing that they are Nepali, which they identify with through the language (which they only speak but cannot write) and what they term 'culture', such as fashion, tastes in music and films, as well as certain rituals and religious affiliations. However, they are quick to argue that ultimately, they are "*British*" or "*English*" now, and thus are 'civilised' and 'educated', especially in comparison to people in Bhutan or even Nepal.

The state of liminality is ongoing and persistent, and some informants argue that they will only 'become British' in the next generation, or maybe only thereafter. Yet, liminality does not pose a significant issue for Bhutanese refugees in the UK. They consciously adopt different identities – in this case, Bhutanese, Nepalese and English/British – depending on the situation and environment, in order to gain an advantage for themselves.

Moreover, aforementioned communitas plays an important part in the restructuring of hierarchies within the Bhutanese refugee community. Status is no longer dependent on caste or property, but on social capital in form of language ability, skills in dealing with official bodies and the government, employment and, in the future, citizenship. In turn, the idea of communitas is vanishing in favour of a newly structured community, in which pragmatic knowledge is valued above more traditional forms of status. Although I lack the space to discuss this in further detail, this newly acquired form of power over the community can create or exasperate conflicts amongst Bhutanese refugees, as the division between three distinct community organisations of Bhutanese refugees in Manchester demonstrates.

(Re-) Integration, (Re-) Assimilation

The phase of liminality is followed by re-integration, in which the passage is completed. In the case of Bhutanese refugees, this phase could be termed 'integration' or 'assimilation' into the British host society and mainstream [8]. Some of my informants argued that this phase will only be complete for the second or even third generation of Bhutanese refugees in the UK, although all my informants expressed their aim to be 'integrated' in the UK.

It is the later point which makes my fieldwork and research unique. Migrant communities – especially involuntary migrants – are often said to over-emphasize their traditions and culture, and create so-called 'subcultures' in host countries. My informants do not seem to comply to this 'need' to 'reinvent' their culture, but rather

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[8]The UK Home Office defines integration as (a) individuals obtaining employment, housing, education and health services similar to the host population; (b) individuals being "*socially connected with members*" of their own and other communities, services and the state; and (c) individuals having satisfactory competence in the local language and culture, a sense of security, and "*confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shares notions of nationhood and citizenship*" (Ager et al, 2004). The concept and definition of 'integration' is widely debated in Social Sciences, and is referred to as 'integration' (with inverted commas) in this paper, in order to highlight the problematic nature of the term and related notions.

assimilate and replicate what could be termed 'Western lifestyles'. Rather than separating themselves from the British host society and seek connections only with South Asian migrants, they aim to be what they call 'integrated'. For them, being British means to be educated, articulated, fashionable, IT-literate and informed about current affairs. Most young refugees seeks white collar employment, and enter higher education, in order to enter the competitive labour market. On many occasions they emphasised their desire to 'give back' to Britain, to do the very best to "*support the British government and people*", to pay taxes (and thus repay their benefits) and to what they call 'integrate'. This is fairly distinct from other research findings with migrants communities in the UK. However, whether their aims will be fulfilled and how these goals change once they can apply for citizenship, will only be revealed through further research in the future.

Multiple & Hybrid Identities: a necessity during liminality?

Bhutanese refugees adopt multiple identities, which they readily apply depending on the situation they are in. For example, when talking about their shared history, they emphasise that they are Bhutanese, and thus legitimate their refugee status. They make use of the 'refugee' label in order to gain favours and attract funding or other advantages by the British bureaucracy and official bodies. At the same time as they highlight their distinctive character from the broader Nepali population both here in the UK and in Nepal, they make good use of their vast network with Nepalese migrants and Nepalese British whenever the need arises, proudly proclaiming that they are Nepalese themselves. When discussing their religion or upbringing, they often talk about themselves as Nepali, and thus emphasise their socio-cultural and linguistic background. However, when they talk about their lives in the UK and their 'right' to be in the UK, their access to facilities, education and sponsorship, as well as their eagerness to obtain citizenship, they always consider themselves 'British'/ 'English'. As one of my informants in his mid-20s explained: "*I'm really proud to be English. I finally feel like I've found my own identity*" (fieldnotes, May 2013). Here, they distinguish themselves from refugees who resettled in other Western nations such as the US. Britain, in their view, is a forward-thinking, technologically advanced and free country, in which they have the chance to "*realise their potential*". They emphasise their gratitude to the British state and adapt their lifestyles and attitudes. It is in these regards that my informants are a unique and interesting community of migrants in the UK.

Even further, the correlation with being English and identity is an important one, and demonstrates how refugees – and perhaps migrants in general – adopt multiple and hybrid identities, in order to overcome their state of liminality, and generate a sense of belonging. Considering Stuart Hall's notion of 'othering', Bhutanese refugees make use of above mentioned three classifications depending on the situation and environment they find themselves in. Because support by services is stopped or outsourced to underfunded charities, Bhutanese refugees rely heavily on the established network both within and outside of their community. One must consider the external situations that have a vast impact on my informants' daily lives. For example, I identified a generational gap amongst Bhutanese refugees, that is of great importance to the restructuring of hierarchies within the community and families. Most refugees over the age of fifty, who did not enjoy formal education in either Nepal or Bhutan, are illiterate – both in English and in Nepali. For them, adjusting to live in Manchester is a challenge, which put enormous pressure on families. This

pressure is further accentuated if we consider that almost all Bhutanese refugees who are not in formal or higher education or training, were unemployed [9]. This created an economic dependency on the British welfare and benefit system. However, several young refugees made use of their vast network of connections with British Asians, and work for Asian businesses[10], such as restaurants, take-aways, warehouses, construction and beauty salons. Those with such a job would happily refer other community members to their employers. Financially independent, and with the social capital of having a reliable network of external relationships, Bhutanese refugees with this form of social and economic capital gain important influence within the refugee community. Similarly, community members with high levels of English and who are in higher education also have increased power within the community, regardless of their (former) caste, religion, gender and wealth before exile and resettlement. The process of establishing new hierarchies within the Bhutanese refugee community is ongoing and will continue to change as more refugees arrive from Nepal.

Conclusion

As it is my aim to continue research with Bhutanese refugees in the UK for a possible post-doc, I aim to further analyse their notion of identity, belonging and borderland. As mentioned before, the first refugees are able to apply for citizenship in 2015. Only future research will tell how their relationship with the British state and the host society will progress. In this paper, I aimed to show that my informants are a small, but fairly unique group of migrants in the UK. They are not passive recipients of services and passive clients of resettlement. They very consciously adopt strategies and identities depending on their situation. In comparison to other migrant groups, Bhutanese refugees do not create a subculture, but aim to fully assimilate what they term 'British/English culture'. Although still in a state of liminality, they actively work on overcoming this phase, and be fully (re-) integrated into the host society. Their status may suggest that they are stateless people, in between borders and citizenship, but their aspirations, articulations and everyday actions demonstrate that the crossing of borders does not necessarily have to be a traumatic experience, in which traditions and culture are reinvented and overemphasised. On the contrary: most of my informants emphasised that refugee resettlement opened up many doors, and enabled them to access facilities, education, health services and employment unimaginable in both Nepal and Bhutan. Although separated from their homeland Bhutan, and their ancestral home Nepal, they attempt to make the best out of a situation they have no control over. Their lives are changing with every day in resettlement, but after all, refugee resettlement is perceived as their chance to overcome the 'limbo' of being a refugee.

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[9]The reason for high unemployment within Bhutanese refugee communities in the UK are manifold, but cannot be discussed in scope of this paper. In summary, the reasons include a lack of English language skills even amongst the younger generation, lack of accreditation of qualifications acquired abroad and lack of access to training. Most relevant however, is the fact that the UK was (and to an extend still is at the time of writing) in an economic recession, and lack of employment affected all communities in the UK. Perhaps the UK itself was undergoing a 'phase of liminality' during the time of my fieldwork. In the UK unemployment increased from 5.5. to 8.5. percent within a couple of years, and halfway through my fieldwork, in April 2013, the unemployment rate was still as high as 7.9. per cent, with a total of 2.56 million people out of work. The rate is even higher for 16 to 24 year-olds: more than 21 per cent of young people (more than 1 million) were out of work in mid 2013 (ONS, 2013a & ONS, 2013b).

[10]It is important to mention that the UK has a vast community of British Asians and Asian migrants, mostly living in enclaves in urban areas. It is obvious that the labelling as 'Nepali' or 'South Asian' is beneficial when seeking employment in South Asian businesses.

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