Tibetan refugee women in Nepal – full of life but formally non-existent

Paths from vulnerabilities to resilience

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Abstract

Tibet was annexed to the People's Republic of China in 1959. This caused the exile of the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans. The majority of these refugees settled in India, where the Tibetan government-in-exile was established too, but an estimated 20 000 Tibetans stayed in Nepal. They are not recognized as refugees by the government of Nepal and they do not have passports, neither Nepali nor Chinese. These exiled Tibetans have become stateless, formally non-existent, lacking any legal identity documentation. They are stuck living in the Tibetan refugee camps in Nepal with increasing police interventions stopping any “anti-China activities” and with very limited possibilities to improve their situation.

This paper examines the effects of statelessness on Tibetan refugee women residing in Nepal. This is done primarily through interviews and participant observation in the Tashi Palkhel refugee camp, in the city of Pokhara. The empirical data is analysed in the light of the conceptual pair of vulnerability and resilience. The vulnerabilities of these women are identified with the help of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, which determines what is required for a good life. After finding out what is missing from the lives of these stateless women from being considered of good quality, their reactions to those vulnerabilities are analysed. The aim of this study is to unfold the strategies of increasing resilience that Tibetan refugee women in Nepal have developed.

The biggest vulnerabilities of these women all derive from statelessness. These have to do with restricted mobility; lack of income, employment and property rights; prohibition to participate in politics and assemble; limited access to education; and banishment from Tibet. Since eliminating the source of these vulnerabilities – statelessness – is practically impossible, the strategies of increasing resilience that the women have developed are ways of learning to live as good a life as possible with the vulnerabilities, or despite them. This paper contributes both to understanding the living conditions of Tibetan refugee women in Nepal and to the development of a theoretical tool for social scientific research of vulnerability and resilience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

There are between 13 500 and 20 000 Tibetans living in exile in Nepal. The majority of these stateless refugees have lived in Nepal since the early 1960's or have been born there. Nepal is the home for the second largest population of Tibetan exiles, with only India having more Tibetan residents. (CTA 2010 & ICT 2012: 6) Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal have no passports or other legal documentation, which considerably limits their rights and makes their lives extremely difficult. This lack of legal status can be seen as the main impediment for Tibetans in Nepal to lead a normal and prosperous life.

This study focuses on Tibetan women in Nepal. The aim of this paper is to first map the current state of affairs; to find out what are the living conditions under which Tibetan women reside in Nepal. I will do this by taking a look at the history of Tibetan refugees, with special attention on the drastic developments of the last ten years. After acknowledging the various conditions that limit the possibilities for the lives of these stateless women, I will reflect these findings upon Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's *capability approach*. At this point the terms *vulnerability* and *resilience* become central. I will use the capability approach to identify the vulnerabilities of Tibetan women living in Nepal, and then turn the focus of the study to the coping mechanisms and survival strategies the women have developed as a reaction to those vulnerabilities. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to identify the elements posing threats (creating vulnerabilities) to Tibetan women in Nepal, and furthermore, to find out the elements that offer them security (develop resilience). Thus, the research questions look like this:

How do Tibetan refugee women in Nepal develop resilience under the difficult conditions they live in? What are their paths from vulnerability to resilience?

I will answer the questions by first finding out what constitutes the difficult living conditions and what the vulnerabilities of these women are. I will do this with the help of the capability approach and, more specifically, a list of ten basic functional capabilities. This is the theory-driven part of my analysis. After gaining a basic understanding of the vulnerabilities of these women, I will look at the individual paths they have taken towards resilience. This part of the analysis will be more data-driven.

I do not intend to make normative claims here on what ought to be done in order to improve the lives of the Tibetan women living in Nepal. Instead, I will survey the factors affecting the quality of life for these women. However, understanding the survival strategies and paths leading from vulnerability to resilience, is of key importance when seeking change. Therefore this is a relevant study for at least two reasons. First, understanding the coping mechanisms these women have been forced to create makes helping them easier – assuming that sooner or later there will be someone, be it an individual or an organization, with the capability to help improve the living conditions of the Tibetans in exile. And second, spreading knowledge about a grievance is the first step in calling for action. The idealist in me still believes that when many enough people learn about an unjust situation, something will eventually be done to change it.

1.1. Personal motivations

My personal interest in this topic stems from my background in development studies, while my fascination for Nepal proceeds from conducting an internship in an eco-foundation in the Kathmandu valley. After the internship my travels led me to Pokhara, the other major city in Nepal. There I had the privilege of getting to know one Tibetan woman, Karma. We became friends and she told me about her life. It was her stories that made me want to learn and understand more about the Tibetans' situation in Nepal.

I specialize in global gender studies, which explains my focus on the rights of women. As a student of gender issues, I had a strong presupposition that life would be especially hard for women also in the Tibetan community, as the case often is around the world. As we know, an enormous amount of work has been done to enhance gender equality in the word, and yet there is no country that would have been able to completely close the gender gap. Gender disparities still remain globally in many areas, such as premature death rates, girls' schooling, access to economic opportunities and access to decision-making (see for example The World Bank 2011: xxi). Thus, it seemed like a clear and natural decision for me to concentrate this study especially on women.

To my surprise I learned in the course of this research, that the Tibetans themselves perceive their

community as quite gender equal. Also my own conception on the issue has changed after researching more on the topic and conducting some interviews. Indeed, it seems that gender roles are actually very flexible among Tibetans living in Nepal. However, I do not think that I would have reconsidered the focus of my study even if I had known about this perception beforehand. In any case, no matter how equal the men and the women themselves feel they are, the factors restricting their lives and thus also the coping mechanisms developed, are inevitably different for men and women. This is due to, for example, the surrounding Nepali society and the biological differences between men and women (such as childbearing and nursing).

1.2. The structure of this study

In the following chapter I will describe my methodology; how I gathered all the information about the topic. In chapter three I will explain the background for the current state of affairs; starting with a brief history of the Tibetans in exile and moving on to a depiction of the existing legal and economic situation. I will also provide definitions for some of the most relevant terms that I refer to throughout the study. In chapter four I establish the theoretical framework of the study. I will summarize my two main theories: Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen's capability approach, and the concepts of vulnerability and resilience. In chapter five I will analyse my empirical data in the light of the theories; see how the Tibetan women's descriptions about their lives look like when reflected upon Nussbaum's quality of life -framework and identify the vulnerabilities and resilience strategies of these women. Finally in chapter six I will summarize my findings.

2. METHODOLOGY

Every scholar has a “basic set of beliefs that guides [their] actions”, better known as a paradigm (Guba 1990: 17). In my case this is social constructivism. I am not looking for an absolute truth like positivists do, but rather I have a more relativist approach. In my view each individual perceives the world in their own way, and thus there are actually “multiple realities”. Guba (1990: 27) explains this concept along with the objective of constructivism in a simple way: “Constructivism thus intends neither to predict and control the “real” world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the world at the only point at which it exists: in the minds of constructors. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the “real” world.” The idea of “multiple realities” seems especially suitable for this particular study; every Tibetan woman residing in Nepal has their personal perception about the reality they are living in, and furthermore, my task as a scholar is not transforming these realities but reconstructing them. Although, like I mentioned above, I do have an underlying credence that by doing my best in reconstructing these life stories and by thus raising awareness about the extremely difficult situation of Tibetans living in exile, I am creating space for change and hoping to possibly transform some mindsets.

When opposed to positivism, I do not hesitate to identify as a relativist. However, I see myself also as a type of universalist, which, at least in the context of human rights discussion, has been portrayed as contrary to relativism (see for example Basnet and Albalooshi 2012). My universalist stance becomes clear when discussing the capability approach in chapter four. The basic (universalist) idea of this approach is that there are some functions of human beings that are the most worth of care and attention, no matter where these human beings happen to live and what culture they are representing. The whole approach focuses in principle on the sameness of all human beings, rather than having difference as the starting point. In my opinion neglecting differences in cultures and not respecting local traditions can be very harmful in many cases, and should, of course, be avoided – unless this universalism is for the sake of greater good. When considering the capability approach, and also in the case of universal human rights, I see focusing on the sameness and forgetting about cultural differences as completely justified, even fruitful. I will get back to this discussion in chapter four.

As my paradigm already implies, I have chosen to use qualitative research methods. Flick (2007: 2)

provides an excellent summary of what qualitative research is: “[It] uses text as empirical material (instead of numbers), starts from the notion of the social construction of realities under study, is interested in the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and everyday knowledge referring to the issue under study.” My aim is to first collect data on the regulations, laws and limitations defining the possibilities for a satisfactory life for Tibetan women living in exile, and then to understand how they have managed to live under all these restrictions. Therefore I do not intend to produce measurable variables or statistics, which is what quantitative research methods aim at. Quite the opposite, my task is to describe, understand and explain what are the factors creating vulnerability and resilience in this particular case and particular context for these particular women, and that is why my methods are qualitative. Now that my paradigm is clear, I will move on to describing the empirical work done along with the methods used in this study.

2.1. The setting

I conducted the empirical work for this study between 5.1.2016 and 28.3.2016. The work consisted of ten semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I considered individual interviews as the most rational method of data collection since displacement, statelessness and coping with vulnerabilities are all highly sensitive topics and possibly difficult to talk about in a group. All the recorded interviews were done in Pokhara, Nepal. However, I also visited one Tibetan refugee camp in Kathmandu. There I did not conduct any official interviews, but nonetheless talked with several people. This visit served as a confirmation for myself that the living conditions as well as the survival strategies of women living in other Tibetan refugee camps and in another city are quite similar to those of the Tibetan women living in Pokhara. I acknowledge that my sample of interviewees could have been more diverse (i.e. include participants from other camps and areas), but due to time and access limitations I decided to focus just on the women living in Pokhara.

2.2. The participants

The only criteria that I had for the participants in the interviews were that they must be Tibetan, female and above 18 years old. I wanted them to be at least 18 years old because girls younger than that are usually still completely dependent on their families and therefore have not had to develop their own economic survival strategies yet. Consequently, the participants in this research ended up being women

aged between 21 and 93 years old. I was very lucky in finding participants for the study; my friendship with Karma, a Tibetan woman, was a huge advantage. She introduced me to some of her friends whom I could interview. From there on it was the classic snowballing effect that lead me to the rest of my interviewees; someone always knew someone who had time and interest to chat with me for a bit. Then again, I never expected finding participants to cause much trouble, since the criteria for eligible interviewees were so loose.

2.3. The data collection

The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to more than an hour. Most of them were done in English, just between myself and the participant. Some, however, required translation. In these interviews my friend Karma was again of key importance; she served as the translator. In these cases I would ask the questions in English and Karma would translate them into Tibetan on the spot, and vice versa, the participants would answer in Tibetan and Karma would translate the answers into English for me, so that I was able to ask follow-up questions right away when necessary. The majority of the interviews were done at the Tashi Palkhel Tibetan refugee camp in Pokhara, usually at the participants' homes. In a few cases there were also one or two other women present at the interview situation; the interviewees family members or friends. They were listening to the interviews, and when I asked them after the interview if they would be interested to participate and give an interview as well, they would invariably give me the same response: “Nothing to add, we have the same situation, the answers would be the same.” I was quite surprised about these claims, did not believe them straight away, and so I asked the women some of the interview questions anyway. To my surprise they all, indeed, gave very similar answers. These additional talks have not been recorded and obviously I cannot refer to them as proper data.

I am fully aware that ten interviews are not that many, and originally my intention was to conduct more of them. However after interviewing ten participants and casually talking with some more women in the refugee camp, I found that data saturation had already been reached. Fusch and Ness (2015: 1409) define data saturation in qualitative research as the point when no more new data, and thus, no more new themes appear in the interviews. This is what happened in my case, surprisingly fast. So after ten interviews and all of the additional off-the-record talks, I was confident that data saturation had been

reached.

In the beginning of each interview I briefly explained the topic of my thesis for the participants to know what the interview is for, asked for their permission to record the interview and asked if they are content with me referring to them with their real names in the final study. I had prepared a frame for the interviews (see Appendix), with themes such as the participant's basic background information, economic situation, social status, sources of joy and comfort, sources of stress and worry, statelessness and the effect of the drastic events of 2015, by which I mean the earthquakes in April and May and the border blockade that drove Nepal into an economic crisis. None of the interviews followed the frame precisely, but still all the themes were discussed with each participant.

In addition to the interviews, I visited some places important to the interviewees and observed the participant's every day life. For example at the refugee camp I was shown around the Buddhist temple, an old carpet factory and kindergarten and school facilities. I made careful field notes after each of these observation opportunities. I also had casual talks about various topics with Tibetan men, took part in a Tibetan New Year celebration and observed one of Karma's normal work days at the city centre. These visits and participation opportunities helped me understand the Tibetan women's daily routines and were very useful in grasping the big picture.

Besides the empirical data, I of course rely on a variety of written sources throughout the study. Out of the diverse theory texts, research papers, articles, history books and reports, one stood out as the most important and relevant source of information for me. This is a report by the International Campaign for Tibet called Dangerous Crossing: Conditions Impacting the Flight of Tibetan Refugees, 2011 Update. This 100-page report is the only proper source of information I was able to find that concentrates specifically on Tibetan refugees in Nepal, and thus, I will be referring to it a lot.

2.4. Ethical considerations

In the course of the empirical work also some ethical concerns came up. For example my original intention was to have all the participants sign a consent letter in the beginning of the interview stating that they have understood what the interview will be used for, that they can at any point refrain from

the research and that they approve being referred to with their real names. However, I very quickly learned that many of the women do not know how to read or write. After this realization the idea of the consent letter felt inappropriate, and thus, I changed the plan to just orally stating these things in the beginning of each interview and asking on the record if the participants agree.

Another issue that concerned me as a researcher was my friendship with the key informant, Karma. This is a common concern for scholars conducting qualitative research; how to draw the line between professional relations and friendship and how to be sure that the relationship with the participant will not bias the study. I agree with Owton and Allen-Collinson (2013: 2) in their view that "emotional involvement and emotional reflexivity can provide a rich resource for the ethnographic researcher, rather than necessarily constituting a methodological "problem" to be avoided at all costs." There are many challenges in using "friendship as method", but those can be overcome if carefully considered, and the result can be richer data than that gathered through a more traditional and distanced researcher-participant relationship (Owton and Allen-Collinson 2013). Karma herself assured me many times that she has nothing to hide and that she just wants to help me in my research as much as possible. Yet sometimes when she was talking about very emotional issues I felt slightly uncomfortable recording it – I knew she would never talk about those things to a stranger. This balancing between the roles of a researcher and a friend was an important learning process for myself, which really made me think about attachment and detachment. After some personal moral debates I came to the conclusion that it is ethically acceptable to use all the information from her, since she was fully aware of being recorded in those situations, and had herself decided to trust me enough to talk even about the most sensitive things.

Finally, one other issue caused me some ethical concerns. Some of the participants asked me why I was studying this topic. I answered them honestly that I consider the treatment of Tibetans by the Nepali government unjust and morally wrong, and that the purpose of my study is to raise awareness about this unfair situation, with the assumption that it might lead to someone doing something to change the status quo. However, afterwards I became worried that stating something like that might raise hopes and expectations that will not necessarily ever be fulfilled. On the other hand I had the feeling that simply being interested in these women and expressing empathy to them was to some extend an

empowering experience for them. Simply asking their opinions and having their voices heard was something they had not experienced often. McNamara (2009) has written more about the potential of ethnography to empower women, and I am in line with her thoughts about the obligation of feminist ethnography to not just serve academic purposes but also strive to make a difference in the lives of the participants.

3. BACKGROUND

In order to get an understanding on the present situation and the life conditions under which the Tibetan women live in Nepal, it is necessary to take a look at the history of the nation. I will first summarize the brief history of Tibet, focusing on the developments since the 1959 Tibetan uprising that caused the exile of the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans. Then I will move on to present day, describing the legal status of Tibetans living in exile and the role of women in Tibetan culture. Finally, I will provide some key definitions.

3.1. The brief history of Tibet

Tibet, the country known as “the roof of the world”, has a tumultuous history rooted in Buddhism and centred around the attacks of various invaders. Tibetan-inhabited areas in the Himalayan region were unified under one ruler, Songtsan Gampo, for the first time in the beginning of the 7th century, and the Tibetan empire was born. The history of Tibet is essentially characterized by the conflictual relation with China. Competition and wars on the neighbouring areas and, especially, on the control over an important trade route, the silk road, in the 7th-9th centuries mark the beginning of this difficult political relationship with China. (Kari 2001: 403) A peace treaty with China in 822 outlined the borders of Tibet (BBC 2014).

In the 13th century the Mongols conquered Tibet, but Tibet managed to sustain substantial autonomy under the Yuan dynasty. By the beginning of the 18th century the Mongol rule had considerably weakened and Tibet drifted under the Chinese rule of the Qing dynasty of the Manchus in 1720. The 18th century was marked with unrest and the Tibetans submission to the supremacy of the Chinese empire. In the 19th century the Qing dynasty weakened considerably. (Kari 2001: 404-405) The year 1912 marked the end of the Qing dynasty in a revolution, and the beginning of the Republic of China. For Tibet this meant end of the Chinese invasion and the Dalai Lama was able to return home from eight years of exile. In 1913 Tibet declared independence. (BBC 2014)

Time after the 1913 independence declaration

However, this declaration of independence was not recognized by the majority of countries, and thus

the Dalai Lama approached the British for assistance in preventing the Chinese from intervening in Tibetan affairs. After almost a year of negotiations between Britain, China and Tibet, the Simla convention had been formulated. In this accord the boundaries of Tibet were defined and the area was divided into outer and inner Tibet, the latter declared as part of China and the former given autonomy. (Karackattu 2014) In article 2 of the convention it is stated: "*The Governments of Great Britain and China recognising that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China, and recognising also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the Dalai Lama), which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government at Lhasa. The Government of China engages not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province. The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibet or any portion of it.*" (The Simla Accord 1914) China had been part of the negotiations, and their representative had even initialled the convention, but in the end he refused to sign it. The borders established in the convention remained, but the Chinese refused to recognize Tibet's autonomy. (Tsering 2013)

Inside China there was a more than 20 years long civil war between the nationalists and the communists, that ended in 1949 in the victory of the communists. The communist leader Mao Zedong declared the People's Republic of China (PRC) founded, and the destiny of Tibet was sealed. (BBC 2016) The Chinese communist regime threatened to "liberate the Tibetan people" and to "integrate Tibet with the motherland." On October 7th, 1950 the Chinese Liberation Army invaded Tibet. The Tibetans were desperately outnumbered and after twelve days of sporadic resistance, Tibet surrendered. (Cavendish 2000) The Chinese started imposing collectivization and wiping out religious monuments in Tibet, which sparked off the birth of the Tibetan resistance movement by 1954 (Barnett 1994: xvii).

In 1959 the Tibetan resistance broke out to full-scale rebellion against the Chinese rule. Thousands of Tibetans had gathered around the Dalai Lama's summer palace to protest against the Chinese annexation. The uprising lasted only twelve days, and was violently put to an end on March 17, 1959 when the People's Liberation Army besieged the palace. The Dalai Lama, along with thousands of Tibetans, managed to flee on foot across the Himalayas to India. Tens of thousands of Tibetans who could not escape were executed or imprisoned for sympathizing the Dalai Lama's government. The

uprising failed and resulted in about 80 000 Tibetans fleeing into exile. The ones who remained became prisoners in their own country when the Chinese closed the borders. The Dalai Lama was well received in India and established his government-in-exile at Dharamsala in the northern part of the country. The majority of the Tibetan exiles followed their leader to India, but some settled in Nepal. (Barnett 2014)

The time after the 1959 uprising

In 1965 the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) of China was officially established. This marked the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, which resulted in the destruction of 90 percent of the monasteries left in Tibet and making religious practices illegal. The same year the UN passed a resolution recognizing the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. (Barnett 1994: xix) The Cultural Revolution was an ongoing assault on the Tibetan culture and led to a refugee flow to Nepal. The Nepal Red Cross, the Dharamsala government-in-exile and the then Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (now Swiss Development Corporation) assisted the Tibetans in Nepal by setting up refugee camps, farmland and carpet-weaving factories around the country. (ICT 2012: 35 & Barnett 2014) Mao Zedong passed away in 1976, ending the Cultural Revolution and leading to the Chinese government to acknowledge “the past mistakes in Tibet”. (Barnett 1994: xix) The repression in Tibet eased to some extent, but the extensive relocation of Han Chinese into Tibet continued (BBC 2014). This was part of the process Choedon (1990: 6) has called sinicizing the population; government-planned migration of the Chinese to the Tibetan areas, destruction of Tibetan-Buddhist religious sites and discouraging the Tibetans from learning their native language – not knowing Chinese language made getting a job almost impossible. A similar development was seen in Nepal during the 1970's, when the teaching of Tibetan language came to an end as a part of the integration of Tibetan schools to the national education system. This lead to many Tibetans in Nepal sending their children to Tibetan schools in India. (ICT 2012: 35)

By the end of the 1970's the Dalai Lama was ready to settle for a higher degree of autonomy instead of independence. He even started negotiations with the Chinese about the conditions under which he could return to Tibet. (Barnett 2014) Despite their new “open door” reforms, the Chinese were not willing to raise Tibet's degree of autonomy (BBC 2014). The Dalai Lama's submission to the Chinese rule and compromise-seeking approach – even when sometimes in contrast with the pro-independence

views of the Tibetans living in Tibet – can be seen as a political strategy. As Barnett (2014) describes: "*This approach has brought considerable diplomatic success. The Dalai Lama has attracted an exceptional degree of media and public support for his cause, and his unusual style of public politics has placed the Tibet issue high on the international agenda. In the last 10 years, despite threats from Beijing, the Dalai Lama has met with 37 presidents and prime ministers, including President Barack Obama on Feb. 21 [2014]. Last week he delivered the opening prayer on the floor of the U.S. Senate, the highest religious leader to be invited to do so. It was a bipartisan slight by U.S. legislators against China."*

1989 was a significant, and to some extent controversial, year for Tibetans, since the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Prize for Peace, but also thousands of Tibetans were arrested or lost their lives (Barnett 1994: xx). The end of the 1980's was a time of increasing demonstrations and riots inside Tibet; the protests were the most prominent ones since the 1959 uprising. China put martial law into effect to stop the demonstrations – several Tibetans were killed and a new wave of Tibetan refugees spread to South Asia. For the Tibetans planning to take refugee in Nepal, the year 1989 marked severe restrictions in their possibilities. Pressured by the Chinese and their tightening policy towards Tibet, the Nepali government decided to stop taking any new Tibetan refugees from 1989 on; they merely promised to guarantee a safe passage to India through Nepal for any new incoming refugees, with the assistance of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This promise came to be known as the Gentlemen's Agreement between Nepal and the UN. Also Tibetan children born in Nepal after this time have not been registered at all, and 1990 was the last year a census has been taken on the Tibetan population in Nepal. (ICT 2012: 12 & 25-35)

The 1990s was a time of failed negotiations between the Dalai Lama's and China's governments and of ongoing dissatisfaction from the Tibetan side. The Tibetans were hoping for improvements on the restrictions on their cultural and religious freedoms, the countless imprisonments based on political views, the effects of the nation-wide economic modernization reforms and the environmental destruction going on in Tibet. The international community, with Britain and the US in the leading roles, continued balancing between their economic interests - and thus seeking good relations with China - and expressing their worries about the human rights violations in Tibet - and thus agitating

China. In 1991 the Tibetans in exile celebrated a kind of triumph in the political field; George Bush, the president of the United States, met with the Dalai Lama, and showed sympathy for the Tibetans by pressuring China to change the situation in Tibet and by changing the immigration policy of the US in favour of Tibetan refugees. After the collapse of Mao's communism, China's economic modernization programme did benefit some regions greatly, but the areas inhabited by the poor minorities tended to fall even further behind in the economic development. An increase of 75% in the price of basic commodities was reported in Tibet. In 1993 several reports came out about China using Tibet as a dumping ground for nuclear wastes for the past twenty years. Not surprisingly this had led to exceeding incidences of cancer in the proximity of nuclear waste storage facilities. It was also revealed that China had stored powerful weapons, also nuclear, in Tibetan soil. (Bowers 1994, n.p.)

In Nepal the 1990's was a decade of political turmoil. A pro-democracy people's movement managed to push the country's first democratic elections through in 1990. Under the new democratically elected government Tibetan refugees were allowed to demonstrate and bring out their political views. China did not tolerate Nepal granting these freedoms to Tibetans, and in 1994 the Nepali government responded to the Chinese pressure. They stopped issuing or renewing refugee documentation to the Tibetans and imposed restrictions on protests taking place outside the Tibetan refugee camps. In 1996 a civil war broke out in Nepal when Maoist insurgents started fighting for the abolition of monarchy. Tibetans, along with Nepali civilians, suffered significant economic losses in the violent ten-year-revolt. Due to the conflict also the once-thriving Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal collapsed, leaving many without an income. In 2005 king Gyanendra of Nepal broke down the government and took over absolute rule. China supplied him with arms and as a service in return he shut down the only two official representative bodies for Tibetans in Nepal; the Office of the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Welfare Office. The following year the Maoists and the government finally resumed the peace talks, signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and ended the civil war, which had had a severe impact on the lives of everyone living in Nepal. (ICT 2012: 35-36)

Beijing was hosting the Summer Olympics in 2008 and the chance for gaining international attention triggered violent anti-China protests and unrest in Tibet. China responded by switching off all communications inside Tibet and by closing the borders, preventing journalists, international observers

and diplomats from entering. The demonstrations were supported by solidarity protests around the world. Tibetans in Nepal were also supporting their brothers inside Tibet but the Nepali police shut these peaceful demonstrations down forcefully. (ICT 2012: 36) Even the Olympic torch relay was disrupted by “Free Tibet” -activists in Europe (BBC News 2008). Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama or his representatives met ten times between 2002 and 2010, but all the negotiations failed in China accusing the Dalai Lama for scheming to bring about independence for Tibet, despite his decades long campaign for autonomy (Barnett 2014). In 2008 the British government recognized Tibet as a part of China for the first time. Also 2008 the Dalai Lama stated that he had lost hope about reaching an agreement with China. (BBC 2014) The same year Nepal witnessed its first democratic elections since the civil war, and the Maoists, a former guerilla fighter movement that had now turned into a political party, won. China saw an easy opportunity to coerce Nepal's brand new beginners-in-politics-government into its favour, with the priority of limiting the refugee flow from Tibet and of preventing the Tibetans already inside Nepal from engaging in any anti-China activities. (ICT 2012: 34-36)

2011 was a dramatic year for Tibetans, entailing ever more pressure from China, self-immolations and the Dalai Lama's withdrawal from politics. On March 2011 in a Tibetan area in the Sichuan province of China a Buddhist monk set himself on fire and burned to death, as an extreme protest against the Chinese rule over Tibet. 11 more monks and nuns did the same by the end of the year, and by 2014 the number of Tibetan self-immolations had risen to over a hundred already. (BBC 2014) These powerful individual acts of protest have been viewed as desperate calls for China to allow the Dalai Lama to return home before he dies. He is born in July 1935, making him already 80 years old. (Barnett 2014) Just after a month from the first self-immolation, the Dalai Lama announced that he will retire from official duties. The Tibetan government-in-exile got a new, secular leader from an academic called Lobsang Sangay. (BBC 2014) The Dalai Lama's withdrawal from politics can also been seen as a failed attempt to please the Chinese and to allure them to negotiate on real autonomy for Tibet.

For Tibetans in Nepal 2011 was a year of continuous harassment by security officials and did not give much hope for improvements in the future. On February a US Under Secretary of State, Maria Otero was visiting Nepal and expressed her concern about the treatment of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. The response given by the Nepali Prime Minister, Jhala Nath Khanal, reflected the narrow prospects for

progress on the situation; he stated that the issue of Tibetan refugees in Nepal was very “sensitive” and could not make any commitment on the issue. Nepal’s obedience to China’s desired treatment of Tibetans can be seen clearly in the increasing abuses of authority by the Nepali police by physical abuse and by holding Tibetans in detention unlawfully and in unsuitable conditions, in the inhibition of Tibetan community group elections and also the elections for the Tibetan government-in-exile, in the banning of public Tibetan celebrations and festivals and in overall restrictions on freedom of assembly and freedom of religion. (ICT 2012: 18-23) Tibetan refugees in Nepal live all the time under a threat represented by the local law enforcement, as it is described in the ICT report (2012: 23): “Tibetans residing in Nepal are well aware of the broad powers held by Nepal’s security forces, and the possibility of police intervention and the looming threat of detention that exists during every community gathering (public or private).”

In 2014 the Human Rights Watch stated that due to pressure from China, Tibetans in Nepal are facing “increasing restrictions” (BBC 2014). On April 25th, 2015 an earthquake of the magnitude of 7,8 hit Nepal. More than 8000 people were killed, 18 000 injured and hundreds of thousands of buildings collapsed. The shock waves were felt also in the neighbouring areas of India, Bangladesh and Tibet. Just two weeks after this natural disaster, another earthquake with the magnitude of 7,3 hit the country. Nepal fell into a humanitarian emergency. The Nepali government has been widely criticized for the way they have distributed the international aid and for not reaching the ones most in need. (Burke, Rauniyar & Gayle 2015) Unfortunately, the earthquake was just the beginning of the adversities people in Nepal had to face in 2015. On September 20th the government adopted a new federal constitution, after having just an interim constitution for the last seven years (Kumar 2015). The new constitution was not well received by all ethnic groups in Nepal. The Madhesis and the Tharus from the southern region of Tarai, by the border with India, protested against the constitution because they felt that it “eroded their political representation, compromised the architecture of inclusion, divided up their territory and carved out federal units which would deprive them of self rule, and institutionalised discriminatory citizenship provisions” (Jha 2016).

The protests were forcefully put down by the Nepali police, and 40 people got killed. Thus, the

Madhesi parties had to adopt a new technique to pressure Kathmandu, and instead of traditional demonstrations they blocked the border between Nepal and India. Transportation trucks were unable to move from India, and import-dependent Nepal fell into a severe shortage of fuel and other goods. The Nepali government blamed India for the blockade and anti-Indian nationalism grew popular in Nepal. (Jha 2016) The blockade caused an economic crisis to the country already devastated by the earthquake. Schools, markets and transportation routes had to be shut down because of the lack of fuel. Remote villages destroyed by the earthquake did not receive deliveries of food and other aid supplies for the winter. After the blockade had lasted for five months, in February 2016 the government managed to persuade the Madhesi to end it, even though the issues causing the protests had not really been resolved yet. (NY Times 2016)

Obviously, 2015 was an extremely difficult year for the people in Nepal and hit the economy hard. According to the Asian Development Bank, the blockade together with the earthquakes and an unfavourably weak monsoon, dropped the country's gross domestic product (GDP) from 5,1% in 2014 to 3,0% in 2015. Services sector, mainly wholesale and retail trade, transport and tourism, that accounts for over half of the country's GDP and has been the driving force of growth in Nepal, suffered greatly from the crisis. (ADB 2016) Also the agricultural sector, that provides a livelihood for more than 70% of the population, took a big hit (Snyder 2015). First of all, the monsoon in 2015 had a slightly delayed onset and was weaker than normal. This, together with the depreciation of the Nepalese rupee, the landslides caused by the earthquake and the lack of adequate fertilizers due to the blockade, resulted in lower-than-normal agricultural production. (ADB 2016) Economic crisis tend to hit hardest on the poorest of the society; if you are poor and struggling for survival already, any disturbances to your livelihood will be felt hard. Since the collapse of the carpet weaving industry, thousands of Tibetans have been left without a livelihood in Nepal. As one Tibetan woman stated in the Washington Post: “It's all we have. We are lost without carpet-making." (Wax 2009) The few Tibetans who have managed to find a new source of income are mainly relying on tourism and agriculture – the two sectors that suffered the most by the hardships of 2015. I believe my statement about 2015 being an extremely difficult year for Tibetans in Nepal needs no more arguing for.

3.2. Nepal-Tibet relations

The brief history of Tibet provided above represents the common, widely accepted view on the events of the past centuries – it is the historical narrative told by foreign historians, outsiders to the conflict. However, there are also two contesting historical narratives told by the opponents themselves; the Tibetan one and the Chinese one. Since the establishment of People's Republic of China and Tibet's incorporation to it in 1951, the Chinese have promoted a historical narrative that portrays Tibet as an inalienable part of China since the 7th century. The way Tibetans tell their own history is a completely different story. In their story Tibet was independent, not a part of China, until 1949. Both of these narratives are fairly recent constructions, since the discussion whether Tibet belongs to China really became pertinent only after the events of the 1950's. (Sperling 2004: 7-23) Both sides are trying to argue for their opposing views with the same argument: history. They just narrate the events of that history differently; the Dalai Lama says Tibet was independent until it was colonised in 1949, China says its dominion over Tibet goes back centuries.

These narratives reflect the opposing opinions of the two sides on the conflict. Then there is Nepal, a country balancing in between these two views. On one hand it has deep cultural ties with Tibet, on the other it is under constant pressure from China. One cannot talk about Nepal-Tibet relations without taking China into account – in the end it is China that dictates what the Nepali officials decide about the Tibetans in their country. However, this is quite a new situation. Just like the two opposing historical narratives are recent constructions, so is the dominant position China has on Nepali politics; up until 1989 Tibetan refugees were welcomed and could enjoy relative freedom in Nepal. Nepal and Tibet share centuries of history together, and their close relations can easily be seen in the Tibetan-Buddhist culture that is thriving also in Nepal. Everywhere in the country, but especially at the mountainous regions, one can see Tibetan-Buddhist monasteries, stupas, monks and prayer flags. According to ICT (2012: 37), the Nepalis of Himalayan origin, often residing in the regions near the border with Tibet, are also sometimes affected by the Nepali police's discriminatory treatment of Tibetans. Reversed, if Tibetans manage to speak fluent enough Nepali, they can sometimes avoid police harassment by pretending to be Nepalis of Himalayan origin. Perhaps this likeness and sense of kinship is why the majority of Nepali people express sympathy to Tibetan refugees. It is often the Himalayan Nepalis living by the border who first offer food and shelter to the Tibetan refugees who have survived the

crossing of the mountains. They do this despite the risk of detention and fines from the Nepali authorities in case of getting caught. (ICT 2012: 37)

Ever since ancient times, trade has determined Nepal's relations with the neighbouring countries, and its close cultural ties with Tibet can be traced back to commerce relations. Back in 1645-50 Nepal forced Tibet to sign a trade treaty, that not only privileged Nepali merchants, but also gave Nepali men the right to marry Tibetan women and to live in Tibet. If there were children born to these marriages, boys would get Nepali citizenship and girls Tibetan. This was called the Khachara system. It was in effect up until 1956, when China had occupied Tibet and Nepal had to recognize Tibet as an autonomous region of China, revoking all the privileges the Nepali used to enjoy in Tibet, including the Khachara system. (Mishra 2003) Another indicator of the long history together is that until this 1956 treaty, Nepal recognized Tibet as an independent state. This was of significance since not many other countries in the world did so. The claim can be proven by looking at Nepal's UN application that dates back to 1949; on the part describing Nepal's diplomatic and foreign relations, Tibet is the first *country* mentioned after Britain. (Nepal UN application 1949: 9)

Nepal's history, and thus also its history together with Tibet, is undeniably determined by geopolitical pressures; Nepal has been referred to as the “yam between two stones” - the stones being the superpowers of China and India. Nepal is dependent on both enormous countries for trade relations and other support. In the case of China, the support received is strictly tied to Nepal following a “one-China policy”, this meaning preventing any “anti-China activities” on their territory. (ICT 2012: 8) The pressure from China has been steadily increasing in the past decades; in 1989 the conditions for Tibetans in Nepal and the access to Nepal for new refugees started to deteriorate, in 1994 the renewal of refugee documentation stopped and from 2008 on the definition of “anti-China activities” has been more and more vague and open to interpretation. The prominent pressure from China can be detected for example in a 2011 speech given by the Chinese Ambassador Yang Houlan where he stated: “We have the authentic information that our oldest and nearest friend Nepal is turning into a playground for anti-China activities. … Nepal understands the politics behind the anti-China protests. It is a political issue and Nepal has always supported China’s concern.” (ICT 2012: 30)

Nepal and the UN entering into the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1989 is due to the fact that Nepal is not a party to the 1951 UN Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Also Nepal's domestic law does not take into consideration asylum seekers. The agreement guarantees Tibetan refugees a safe transit from Nepal onwards to India with the help of Nepali authorities and the UNHCR. Nonetheless, there have been violations to the agreement from the Nepali side, especially in recent years. Border monitoring has been tightened and Tibetan refugees have been caught in transit and forced to return to TAR. (ICT 2012: 16-17) In addition to breaking the Gentlemen's Agreement, this is a violation of international law. As it is explained by the ICT (2012: 17): *"The principle of non-refoulement forbids the expulsion of a refugee into an area where the person could be subjected to persecution. And while Nepal is not a signatory to the U.N. Convention or Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, it has acceded to the U.N. Torture Convention in which the principle of non-refoulement is also enshrined."*

3.3. Women's role in the Tibetan culture

Gender equality among Tibetans is such an interesting topic, that I will briefly discuss it here. What makes it so intriguing is the way it has developed and the seemingly immense difference between the role of women inside Tibet and the one of Tibetan women in exile. Perhaps this is not that surprising, since the exiled community has been living outside of Tibet already for almost 60 years – a big proportion of the Tibetan refugees are born in exile and have never been to Tibet. As I already briefly mentioned before, the Tibetans in exile themselves see their culture as very gender equal. I will get back to this in the analysis of my empirical data.

When considering the role of women inside Tibet, not surprisingly, it looks like the ones living in exile are enjoying more freedoms. Of course, one has to remember that getting trustworthy information about the situation inside Tibet is not easy and thus, the information received ought to be handled with consideration. However, many enough sources state that there have been some gross violations to the human rights of women inside Tibet, perhaps the most upsetting being the forced abortions and sterilizations. China's "two-child policy" with all its restrictions has been in effect in TAR since 1984, and is behind these violations to the reproductive rights of Tibetan women. The Tibetan Women's Association goes as far as stating that this "coercive birth-control program suggests intent to destroy

the Tibetan people, in whole or in part” (TWA 2013). Besides these inhumane products of Chinese family planning, there is also evidence on torture, prostitution, trafficking of women and children from Tibet to other provinces of China, "virginity testing” as a precondition to employment, lack of access to health care and discrimination of women in education and employment. (See for example Bowers 1994; TWA 2013 or the Violence and Discrimination Against Tibetan Women Report 1998)

One has to keep in mind, however, that many of these issues, such as prostitution, trafficking of women and children and other gender-based discrimination, are big problems in Nepal too. There just is no data available, for example on the proportion of Tibetan women out of all the women trafficked from Nepal. The Tibetan Women’s Association's (TWA) executive, Tenzin Dhardon Sharling, states in an interview that in general life is easier for Tibetan women in exile than for those inside Tibet. Furthermore, she sees that compared to the surrounding Indian culture, where the majority of Tibetan exiles live, Tibetan women are very fortunate. Even though there are still things that ought to be changed, she claims that Tibetan men and women are quite equal in terms of opportunities, education and political representation. (Lundsgaard 2011)

As a conclusion on the state of gender equality in the Tibetan culture, it can be said that the 1959 Chinese occupation sort of united men and women and lead to a more gender equal community. This perhaps unexpected outcome of the invasion is easy to understand. First, inside Tibet women and men were given a common enemy, China, and could focus on the struggle against together. For example in the pictures from the protests of 2008 one can see women side by side with the men. Similarly there were self-immolations of nuns just like there were those of monks. Second, the exile provided new opportunities to study and work for Tibetan women. Before the 1959 occupation the Tibetan culture was nomadic and pastoral, which meant very few possibilities for women to break through from their traditional roles of taking care of the cattle, the children and the house. In exile the Tibetans were deprived of the possibility for their nomadic lifestyle, and thus, had to come up with new sources of income. In Nepal, men and women equally would do the same work in the carpet factories, and later on it would not matter if it was the man or the woman who managed to find a job and who stayed at home with the children. Indeed, it appears as if the Chinese occupation promoted gender equality among Tibetans by providing a common goal for both genders in the struggle against the invaders and in the

struggle to survive by any means.

3.4. Definitions

To round up this background chapter, I will finally provide short definitions to three concepts often referred to when talking about Tibetan refugees. These concepts are refugee status, anti-China activities and statelessness. Understanding what is meant with these three expressions is of key importance, since I will be using them later on in the study and since they actually kind of summarize what are the legal restrictions making the lives of Tibetans in Nepal so difficult.

- **Refugee status**, more precisely the lack of it, is the most important issue for Tibetans in Nepal. It is something the Nepali government denies from Tibetan people. According to the UN, “if recognized as a refugee, a special legal regime applies to them, and they will be entitled to a number of important rights and benefits as well as assistance and protection measures which, taken together, constitute what is known as 'international refugee protection'” (UNHCR 2005). The Tibetans who entered Nepal prior to 1989 were issued a refugee [identity] certificate, which guaranteed them the right to live in Nepal, and was the closest that Tibetans in Nepal have gotten to the refugee status that the UN talks about. These refugee certificates are the only legal documentation to many Tibetans in Nepal, and even though their issuance and renewal came to an end in 1998, they are still widely in use. For many Tibetan children born in Nepal after 1998, the only documentation about their birth is an entry in their parents' refugee certificate. If the parent loses the refugee certificate, there is no possibility of getting a new one and the whole family is left without any kind of identification documentation. Karma's refugee certificate is presented in photos 2 and 3 below. As one can see, the certificate is issued in 1995 – after that she has not been able to get a new one, and if she loses this one, she will be left without any identity documentation. Other details worth noting are the fact that she does not know her exact birthday, but only a year, and that her real name is Tsering, but everyone calls her Karma. On the front page of the certificate (photo 3) it is stated that “she will enjoy freedom of movement in the territory of Nepal.” I will get back to this in chapter five, the analysis, but already here it can be noted, that this is not the case in present-day Nepal – the freedom of movement of Tibetan refugees has been restricted since the days of the issuance of this certificate.

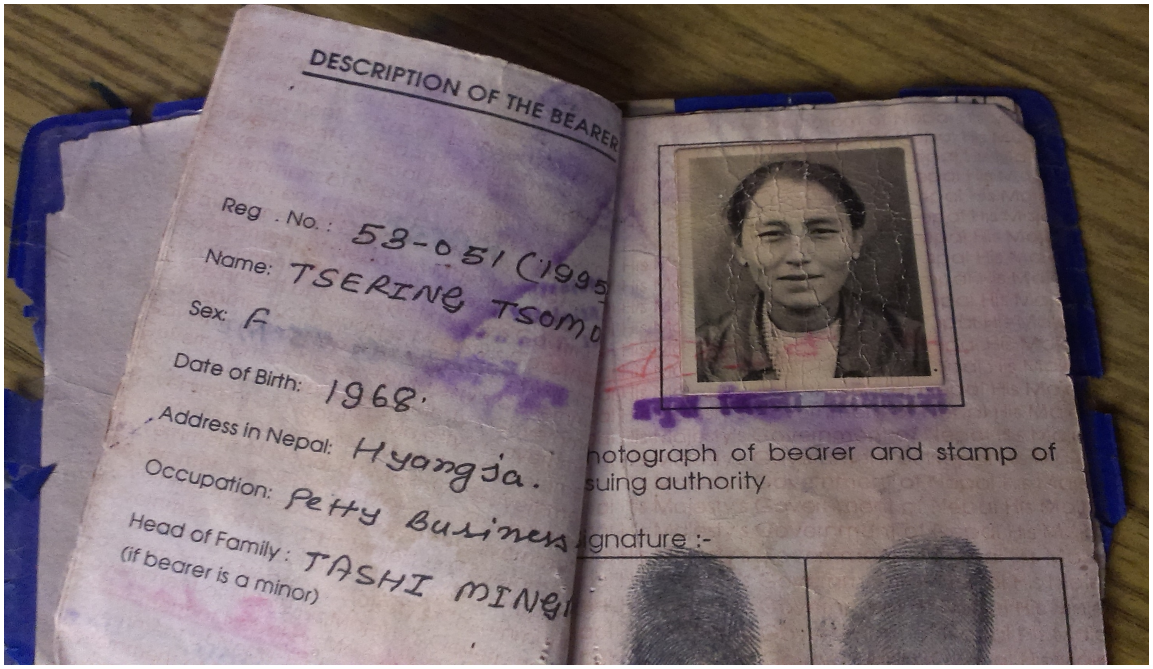

Photo 2: Karma's refugee certificate

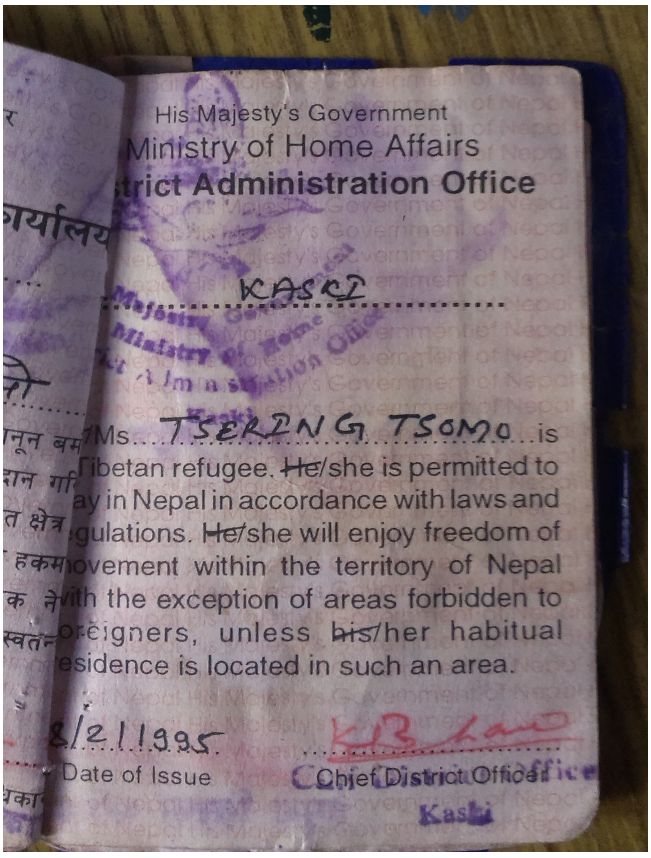

Photo 3: Karma's refugee certificate

- **“Anti-China activities”** is the base for and argumentation behind the police harassment of Tibetan people in Nepal. What exactly is meant by these activities has never been defined either by Chinese or Nepali officials, and this openness to interpretation is what makes the concept so dangerous to Tibetans. A related concept, that probably falls under “anti-China activities”, is “Free-Tibet activities” that seems to refer to any protests, gatherings and events which have a political tone. As one can imagine, with this lack of clear definition, almost anything can be framed as “anti-China”, and the “repression of Tibetans in Nepal since 2008 has gone beyond the political to include many aspects of Tibetans’ cultural, religious, social, civil and economic lives” (ICT 2012: 8). Nepal's Chief District Officers are authorized with significant powers, including the right to detain any individuals for 48 hours, which happens to Tibetans relatively often. Furthermore, Tibetans' arbitrary detentions in Nepal are legitimized with a Public Security Act and a Public Offenses Act. The former gives the law enforcement the possibility to “detain individuals for up to 12 months without charge if they are deemed, among other things, a threat to domestic security and tranquility, or a threat to amicable relations with other countries” and the latter to detain individuals “for up to 25 days without charge for crimes such as disturbing the peace” (ICT 2012: 23). Until “anti-China activities” is given a clear definition, the Nepali security officials can keep on arbitrarily detaining and fining Tibetans under the protection of these two Acts and the 48-hour-detention right.

- **Statelessness** is the term used for the condition of having no legal or effective citizenship. This, obviously, is a very disadvantageous condition, to the extent that it has also been considered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In article 15 of the Declaration it is stated that "everyone has the right to a nationality"' and that "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality." This right to a nationality has been recognized also in several other international conventions. The lack of citizenship leaves an individual without many basic rights and outside the protection of a state. Even though the right to a nationality is accepted as a universal human right, some human rights scholars have remarked that human rights instruments should mitigate the importance of nationality, in order to prevent discrimination based on statelessness. (Weissbrodt and Collins 2006: 245-249) For the Tibetan exiles statelessness means that they cannot legally travel to any country or own any property. What they see as their home country is

not recognized as a state by other states, but as a part of China. Thus, they do not have a state to protect them or even to keep count on them. They are formally non-existent people. Weissbrodt and Collins (2006: 265) summarize the difficulty of not having a citizenship as follows: "*Stateless persons not only must deal with the challenges associated with being vulnerable targets for gross human rights violators, but also they must deal with the fact that, in many states, nationality is a practical prerequisite for accessing political and judicial processes and for obtaining economic, social, and cultural rights. One reason why stateless persons are unable to access these processes and rights is that stateless persons are often not issued identity documents by their states of habitual residence.* "

4. THEORIES

In this chapter I will summarize my two main theories; the capabilities approach and the conceptual pair of vulnerability and resilience. In chapter five I will use the capabilities approach, created by Amartya Sen and further developed into a list of ten capabilities by Martha Nussbaum, to understand the vulnerabilities in the lives of Tibetan refugee women in Nepal. Then I intend to find out what are their paths from these vulnerabilities to resilience, but before I can do that, I must first explain here what exactly is meant with vulnerability and resilience of refugees.

4.1. The capabilities approach

The capabilities approach was originally developed in the field of economics in the 1980s by Amartya Sen, with the aim of measuring the quality of life. He created the approach as a response to the widely used approach that focuses on the equal distribution of resources and sees economic growth as an indicator of the quality of life. Instead of focusing on resources and opportunities, Sen took human functioning as the core of his approach. His essential statement was that resources alone have no intrinsic value – they matter to the quality of life only when promoting human functioning. Thus the goal of public policy ought to be an equal level of functioning, not so much economic growth or equal distribution of resources. The question he was looking for an answer to was: “What are the people of the country in question actually able to do and to be?” (Nussbaum 1995: 5) Probably the most famous use of Sen's capabilities approach is the development of the measures used in the UN Human Development Report. Sen is also known for promoting gender equality, which was one of the reasons he found it necessary to develop a new theory for the measurement of the quality of life; the traditional approaches that focused on utility and resources were blind to the unequal level of functioning of women compared to that of men, all around the world. (Nussbaum 1995: 2-6)

As a promoter of gender equality, Sen's career has centred around social justice; the creation and definition of a just society. By asking what the people in a nation are *actually able to do*, Sen avoided the trap of neglecting the poorest and the neediest of people in the life quality measurement. Another argument against the resources-based approach and in favour of focusing on capabilities, is the fact that people need different amounts of the same resources in order to reach the same level of capability to

function. To give a simple example: an average adult woman needs less protein (the resource in case) than a pregnant woman to reach the same level of nutrition or physical health (the capability to function in case). Linked with gender equality, especially social differences between men and women become important here; for example enhancing literacy rates in a developing country will most likely require more resources with women, who have perhaps never been to school, than with men, who probably have already had some access to education before. (Nussbaum 2003: 33-35)

For this kind of theory of social justice to be adequate, some claims have to be made about primary rights, about fundamental entitlements that belong to each individual, no matter if they themselves think so. Here the capabilities approach comes very close to the discussion about universal human rights. The core capabilities that should belong to each individual in the world contain the same themes as widely accepted human rights do; freedom of speech, freedom of association, political and civil liberties, freedom of religion and so on. The important difference between rights and capabilities can be found in the ability of an individual to exercise the right; the right to free speech for example is only secured if the required capabilities, such as the capability to leave the house and assemble, are present. Thus, rights are in a way like resources – they can be enjoyed only if the relevant capability to do so has been achieved first. (Nussbaum 2003: 33-39)

The established universal human rights and the idea about core capabilities that belong to everyone both derive from a universalist and essentialist starting point; they concentrate on the sameness of people, on what is common to all. This is something I already mentioned in chapter two and will further explain here. Sen's capabilities approach, and especially Nussbaum's list of ten capabilities that I will soon get to, are completely based on the conception that some human functions are so important, at the centre of every human life, that they can be seen as requirements for a good life no matter where on earth this life is lived. Just like human rights are seen to apply everywhere and to everyone, regardless of cultures, regions, traditions, ways of life or religions, so are these core capabilities. As Nussbaum (2003: 39) herself explains the universal nature of capabilities: *"When we speak simply of what people are actually able to do and to be, we do not even give the appearance of privileging a Western idea. Ideas of activity and ability are everywhere, and there is no culture in which people do not ask themselves what they are able to do and what opportunities they have for functioning."*

Maybe out of reluctance to be categorized as a universalist, Amartya Sen never made clear statements on what exactly the core capabilities should be. This is where the philosopher Martha Nussbaum stepped in with her version of the capabilities approach. She took as her starting point defining what constitutes human life; what are the characteristic activities of a human being; what distinguishes human life from the lives of animals and plants. She ended up with a list of ten items that are crucial parts of humanness, parts that have to be there for any life to be considered human: 1. Mortality 2. The human body 3. Capacity for pleasure and pain 4. Cognitive capability: perceiving, thinking, imagining 5. Early infant development (everyone has been a baby) 6. Practical reason 7. Affiliation with other human beings 8. Relatedness to other species and to nature 9. Humour and play 10. Separateness (individuality). With this list as her guideline she turned to the question about what constitutes a good human life. In line with Sen, she argues that ensuring capabilities should be the goal of public policy and that politics should aim in essence at providing the possibilities for anyone to live a flourishing life. This is what lead Nussbaum to her list of ten capabilities, which all must be present for a life to be considered good. She leaves room for specification and additions, but clearly claims that at least these ten capabilities are required for the good quality of any life. (Nussbaum 1995: 72-85) Below is the list intact, as she presented it in 1995 (83-85):

Basic Human Functional Capabilities

1. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction, and for choice in matters of reproduction; being able to move from place to place.

3. Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain, so far as possible, and to have pleasurable experiences.

4. Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason—and to do these things in a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination

and thought in connection with experiencing and producing spiritually enriching materials and events of one's own choice; religious, literary, musical, and so forth. I believe that the protection of this capability requires not only the provision of education, but also legal guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and of freedom of religious exercise.

5. Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing and gratitude. Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.

6. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. This includes, today, being able to seek employment outside the home and to participate in political life.

7. Being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. Protecting this capability means, once again, protecting institutions that constitute such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedoms of assembly and political speech.

8. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Being able to live one's own life and nobody else's. This means having certain guarantees of non-interference with certain choices that are especially personal and definitive of selfhood, such as choices regarding marriage, childbearing, sexual expression, speech, and employment.

10a. Being able to live one's own life in one's own surroundings and context. This means guarantees of freedom of association and of freedom from unwarranted search and seizure; it also means a certain sort of guarantee of the integrity of personal property, though this guarantee may be limited in various ways by the demands of social equality, and is always up for negotiation in connection with the interpretation of the other capabilities, since personal property, unlike personal liberty, is a tool of human functioning rather than an end in itself.

Nussbaum emphasizes that all of these capabilities, separately, are of central importance. Each component on the list is irreplaceable and trade-offs are not possible; the need for one cannot be satisfied with a bigger amount of another. For a human life to be good, each of the ten capabilities must be available, in part because the components are so connected with one another. Without one capability, one may lose another; for example taking part in recreational activities or political events is not possible without the ability to move from one place to another, which again is not possible without the capability to be adequately nourished. Nussbaum calls for "capability-equality" as the main goal of public policy. Every citizen of a country should have equal capabilities to lead a satisfactory life. Guaranteeing this is the task of public planning, whereas the implementation, whether or not the citizen decides to make use of these capabilities, is up to each individual. Again, to give a simple example, it is the government's responsibility to make sure there is adequate food available for everyone, but the individual citizen can still choose not to eat it and fast instead. (Nussbaum 1995: 85-95) Nussbaum (1995: 87), in line with Amartya Sen, claims that: "*The questions that should be asked when assessing quality of life in a country are (and of course this is a central part of assessing the quality of its political arrangements) 'How well have the people of the country been enabled to perform the central human functions?' and, 'Have they been put in a position of mere human subsistence with respect to the functions, or have they been enabled to live well?'*" Indeed, the list of ten capabilities is not about mere subsistence, but about what is required for a *good* life, for a life with dignity.

To conclude, the capabilities approach is all about social justice. The fundamental idea behind the theory is that a society is not just if it does not guarantee these basic human functional capabilities to all its citizens equally. The list of ten can be specified and modified to suit different cultures better, but at least those ten capabilities are needed for a good life. Finally, both Sen, Nussbaum and myself hold a belief that there is an underlying moral claim in human capabilities: they should be developed. The basic capabilities have a claim to be assisted in developing, and that claim is especially on the government. (Nussbaum 1995: 88)

4.2. Vulnerability and resilience

The terms vulnerability and resilience refer essentially to ways of dealing with endangerments.

Through the ages, human societies have encountered various threats to their existence and, as a response, found ways to cope with them. It is in the human nature to immediately try to figure out ways to protect themselves when a danger of some kind is detected. How dangerous the threat in case is perceived to be depends on the individual or the society making the judgement, and consequently, so does the reaction to it. The terms vulnerability and resilience derive from ecology and the research of natural disasters, where the endangerment consists of natural hazards such as floods, storms and earthquakes, and the resilience studied is mainly the way a society prepares and reacts to these hazards. In recent years the conceptual pair of vulnerability and resilience has been adopted also in the social sciences, where “endangerment is the result of a wide range of constellations of interacting social, economic, institutional and ecological factors” (Christmann and Ibert 2012: 261).

In short, the term vulnerability refers to the susceptibility shown by individuals, societies or communities to various hazards and threats. Ibert and Schmidt (2012: 350) provide another simple definition for vulnerability; it uncovers “how actors socially construct threatening situations.” An important aspect of vulnerability is that it is always socially constructed - one individual may perceive something as a serious threat that another individual sees as harmless. Christmann and Ibert (2012: 267) define vulnerability as “a concept which, in the context of social action under conditions of uncertainty, denotes practices of collectively assessing and negotiating situations of endangerment.” Furthermore, the term vulnerability can be seen to include also the reaction capacities of the individual or the society; if the reaction capacities are high, even exposure to highly threatening factors can result only in low levels of vulnerability, and vice versa, even a seemingly small threat can result in high levels of vulnerability, if the reaction capacities are low or non-existent (Christmann and Ibert 2012: 261).

Vulnerabilities can originate both from outside factors (as is the case in the classic vulnerability and resilience research tradition that deals with natural disasters) and from within the individual (for instance issues with personal health can be sources of vulnerability since they can limit the individual's possibilities for employment, among other things). In line with this thought, sometimes the same entity can be both a source of vulnerability and a path to increase resilience. If an individual for example finds his or her physical condition a vulnerability, then improving this condition can create resilience.

(Ibert and Schmidt 2012: 356-357) Aysa-Lastra and Cachón (2015: 11) take a different approach to vulnerability by defining it through lack of resources: *"The vulnerability of a person or group, such as immigrants, is determined by the absolute or relative deprivation of symbolic, social, emotional, or material resources or the difficulty or impossibility to use them in a specific historical context due to institutional, political, economic, social, or cultural constraints."* They have focused their research especially on immigrant vulnerabilities and emphasize the importance of working conditions. It is a known fact that immigrants tend to end up in the low-paid and least valued occupational categories, if they manage to find a job at all. Sources of immigrant vulnerabilities are very often found in this "class component", together with the causes for the migration in the first place. (Aysa-Lastra and Cachón 2015: 11)

Where vulnerability refers to the construction of threatening situations, resilience on the contrary has to do with reactions to these vulnerabilities. The term resilience is actually very close to the concept of capability. It is used to describe the ability of an individual or a group to continue to exist with minimum amount of harm, despite all their vulnerabilities. The term encompasses both the ability to encounter and reduce vulnerability and the strategies how to do this. Resilience is usually understood as a continuous process rather than an established state. (Christmann and Ibert 2012: 261-262) The definition provided by Aysa-Lastra and Cachón (2015: 10) is in line with this notion: "resilience should be conceived as a process, a reaction, and a form of resistance exercised by the actors within a "field of possibilities" that are marked by the social structure that tend to construct vulnerable subjects." This "field of possibilities" tends to be more narrow for refugees, as their position in the social structure is often limited by race, ethnicity, gender, class and other factors, such as statelessness.

Christmann and Ibert (2012: 262) have summarized three dimensions of resilience from literature in the field: "First, the ability of a system to withstand certain actual shocks or internal changes; second, the capacity to restore the original state relatively quickly; and, third, the ability of a system to learn and to continually adapt itself to the changing conditions." Indeed, when talking about resilience, both the tolerance for adversities and the actions taken to cope with them need to be considered. Now that the definition of resilience is rather clear, we can take a look at where does resilience come from. A widely accepted conception is that resilience derives from social capital. Tripp et. al. (2009: vii) define social

capital as “social networks, the norms of reciprocity and trust that arise from them, and the application of these assets in achieving mutual objectives.” Robert D. Putnam (1993: 169) gives a similar definition, stating that social capital refers to the “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.” Social capital is a very broad concept and it can adopt many different forms, but in any case its connection with resilience is undeniable (see for example Aysa-Lastra and Cachón 2015: 10). Ibert and Schmidt (2012: 355) add that also formal institutions, like different contracts and insurances, can create resilience. In the case of refugees this is unfortunately rare, since they often fall outside the support of these types of institutions, as I have pointed out in the discussion about statelessness. In fact this often turns the formal institutions rather into a source of vulnerability than that of resilience for refugees lacking legal documentation.

Everyone faces vulnerabilities in their life, but in the lives of immigrants there are always additional constraints caused by their immigrant status, by the fact that they are not citizens of the state that they reside in. Aysa-Lastra and Cachón (2015: 11) talk about a “discriminatory institutional framework” that refers to the ways in which immigrants are constructed as powerless and vulnerable; the government can significantly affect the levels of immigrant vulnerability by recognising, guaranteeing or denying individual rights. Christmann and Ibert (2012: 262) have also noted that increasing resilience can be more difficult for disadvantaged groups: “they often have neither the economic nor the cultural and/or social capital to change anything about the situation, i.e. to raise their resilience by moving away, insuring themselves against possible damages or repairing damages that have occurred.” Here again the importance of social capital as a means of increasing resilience comes up. As one form of social capital, cross-ethnic ties are mentioned as supporters of ethnic resilience; social ties with the natives of the country can add to the immigrants' social capital. (Aysa-Lastra and Cachón 2015: 13)

Finally, it needs to be noted that vulnerability and resilience are always interrelated; you cannot talk about one without the other. Already the process of constructing vulnerability, where the individual determines how threatening a situation is, more or less starts the process of creating resilience, where the individual takes action to reduce the perceived threat. Indeed, vulnerability and resilience are “an indivisible pair of terms.” (Christmann and Ibert 2012: 269) Identifying vulnerabilities is done by first,

determining who are the individuals or groups under a threat and then, finding out what exactly are the factors threatening them and, furthermore, what are the factors offering them security. Moreover, the strategies for increasing resilience can be recognized by looking at what kind of changes the vulnerable entities have made as a response to these threats. (Ibert and Schmidt 2012: 359) This is what I will do regarding Tibetan refugee women in Nepal in the following chapter.

5. ANALYSIS

I will now move on to discussing the empirical data, and see what the interviews and my observations reveal about the vulnerabilities and resilience of Tibetan refugee women in Nepal. I will begin by finding out what constitutes the vulnerabilities of these women. The way I have chosen to do this is theory-driven, as I will do it by going through Nussbaum's list of ten basic human functional capabilities in the light of my empirical data. I will discuss each of the ten capabilities one by one to see whether or not the capability is available to the women under study. Since the core statement in Nussbaum's version of the capabilities approach is that all of these ten capabilities must be there for the quality of a life to be good, I think I can claim without further argumentation that the lack of any of those capabilities can be interpreted as a vulnerability.

After examining the vulnerabilities of the women in case, I will continue to the profoundly data-driven section of the analysis. Here I will look for the answer to my problem formulation; what are the paths these women have taken from vulnerability to resilience – how have they developed resilience? I will do this through the vulnerabilities I have identified in the first part of my analysis. I will see if there is a response, a reaction to be found, to each of those vulnerabilities.

5.1. The lack of basic human functional capabilities as a source of vulnerability

1. Ability to live to the end of a human life of normal length

Out of all the ten capabilities this is the easiest one to discuss regarding the Tibetan women *living* in Nepal. Indeed, all my interviewees had reached maturity and were still very much alive. Thus, it is fair to say that none of them has “died prematurely” and this first capability is, indeed, present. Some had actually exceeded the “normal length” of a human life by far. According to the Unesco Institute of Statistics the life expectancy at birth is 68 years in Nepal (UIS 2014a) and 75 years in China (UIS 2014b) – obviously there are no statistics available from Tibet since it is not a recognized state, neither was I able to find statistics about the life expectancy of Tibetans residing in Nepal. The older participants in my research had lived the first part of their life in Tibet and since 1959 in Nepal. Three out of my ten interviewees were past these average life expectancy rates with 76, 85 and 93 years of age. What Nussbaum means with “one's life being so reduced as to be not worth living” is of course

open to interpretation. Is this just her way of referring to suicides, or can it be said that this capability has not been there even with a long life in years, if that life has not been of good quality? I will not go deeper into this discussion, but solely assume that in my case all the women have found their lives worth living, despite all the hardships.

2. Ability to have good health

Besides adequate nutrition and shelter, Nussbaum included in this second capability the opportunities for sexual satisfaction, the ability to decide on reproductive matters and the ability to move from place to place. At a quick glance on the data it looks like all the other abilities are there for the women in my study, except for the last one regarding mobility. Indeed, moving across borders is illegal without a passport, so moving to another country is almost impossible for these stateless women. Furthermore their mobility inside Nepal is restricted by the fear of police harassment. Also a deeper look at the data reveals that problems with income are threats to having adequate nutrition and shelter. As I will show with examples from the empirical data, capability number two is not present for these Tibetan women in Nepal.

Nepal is positioned between China and India. Going back to Tibet (China) is completely out of the question for my interviewees and could be life threatening for the Tibetan women in the current political situation. However, there is a chance for Tibetan refugees to get to India, if they have a driver's license. According to my interviewees the driver's license is usually enough of an identification at the Indian border, and if at first it is not, then a bribe of a few hundred rupees will make it that, as Tsering explains: “I have a driver's license and sometimes I have to pay a hundred or two hundred rupees of bribes in the border, and then it's okay, then they let me cross.” In any case, going to any other country is practically impossible and even this loophole in getting to India might soon be obliterated, as the Nepali government has stopped, or at least made a lot more difficult, the renewal of driver's licenses for Tibetans. This change in policy started in 2011 all of a sudden, and there is still confusion among the Tibetans on whether or not they will be able to renew their licenses, which they are supposed to do every five years. Driving a motorbike is the main means of transportation in Nepal, which means that this new restriction can really be harmful to the Tibetans in the country, or as the ICT (2012: 65) explains it: “Overnight hundreds of Tibetans have been forced to quit driving or drive illegally. This

will impinge hugely on many businesses and livelihoods and will make vulnerable any Tibetan who attempts to flout what essentially amounts to a government ban on refugee mobility." Also taking away the possibility to easily travel to India can be a huge cutback in the life possibilities of Tibetans in Nepal. One of my younger interviewees was worried about this new development:

> "*I wanted to study to become a nurse, but in Nepal, we have to show a Nepali passport. So I couldn't get in. I studied in the Tibetan refugee's school, then after finishing my studies I wanted to learn nursing, but I am not able to get in the education in Nepal. So still I'm trying. No chance here in Nepal, but I am planning to go and study in India. I have a driving license, so I can cross the border to India. After five years we have to renew the license. Maybe it will be okay. I got my license three years ago, so for two more years I have it. If I don't make it to India in that time, then I don't know.*" -Karma B.

According to the laws and regulations, moving inside Nepal should be possible for Tibetans. However, the interviews revealed that many of the refugees follow something the ICT (2012: 60) has called self-imposed curfews. By this it is meant that many of the Tibetan refugees avoid moving outside the refugee camp especially in the evening times, when they are more likely to be stopped by the police, who are asking for identity documentation (ID), and then for bribes if and when the ID is missing. To my surprise, especially the older Tibetan women told me that they do not ever really go outside the refugee camp, or at least try to avoid it as much as possible:

> *"I don't go outside and so I don't have problems with the police."* -Khando

> *"I never leave the camp, it's good for me here."* -Mutup

> *"We stay at home every day. I don't leave the camp, so the police don't bother me. Here in the camp they don't ask for IDs."* -Pempa

In addition to the restrictions on mobility, the second capability is threatened by problems with income generation. In fact money is something that everyone out of my ten interviewees mentioned as a worry. They talked either about the difficulty of finding a job without an ID or about the insufficiency of the work they do to provide enough for the family. None of Nussbaum's ten capabilities mentions money per se, but as we all know, in the world today money is usually the precondition for having food on the

table and a house to sleep in. Thus, I decided that this is the right place to talk about this vulnerability. Besides worrying about feeding the family and paying the rent (for those who do not own their house in the camp), providing for one's own or the children's education always came up in the discussions about money, but this I will get back to when analysing the capability number four. More often than not, when money came up in the interviews, so did the adversities of 2015. The majority of the interviewees work in "petty business", selling jewellery and handicrafts to tourists. The rest are unemployed, besides one who works in a Tibetan restaurant in the camp. Thus, the decline in the amount of tourists caused by the earthquake has been felt hard among the interviewees:

> *"It's now been almost a year from the earthquake, and it stopped every income for us. It really was a big disaster, a crisis for us. And then also the fuel, it's making everything very difficult. You know we have to buy all the gas and the fuel in the black market, and the price is more than double. … The lack of tourists is a huge problem for our income, it went totally to zero. Life is very hard here now, it is difficult to make enough money."* -Tsering

> *"It worries me that there are no tourists. We have no income, no land. It is a problem. No business here, and still we have to care for our children."* -Tashi

For one of the women there was also a concrete problem with shelter. She is originally from another Tibetan refugee camp, Dorpattan, one in the mountainous area of Mustang. There she has a house and a small farm with her husband. However, in this remote refugee camp there is no school available for their children. Therefore she and their two daughters live half of the year in a rental house in the Pokhara camp, where the girls can go to school. The earthquake destroyed the Dorpattan house, and now she cannot go back home with her daughters:

> *"My husband is staying in a little house, a shelter, that did not get destroyed in the earthquake, so he can farm the vegetables, but for now there is no place for me and my daughters to go back home, not until we can fix the house. No one can stay there because we're afraid it will collapse completely – no money to fix it and no help from the government."* -Khando

The point Nussbaum makes about the opportunities for sexual satisfaction and the ability to decide on

reproductive matters belonging to this capability, is something that my data does not give clear answer to. The overall impression that I got and the stories the women told me about their lifespans, indicate that the women have made the decisions about having children together with their husbands. Also out of the two participants under 25 years old, one said she wants to have kids some day and the other said she is not sure. These observations suggest that the Tibetan women do have a say on reproductive matters, but I cannot make any certain claims. Finally, the ability to have good health is something that, according to the regulations, seems to be there for Tibetan refugees regarding medical care. Any Tibetan, no matter if they have the RC or not, can go to any hospital in Nepal and get treatment (ICT 2012: 63). Also at least in the Tashi Palkhel refugee camp there is a Tibetan doctor's office. However, many refugees avoid going to the hospital and admitting that they are not healthy. Money is so tight, that taking a day off from work is something many try to refrain from. This quote from Karma sums up the thoughts of the majority of my interviewees with respect to capability number two:

> *"The money I make is not enough. Actually, when I am sick, then it's so difficult. I think so every night, and then no sleep. I think every day like that. When I am sick, yea? Then nobody's looking after the family, you know. The children are so small and husband has no work. ... I think about that every night – what if I go to the hospital, then we have no money. When I go selling, I make little little money, not enough, but some money. If I am sick, if one person in the family is sick, then we don't get money. There is no support, only what I make from selling the jewellery. Every night I think inside my head, I worry and then no sleep. I don't need building nice house, I don't need big land, I don't need things like this. Just need enough for the kids to go to school, to have food and pay the bus."* -Karma

Photo 4: Karma, her husband and youngest son in front of their house in the refugee camp

3. Ability to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain

Besides the pain, Nussbaum also included the ability to have pleasurable experiences in this capability. When looking only at my empirical data, I would say that this capability is there for these Tibetan

women. None of them told me about any “unnecessary” pain, and some did talk about “pleasurable” experiences. I am assuming that Nussbaum refers only to physical pain here. Some of the interviewees had small problems with health, such as pain in the eye connected with losing their sight and having a sore foot, but nothing I would interpret as “unnecessary” - rather natural with old age. However, there are reports about the Nepali police using unnecessary violence against Tibetans who are accused of anti-China or free-Tibet activities, especially after the 2008 protests. Nowadays any traditional Tibetan celebration, such as the Uprising day, the Dalai Lama's birthday or even the apolitical Losar (Tibetan new year), invariably bring about increased police patrolling around Tibetan settlements and a high risk of being arrested for Tibetans. Rarely, but sometimes the encounters with the police include hitting with bamboo sticks and beating, and there are rumours about the use of violence while in detention too. (ICT 2012: 21, 24 & 96) Despite these reports, none of my interviewees had been arrested or beaten by the police. Some had witnessed violence during the Nepali civil war too, but again, not experienced it themselves. Thus, capability number three is, perhaps not very well secured, but available to these Tibetan women.

4. Ability to use the senses; to imagine, to think, and to reason

Besides education, Nussbaum includes freedoms of expression and religious exercise to this capability. For some of my interviewees, this capability is limited only by the strict prohibitions on political speech. For the majority, only the practice of religion, out of all the rights linked with this capability, is possible. Perhaps because also many Nepalis are Tibetan-Buddhist, the religious practices of Tibetans in Nepal have not been restricted or disturbed by the law enforcement. In any case the lack of access to education, illiteracy and the prohibition of political speech are huge constraints to this capability, and it is obvious that the capability number four is not available.

Regarding education, the problem is two-sided; it is both about the lack of funds to finance the education and about the legal restrictions concerning higher education. First of all only four out of my ten interviewees had ever been to school. This means that the majority of them are illiterate and have not received any mathematical or scientific training either. They know about many things, they have had extensive lessons on religious matters and they have a lot of practical skills, such as carpet weaving and working with wool, but their thinking has not been “informed and cultivated by an adequate

education” (Nussbaum 1995: 83-84). For the eldest ones, who grew up in Tibet, there simply were no schools in their home villages. Tibetan lifestyle back then was pastoral and nomadic, and since none of my interviewees was from Lhasa, they did not have any access to education. For those born in the refugee camp in Nepal, the reason for not going to school was purely economic. Their families did not have the money to pay for tuition fees and instead of going to school, they would follow their parents to work, which for most meant going to the carpet factory. The women acknowledge it what a big limitation illiteracy is, and it has made them appreciate schooling of their own children even more, as Karma explains:

> *“I've never been to school. When I meet some people while selling souvenirs and they ask me 'can you give me your address or your email' and I can't, it makes me embarrassed. They always look so surprised when I tell them I can't. That is so difficult. I can only hear and speak, not write, not read. That is why my three sons, I really want them to go to school. I know that education is very important because I know how hard life is without education.”* -Karma

In terms of the availability of education, there is more to it than just the sparsity of Tibetan schools in Nepal. According to the ICT (2012: 66-68), there are 13 Tibetan schools in Nepal. In the 1970's the Tibetan schools were integrated to the national standard curriculum, which meant the end of teaching Tibetan language and culture. This lead to many parents sending their children to boarding schools in India. In 1981 the education policy change was reversed, and Tibetan education in Nepal became possible again, but the trend of sending kids to study in India is still big. The education is perceived to be of better quality there, and as some of my interviewees pointed out, there is a chance of the children eventually getting an Indian nationality if they live there long enough. After the basic education, most students proceed to high school. In Nepal, there are Tibetan high schools only in Pokhara and Kathmandu. Thus, until secondary education, all Tibetans in Nepal have access to schooling if they can pay the tuition fees and afford to move to the big cities for high school. However when it comes to higher education, the only chance stateless Tibetans have is to travel to India and study there. As Karma B. already explained in connection with the driver's licence, since 2010 students have been required to present a passport to be accepted to higher education in Nepal. Private colleges are an exception, but the tuition fees are by far too expensive to most Tibetans.

Finally, as already mentioned several times, anything political is forbidden from Tibetans in Nepal. Nussbaum (1995: 84) notes that the protection of capability number four "requires not only the provision of education, but also legal guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech." In Nepal the situation is the opposite: it is guaranteed that Tibetans cannot express any political opinions. This is due to the pressure from China, and the surveillance on the matter has gotten more strict since the events of 2008. Also the Tibetan self-governance has been interfered in by Nepali officials by closing the Office of the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Kathmandu in 2005, seizing ballot boxes from both community leader elections and the elections for the government-in-exile and by many other violations of freedom of speech. (See for example ICT 2012: 96-98) My interviewees were well aware of these developments:

> *"You know, here in Nepal, we are not allowed to protest. If we protest, if we say anything against the Chinese government, if we say 'free Tibet', of course there will be problems with the police. Like in 2008, they did. It was almost a revolution, a big protest, all the old Tibetans in India, in Canada, in the States, they made big protests. So in those days in Nepal many many Tibetans got in jail, the police came to the camp and they arrest many people, put them in jail."* -Tsering

> *"We have to be very careful what we say. The Chinese have spies everywhere. We can go to jail for just saying 'free Tibet', you know. Even now because you record this, I'm worried to say anything."* -Dolma

5. Ability to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves

With capability number five, Nussbaum (1995: 84) means being able "in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing and gratitude." This is a very personal attribute, but regarding the women participating in my study, this capability is clearly present. Their ability to love and have attachments can be seen and heard every time they talk about their families; what worries them the most is their children's future, or for the young ones, their parents' future and their own ability to take care of their parents when they are old. The overall impression I got through the course of my empirical work was that I was working with very warm-hearted people. Nussbaum (1995: 84) states that "supporting this

capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development." The way I understand this is that she is referring to early childhood relationships and the security of having a family, or someone comparable to a family member. If one gets to experience love and gets to express their feelings in a safe environment when growing up, I believe it will support the development of this capability. The Tibetan culture, like that of Nepal and South Asia by and large, is family-oriented, and since it seems that there is no question about the presence of this capability to the women in my study, I am assuming they all had these "forms of human association" when growing up.

When it comes to being able to grieve and to long for loved ones, these women have had more than enough opportunities to practice this ability. As people who have been deprived of their home country, they all long for the possibility to go back home one day. This is something I will discuss more in connection with capability number ten a. Almost all of the women (eight out of ten) have some family left behind in Tibet. None of them has been able to keep in touch with those relatives or even knows if they are still alive. For some the last contact was a few years ago, for others there has been no contact at all ever since their exile. Talking about this was very emotional to some of the interviewees and simply seeing the tears in their eyes assured me that, indeed, they have capability number five. These quotes reveal more about their grief and longing than anything I could write:

> *"I don't have any family here. I only have an uncle in Tibet. And... no contact at all. No phone calls, no letters. Before it was easier, before we could call. Now it's maybe... two years ago I last heard anything about him. I don't know. What can... maybe he's been killed, maybe he is dead. I don't know. If someone gets killed, we can't know. Chinese people, they are free. If they kill, they are still free."* -Karma

> *"I was 28 years old when the Chinese took our country. We walked to Nepal with my family and my husband, it was a very difficult road. We didn't have food or drink. If we met people, they would sometimes feed us. My mother and my father both died on the road, on the way cross the Himalayas. We had some pigs with us too, but also they all died on the way, by the side of the road. I feel so bad I couldn't help any of them."* -Sonam

> *"It took us two months on the road to cross the mountains. We had to move always only at night, because we were afraid the Chinese will see us. I was with my mother and my brother,*

the rest of the family stayed behind, in Tibet. I haven't heard of my younger brother and my father ever since. Every night when I go to bed, I worry for my family. I worry for my little brother in Tibet, if he is still alive and how is he doing." -Mutup

Photo 5: Sonam in her house, with her prayer beads

Despite all the hardships experienced, or perhaps because of them, these women also expressed deep gratitude. Everyone, ten out of ten interviewees, said that Nepali people are good to Tibetans. All of

them also said it is the Nepali government that is not good and made a clear difference between ordinary Nepalis and the government authorities. I found it quite amazing that none of the women had grown embittered. They all thought Nepal and the refugee camp is a good place to live in, no one had experienced any kind of discrimination from Nepali people, and the older ones, who had made the crossing from Tibet, were still grateful to those Nepalis they first encountered who had given them food and shelter. Finally, some of the women who sell souvenirs and jewellery to tourists also mentioned how sometimes Nepali business owners help them. As I have explained, doing any kind of business is illegal for Tibetans without IDs, and sometimes the police patrols the tourist areas. They can confiscate the bags of merchandise from the Tibetans if they see them selling anything. In times like these, if the Tibetans see the police approaching, they can “hide” in the nearby restaurants or shops and pretend to be just customers. Not all restaurant owners and shop-keepers allow this, but some do, and the Tibetan women remember them with gratitude.

6. Ability to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life

According to Nussbaum, in today's world having this capability means being able to seek employment outside the house and being able to take part in political life. These are themes that have come up already several times in my study, and it is very easy to say that this capability is not available for any Tibetan residing in Nepal. Seeking employment has been made virtually impossible without a passport and participating in politics counts outright as anti-China activities.

When Tibetans started arriving to Nepal, the Red Cross and the Swiss Agency for Technical Assistance helped set up carpet factories that employed many Tibetans. The carpet industry collapsed with the civil war in Nepal and around the same time pressure from China got stronger, making the regulations about hiring Tibetans without IDs more strict. Nepali employers know it that if they hire a Tibetan, even one with a RC, the risk of getting into trouble with authorities increases significantly. To put it simply, hiring a Tibetan is a risk for business. This has led to high rates of unemployment among Tibetans, and the only source of income for many is self-employment in petty business. Selling jewellery, handicrafts and souvenirs to tourists in the city or in the mountain trails is not a way to get rich, often not even a way to provide enough for the family, but for many Tibetans it is the only option. So far the police have

only confiscated the bags with the products when encountering Tibetans selling in the streets, but the threat remains that they will start arresting people for doing this too. Having a business of their own has also been made difficult since Tibetans have to pay double taxes and they have no property rights. (ICT 2012: 68-75) The difficulty of finding a source of income is of course the reason for the financial problems the majority of Tibetans in Nepal face. This I have already discussed in connection with capability number two. This quote from Dolma summarizes the employment situation of so many Tibetan refugees in Nepal:

> *"When I was small both my mother and my father worked at the carpet factory, just here in the camp. You know that factory, right? Now it's almost empty, but back then everyone worked there. So as a child I was first cutting the designs on the ready carpets and later I learned how to weave myself. When they had to close the factory I didn't know what to do. I already had children and I tried to apply for many jobs in the city, but always when the employer found out I don't have an ID, they sent me home. So I started weaving these belts from wool and selling them, I didn't know what else to do. My husband buys some jewellery and we sell them too. I don't want a life like this for my children. We sit or walk all day and hope someone buys something. It takes all day and maybe I sell only one piece or two pieces, from sunrise until dawn."* -Dolma

When it comes to taking part in political life, there are even less possibilities for Tibetans than there are in seeking employment. In short, the Tibetan government-in-exile operates from Dharamsala, and basically India is the only place where Tibetans can engage in politics. In Nepal Tibetans get arrested right away if they are suspected of having political meetings or events. As already explained, anything that the law enforcement thinks has to do with an independent or autonomous Tibet, with the Dalai Lama or even with planning an event that could have something to do with politics, is interpreted as anti-China activities, and put to an end quickly. The interpretation of what exactly counts as "political", and thus as anti-China, has been getting more and more open since the events of 2008. As Tsering explains:

> *"Protests, it's one thing, and I kind of understand that they don't let us do that. But now we're not even allowed to make the candle vigil in the city. It's something where we pray in the candle light for the people who lost their lives in Tibet, who self-immolated. Now we can only do this*

in our community hall, not outside. If we go outside in lines, line by line with the candles, the police think it's a protest. The spies from China directly call the Nepali government, and the police will come. If we do anything outside our community hall, they think it's something political and they arrest us." -Tsering

7. Ability to live for and to others

With capability number seven Nussbaum (1995: 84) refers to the ability to "recognize and show concern for other human beings and to engage in various forms of social interaction." She mentions freedoms of assembly and political speech as requirements for having this capability. This capability is closely linked with capabilities number four and five, and I will not repeat the discussion about the prohibition of political speech here – it has already become clear that Tibetans in Nepal do not enjoy freedom of speech. When it comes to the ability to show concern and compassion to other human beings, my empirical work suggests that these Tibetan women do have this capability. However, they do not enjoy freedom of assembly either, so it looks like the preconditions Nussbaum set for this capability are not met. Even though these Tibetan women seem very compassionate, they do not have "the ability to engage in various forms of social interaction" and thus, capability number seven is not fully available for them.

I discussed the ability of these women to care for others and be compassionate when analysing capability number five. As an addition to that discussion, I will briefly mention here the candlelight vigils and the Tibetan Women's Association (TWA). The candlelight vigils are purely an expression of compassion, like Tsering explained in the previous quote. The Tibetans in exile want to pray for those who lost their lives inside Tibet, despite the threat of the police interrupting these events and accusing them of having a political gathering. This, in my opinion, indicates that these Tibetans, indeed, have the ability for empathy and can show concern for others. Another indication of this is the TWA, which one of my interviewees is an active member of. She explained that the TWA has its own branch in every village, and compared their activities to social work. She told me that they take care of those women in the village who cannot get by on their own. After the earthquake her branch of the TWA collected money to help the victims. They bought clothes and other goods and went themselves to the remote

villages near the epicentre of the earthquake to distribute the help.

Regarding the freedom of assembly, the situation is reversed for Tibetans in Nepal: instead of having the freedom, they have a prohibition. Once again this has to do with Nepal's one-China policy. Any gathering of Tibetans can very easily be interpreted as political. As the police surveillance has gotten tighter and tighter, Tibetans have been directly told by the law enforcement to keep their celebrations inside their homes, to not gather in big groups but to keep the celebrations private. The ICT has noted the same in 2012 (80-81): "Where once Tibetans in Nepal were able to freely gather to mark cultural events, over the past three years, state interventions in these have become common. A tacit understanding which existed between the Tibetans and the Nepal authorities that events within the settlement boundaries would be left unhindered has also been repeatedly broken." Many of my interviewees mentioned these developments too:

> *"Sometimes the police come, like March 10, the uprising day. They stop the celebration, even though we just want to celebrate in peace, no fighting. But they come and stop us. Normally there is no problem with the police, only on the special days like the Dalai Lama's birthday and so on. If we just stay in the camp, and keep the celebrations inside our homes, there are no problems."* -Tashi

8. Ability to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature

This capability is a bit more difficult to discuss in the light of my empirical data. It is a topic that did not come up that often in the interviews, or if it did, the discussion did not go very deep. However, my impression is that capability number eight is there for the Tibetan women. I base this judgement on the brief notions my interviewees made about the beauty of the Himalayan region – clearly they appreciate the natural environment surrounding them, and on the way Buddhism teaches about respecting animals and the world of nature. All of my interviewees are Buddhist, some more devoted than others. When talking about the dream to leave Nepal and move to some other country that would recognize the rights of the Tibetan people, some of the interviewees mentioned that it would make them sad to leave the Himalayas. The older ones said that seeing the mountains and the high plains of Nepal reminds them of Tibet. Finally, one interviewee brought up the concern about environmental destruction in Tibet. Even though these are not very strong indicators of having capability number eight, I did not encounter any

indicators of not having it either. Neither the literature nor the empirical data suggested anything that would deny this capability from the Tibetan women.

Photo 6: The Himalayas, Annapurna range

9. Ability to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities

As with capability number eight, also with this one, I cannot make very strong argumentations. Again, since there is no evidence against having this capability, I consider it present for these Tibetan women. The ability to laugh is something that I am sure they all have. Throughout the empirical work it kept amazing me how much these women can smile and laugh, despite their difficult living conditions. Even when talking about serious matters, they could turn it into a joke and laugh in the end. To give a few examples, when discussing the fact that 2015 was a very difficult year, Tashi said: “we sit here every day, selling jewellery to tourists who are not there – we're here just like before, the customers are not and still we sit here all day,” and then she laughed. When we were talking about the future of Tibet with Karma, she told me that she does not believe there will ever be free Tibet. Then she continued: “the

Chinese will never give us freedom, actually, I think they are slowly taking over Nepal too," and gave a big laugh. When it comes to the ability to play, many of the women have not had it when they were children; they had to work from a very young age on. Perhaps, like with the education, that is partly the reason why they want to guarantee their own children have the possibility to do so.

Finally, the question about recreational activities is an interesting one. It seemed to me as if the concept of 'free time' was quite foreign to these women, as if they did not really understand what I meant when asking what they do with their free time. This might, of course, have to do with the fact that many of them are unemployed and do not really have separate working time and free time. When I tried to clarify the question by asking "what do you like to do when you're not doing household chores or making handicrafts for sale?", many of them looked confused and did not know what to say. After some more follow-up questions I found out that many simply enjoy spending time with the family or friends, some like to watch television and one is busy volunteering in the TWA. However, the whole idea of having a hobby or doing something just for fun, appeared to be weird for them. I believe this is mainly due to money being so tight. The working hours for selling souvenirs and handicrafts are long, and when combined with household chores, going to the monastery and taking care of children, there is not much time left. For the unemployed ones every day is a blur of making handicrafts, cooking, cleaning, praying and socializing with others in the camp. None of the women considered praying and going to the monastery as 'a free time activity'. It is something one just does every day; someone compared it to eating food. The whole concept of recreation appears to be something alien for these women. Either they do not have the time or the money for it, or they do not feel the need to make a difference between 'normal time' and 'free time'. Maybe there is a need for some meaningful recreational activities to be organized in the camp, since half of the interviewees perceived their lives being boring. As Maya put it:

> *"I don't have a job, I can't study any more in Nepal, I can't really leave the camp and I have no money. What can I do all day? There is nothing to do. Sometimes I feel useless."* -Maya

10. Ability to live one's own life and nobody else's

With capability number ten Nussbaum (1995: 85) refers to "non-interference with personal choices regarding marriage, childbearing, sexual expression, speech, and employment." This is one of those

capabilities, that the Tibetan women have in part, but not fully. I have already demonstrated how difficult finding a job has been made for them, and choices to speak in public will certainly be interfered with. Regarding these two aspects, capability number ten is evidently not there for these women; the authorities of Nepal have and will interfere if the women try to employ themselves or to speak in public. The other aspects of this capability, however, seem to be available to my interviewees. When it comes to choices about marriage and childbearing, I got the impression that the women do have the ability and possibility to make the choices themselves. I explained already in connection with capability number two, that it seemed to me that they can choose, or have chosen, independently whether they want to have children or not.

I am under the same impression regarding marriage; the women can make the decision on their own. Seven out of ten of my interviewees are married. Out of the three who are not, two are so young that they most likely will get married later. When I asked from them, if they already know who they will marry and if they want to get married in the first place, both of them told me, that they do not know yet, but that if they will marry, they have the freedom to choose the husbands themselves. They both assured me that there is no caste system limiting their possibilities and that their parents would be fine with them marrying a Nepali, a Tibetan or a foreigner. The third one not married is the oldest of my participants, and she has never been married or felt like doing so. She told me that life has been hard without a husband, since she always had to get along on her own, but that she never met anyone she would like to marry and thus, she preferred to stay single. Out of the seven participants who are married, one had divorced and gotten married again. Her first husband was violent and abusive, so she chose to leave him. In the light of these findings, it does look like these Tibetan women have the ability to make choices regarding marriage without interference by anyone.

Finally there are the choices that have to do with sexual expression. This is something we did not really discuss in the interviews, but I assume it, also, is up to the individual. The Nepali society is quite strict with their rules or customs regarding expressions of love and intimacy; the custom is that these are private matters that ought to be kept in private too. The practice is the same with clothing – revealing outfits are not appreciated. Thus, the surrounding society might interfere by expressing their

indignation if an individual expresses their sexuality in a very flagrant manner. In my opinion this whole discussion about the freedom of choice regarding sexuality, relationships and reproduction is linked with gender equality. Usually if a community is gender equal, then these freedoms are guaranteed to everyone, regardless of their sex. As I have already mentioned before, gender equality among the Tibetans in exile is an interesting topic, and I will discuss in short here what my empirical data reveals about it. First of all, all my interviewees said that the Tibetan community is gender equal and that life is the same for men and for women. During the empirical work I was faced with frowns and confused looks every time I asked questions like “Do girls and boys have the same possibilities in life?”, “Can women apply for all the same jobs as men?” and “Who makes the decisions in your family?” Each interviewee, and also all the Tibetan men that I talked to, explained to me that it does not matter if you are a man or a woman; life is just as hard to both. That what matters is that you are Tibetan, which means that you are lacking some basic rights, and thus basic things like finding a job, feeding your family and paying your rent are very difficult. I was not directly told this, but the impression I got was that they see that their life is so hard that they do not have time for such silly things like gender discrimination.

The interviews and my own observations seem to support the statement about Tibetan culture being gender equal, at least when it comes to employment. In many families it is only the woman, the mother, who has a job and it is the father who stays at home and takes care of the children and the household work. In some cases the man of the family is working in a farm somewhere further away, leaving the mother to care for the children but also to make all the decisions regarding the home. When it comes to traditions and education, when asked, the Tibetans in exile say their community is gender equal, despite the fact that in reality it seems like old gender roles are still present. They say that of course girls and boys are allowed to do all the same things, but when I talk to young Tibetans, almost invariably it is the girls who would like to study to be nurses and the boys who want to become engineers. They say that of course women and men have the same possibilities and rights, but it is only the married women who have to wear an apron the show everyone they are married – from a man one cannot tell his marital status just by looking. They say that men and women share the household chores together, but every time I visit a house, it is the woman who prepares and serves the traditional butter tea. Therefore, it looks like the Tibetans in exile perceive their culture as more gender equal than it actually is in the end,

which in itself is very interesting.

10a. Ability to live one's own life in one's own surroundings and context

This last capability is like an addition to the ten others, and has to do with freedom of assembly, freedom from unwarranted search and seizure, and integrity of personal property. The majority of Tibetans in Nepal have none of these freedoms attributed to capability ten a. I have already discussed the lack of freedom of assembly in connection with capability number seven, and will not get back to that. Similarly, the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure is a very related topic – usually doing anything that can be interpreted as political, such as any kind of assembly of Tibetans, results in search and seizure by the Nepali authorities. How unwarranted those actions are is another question; in the eyes of the Chinese and the Nepali officials, the detentions are totally justified and legitimate, whereas in the opinion of human rights monitors, they are unwarranted and discriminatory. Integrity of personal property of Tibetans in Nepal is a paradoxical topic, since the Tibetans do not have property rights whatsoever. They are only allowed to own a motorbike. If a Tibetan, even one with a RC, wants to buy or rent any property, they have to do it with the help of a Nepali friend, under whose name the papers will be done. (See for example ICT 2012: 64)

Finally, regarding the main point of this last capability - “the ability to live one's own life in one's own surroundings and context” - in my view, it is self-evident that Tibetans in Nepal do not have this privilege. The whole reason for them being in Nepal is because they were forced to leave their own surroundings. I do not think it is possible for any refugee to have this capability. Before conducting the empirical work, I was wondering if also the Tibetans who are born in exile will have a sense of longing and willingness to go back to Tibet. In hindsight I am no longer wondering; ten out of ten interviewees mentioned free Tibet and the ability to return home, when I asked them about their dreams. Some have lost their hope and others still believe autonomous Tibet is possible one day, but nevertheless returning home is something all of them dream about. It makes the younger ones sad that they have never been able to see their home country. The older ones cherish their memories from childhood and youth, and worry about forgetting how it was back home. Even the ones born in exile feel like intruders, foreigners in another country. Many appreciate it that they can stay in Nepal, and yet long for their home country, as Sonam describes:

"If one day there was free Tibet, if we could see that happen to our country, I would go back straight away. When I came to Nepal, I didn't see any cows around and only a few people, and I couldn't speak any Nepali. Now I understand the language and I'm grateful we can stay here in Nepal, it's good here. Nepali people helped us in the beginning, they are very good people and they don't say bad things about us. But if we got free Tibet, life would be better there. We just want to go home." -Sonam

Summary

Before moving on to finding out what are the paths the women in my study have taken from vulnerabilities towards resilience, I will quickly summarize the analysis so far. In the table below I have collected each capability and the main reasons why some of the capabilities are not available to these Tibetan women. By looking at the right column of the table, it is easy to identify what are those vulnerabilities that deny these women from leading a good and satisfactory life. As a concluding comment, according to my empirical work and my understanding of the situation, Tibetan refugee women in Nepal have only five out of the ten capabilities Nussbaum has claimed to be necessary for leading a good life.

Capability	**Is it available?**	**Why not? What is missing?**
1	YES	
2	NO	Mobility both inside and outside Nepal; Lack of income threatens having adequate nutrition, shelter and health
3	YES	
4	NO	Freedom of expression; Access to education; Illiteracy
5	YES	
6	NO	Ability to seek employment; Participation in politics
7	NO	Freedom of assembly; Political speech
8	YES	
9	YES	
10	NOT FULLY	Interference with choices regarding speech and employment
10a	NO	Freedom of assembly; Freedom from unwarranted search and seizure; Property rights; Ability to live in one's own surroundings

5.2. From vulnerabilities towards resilience

This final part of the analysis will be completely data-driven, as the only theory I have guiding me is the notion of resilience. I noted before, that the way to recognize strategies of resilience is to see what kind of changes the vulnerable entities have made as a response to the perceived threats. This is what I intend to do in this second part of my analysis. Statelessness can be seen as the cause of all the vulnerabilities of Tibetan women in Nepal, rather than as a vulnerability of its own. To use a figure of speech from the tradition of natural disasters research, statelessness is like an earthquake – it is not a vulnerability in itself, but causes many of them. After an earthquake people may end up homeless and injured and lose their property, jobs or family members, making them very vulnerable to a variety of threats. Similarly statelessness restricts people's mobility, limits their rights and possibilities for employment and education, which then makes them very vulnerable.

Through Nussbaum's quality of life -framework and with the help of the table above, I have identified five main sources of vulnerabilities for the Tibetan women in Nepal: 1. Restricted mobility; 2. Lack of income, employment and property rights; 3. Prohibition to participate in politics and assemble; 4. Limited access to education; and 5. Banishment from Tibet. As noted before, an important aspect of vulnerability is its social construction. When I asked my interviewees to identify the biggest causes of stress or worry in their lives, the first one they mentioned was invariably money and the difficulty of finding a source of income. So the participants themselves perceive the lack of money as the biggest threat in their lives, whereas in the light of the ten capabilities -framework the absence of freedoms of expression, assembly and participation in politics emerge repeatedly as impediments for a good life. However, all five sources of vulnerability that I have identified through Nussbaum's theory, were mentioned by the majority of my interviewees as things that worry them or make them feel uncertain about the future. I will now analyse each of the five sources of vulnerability individually, and see what kind of, if any, reactions the women have made to those threats to understand their strategies of increasing resilience.

1. Restricted mobility

I already described some of the reactions of the Tibetan women to this vulnerability in connection with capability number two. One way to tolerate restricted mobility and to avoid encounters with the police,

is to not leave the refugee camp. Usually the Nepali law enforcement keeps outside the settlement boundaries, so unless it is a Tibetan holiday, the camp is a safe zone for Tibetans without IDs. This strategy of resilience – staying inside the camp like a prisoner in one's own home – reflects ultimate acceptance of and adaptation to the situation. Every time my interviewees talked about not leaving the camp so that the police will not bother them, they had a dispirited look and voice. As if they had grown tired of trying to resist and rather admitted their defeat by just staying in the camp. One of the younger participants told me that when the blockade and the fuel crisis were not yet ongoing, she would ride her scooter to the city and meet with her friends, and when the police stopped her, she managed to fool them that she is a Nepali. “It doesn't work every time, but usually,” she told me and winked.

The strategies mentioned above – staying at the camp and pretending to be Nepali – help Tibetans to cope with the mobility restrictions inside Nepal. When I tried to ask about the new development of not renewing the driver's licences for Tibetans any more, all of the interviewees said they do not know if it is true or not, and admitted that it would be a problem for them, especially regarding travelling to India. One participant was worried about a rumour she had heard, that the border officials might also stop accepting student cards as valid IDs for the children travelling from India to Nepal. If both of these scenarios would become true (not renewing the driver's licences and not accepting the student cards as IDs at the border), it would mean that her family, along with many others, would be separated, as her son is studying in a boarding school in India. “I would move my whole family to India right now, while we still can, if it wasn't for my mother,” she continued. Her mother is old and does not want to leave Nepal and move further away from Tibet. In any case, these considerations about moving to India can be seen as possible strategies to build resilience. Moving away is a common strategy to increase resilience – that is essentially what refugees are all about in the end.

For Tibetans without any legal documentation, moving to India is the only possible solution to get away from the discriminating Nepali authorities. For those Tibetans who manage to get an Indian or a Nepali nationality, the possibilities are a lot wider. Many young Tibetans dream about making their way to the western world (Europe, Canada, the United States), finding a good job and being able to send money back home to support their family. This dream is also what keeps many of the parents working hard and doing everything they can to be able to pay the boarding school fees for their children. The

hope of getting their child an Indian nationality keeps the parents going and gives them strength. Sending children to study in India is definitely the parents' strategy to increase resilience; it gives their daily struggle a purpose and to them hope that their children will have more opportunities and a better life. I think also just the dream about moving away, and especially the dream about one's children moving, which is actually a realistic option, is something that gives the Tibetan women strength to carry on. As Tsering explains:

> *"My aim is to give good education for my children, and I just wish my children could get papers. Then they could do so many things and they could do things for Tibet. I want to send also my son to study in India* [like her daughter is already], *and I hope that if I pay some money, they can get papers there. Then their future will be not so bright, but maybe ok, they will have a chance to find work. There is nothing for them in Nepal without papers, so I want them to go to India. Life is very hard here* [in Nepal], *it is difficult to make enough money. That is why so many Tibetans have went to Canada, to the States. They can get the refugee status and then it's easier. Everyone wishes they could go, everyone wants to leave, because there the children can get good education and a better life. Also there we would get the human rights, the same rights as the local people. I would leave right away if we got passports."* -Tsering

So, getting a nationality is the only way to break the restrictions on international mobility. As harsh as it may sound, another technique to get the children a passport, is making the children with a passport-holding man in the first place. If a Tibetan woman has children with a Nepali man, the children can get a Nepali nationality, with the permission of the man. Although Tibetan women perceive their society as gender equal and although they say that they have love marriages and that they get to choose their husbands themselves, some of the women told me that they had been pressured to find a Nepali man. Dolma, who ended up marrying a Tibetan and having stateless children, said that her father had told her to think very hard about who to marry. He had not objected to her falling in love with a Tibetan man, but had just told her to weigh the options very carefully, meaning the options of being able to give her children passports and that of marrying the man she loves. She made her choice and her father never talked about the topic again. "I think my father just felt so bad that he could not give me a passport and a better life, so that's why he wanted me to do it for my children," Dolma pondered. Tibetan women can even be judged by fellow Tibetans for not using this kind of a chance to give their children a

nationality, like Karma told me:

> *“Some people, they say to me: why didn't you stay with the Nepali man, if you stayed married with him then all your sons could have passports. But husbands are not all the same, not all men are the same. He beat me and he drank too much raksi* [local liquor]. *He was no good for me, so I got a divorce. It's better. Now my husband is very good, but people tell me it's my own fault the younger sons are without a nationality.”* -Karma

To conclude, the strategies that I was able to identify these Tibetan women have in coping with the restrictions on their mobility, have to do with accepting the situation and adapting to it or with trusting in a better future and working towards that. By accepting the situation - the fact that the police will harass them and ask for IDs and bribes - and conforming to it - staying at the camp or having a strategy of faking to be Nepali ready and prepared - the Tibetan women have changed their behaviour in order to continue to exist with minimum amount of harm. By focusing all their energy on working towards a better future for their children, the Tibetan women have reduced their own vulnerability to the threat of not being able to move from place to place. If they can get their children out of Nepal, the children will most likely help them from abroad by sending money back home. Knowing that their children will not necessarily be in the same situation and under the same threats, increases the resilience of these women to endure being stuck in Nepal and in the refugee camp.

2. Lack of income, employment and property rights

This is the Tibetan women's biggest vulnerability according to themselves. If they had more money, they would have more possibilities to change the things in their lives that they are not satisfied with. To get more money, they would need a job and to get a job, an ID is required. To be able to set up a business of their own, they would need a trustworthy Nepali friend, who would buy or rent the business establishment in their name, since Tibetans have no property rights and they have to pay double taxes if the businesses are under their own names. Tibetans in Nepal do not have many options for creating income, and since the collapse of the carpet industry, the majority have become unemployed or self-employed in petty business. The threats of not having enough money to pay for children's or one's own education and to have food on the table are present every day, and cause stress and sleepless nights for

these women.

The main strategy I found the Tibetan women have in increasing resilience regarding this vulnerability is quite the same as the strategy mentioned above: they have hope in the future and in their children. When we talked about the uncertainty of the future, the participants who have children invariably mentioned their hopes about their children getting a good job some day and being able to support their parents when they are old. The young ones, who do not have children of their own, were dreaming about being able to move to India, to study and work there and to help their parents some day. The older ones, whose children have children of their own already, were living in the old people's home in the camp and said that they do not have to worry about money any more. This 'retirement home' is mostly financed by the Tibetan government-in-exile and the nearby monastery. The older participants (three out of ten) claimed being done with worrying about employment and income. All of them still made some handicrafts and tried to sell them to visitors, and some would give blessings to visitors and get a bit of money as a return gift for that. However, their living expenses are now paid by the community, and thus, they spend the little money they make on eating in the local Tibetan restaurant once in a while. Despite being done with their own financial problems, all three of them anyway brought up the difficulty of Tibetans finding employment, and said that it worries them for the sake of their children and the future of Tibetans in general.

It seemed to me that all of the interviewees had given up hope of the employment situation getting better in Nepal. They all did have hope in a better future, but this included themselves or their children making their way out of Nepal to better job opportunities. As this is not very likely to happen for many of them, the Tibetan women have had to create other coping mechanisms too. For example, the ones self-employed in selling jewellery and handicrafts to tourists, have adapted to the constant threat of police intervention. They are always keeping an eye out for the police when selling and they have memorized those friendly Nepali business owners who let them hide inside their establishments when there is a danger of getting caught by the police. Furthermore, some have created an alert system with other Tibetans selling in the same area; they have each others' phone numbers and they call one another if they spot the police patrolling for Tibetans. This way the others will have time to pack up their products in their backpacks before the police even sees them. These clever techniques increase their

resilience to police interventions, and actually the threat of getting caught by the police while selling is perceived to be quite low. I believe this is due to the high reaction capacity of these women – they have trust in their strategy how to avoid getting caught.

Another strategy to decrease financial problems is seeking income from other sources than work. When I asked if there is some kind of outside assistance available, everyone said no, besides the old women who rely on the support of the government-in-exile and the monastery to keep financing the old people's home in the camp. Also one mother had heard that it is possible to apply for support from the government-in-exile to pay for children's education, but she had not applied yet. Two of the participants had received some support from foreign friends they had gotten to know when selling souvenirs. These random donations are not sustainable sources of income, and, as one interviewee noted: “There are other ways too.” She was referring to illegal business. None of my participants admitted taking part in any illegal activities themselves, but most of them had heard of Tibetans engaging in the drug market, and one said that her husband used to sell hashish. The marijuana plant grows wild in Nepal, so getting one's hands on it is not difficult. The business gets risky when the plant is processed into hashish and sold for money. The women participating in my study did not really want to comment on this topic, but the ones who did, shrugged their shoulders and said something like “everyone has to do what they have to do to survive” and “it is one of the few ways of making money available for us Tibetans.” Thus, the way I see it, selling hashish and other illegal activities are not appreciated among the Tibetan women, but the option of doing something like that, if there are no other means to survive, is kept open.

As my remarks above indicate, the Tibetan women are very vulnerable regarding financial threats. They have not managed to grow much resilience to this vulnerability. The strategies I found them having are trusting in a better future, utilizing the help of each other in avoiding getting caught by the police and taking comfort in the knowledge that there is always illegal business to do, if nothing else works out. I believe that holding on to the idea that their children will be able to get out of Nepal and employ themselves in another country one day, is something these women must do to keep going from day to day. Without this glimpse of hope their future would simply look too uncertain and scary.

3. Prohibition to participate in politics and assemble

This is the source of vulnerability that came up most often in Nussbaum's list of ten capabilities. Here I have bundled up the lack of abilities to take part in politics, to express opinions, to be free from unwarranted search and seizure, to assemble and to speak in public – basically all those things that the Nepali law enforcement can count as anti-China activities. Besides forbidding Tibetans from taking part in anything political, this broad interpretation of the one-China policy is prohibiting them from gathering together for any given reason and from having totally apolitical celebrations together. These prohibitions to participate in politics, to talk about politics and to assemble are depriving Tibetans of their self-governance and of their possibilities to plan and make decisions together.

The most common reaction I was able to detect the Tibetan women having to these prohibitions is, again, accepting the situation and adapting to it - obeying the rules. Similarly as in connection with the restrictions on mobility, when talking about these prohibitions, the majority of my interviewees looked dispirited. They told me that they just do not go to demonstrations or protests any more, they simply do not wear 'Free Tibet' slogans and they basically do not do anything in big groups. Instead, they stay at the refugee camp as much as possible, talk about politics only inside their houses with low voices and closed windows, hang 'Free Tibet' posters only inside the houses and keep their celebrations at home. Some of my interviewees mentioned the big protests of 2008, and said that after those demonstrations were put down so forcefully and since the treatment of Tibetans has only gotten worse ever since those events, they do not want to try any more. “What can we do” and “There's nothing we can do” were common concluding comments on this topic. There was a general atmosphere of giving up. When I was walking around the camp and chatting with some Tibetan men, all of them agreed that there is no longer point in resisting these regulations. “They will always shut down the protests” and “We are only harming ourselves if we try to do something” were their shared opinions. These comments marked in the citations are not direct quotes from any of my interviewees, but are based on my field work notes and the general picture I got on the topic. I had written down these comments on my diary, but cannot provide a name who exactly said it – this was the common opinion of both men and women that I talked with off the record. Thus, it looks like the main reaction of my participants and of the Tibetan community in general to the prohibitions of political activities is simply accepting the regulations and following them.

Photo 7: A sticker on a fridge in one of the women's home

Another reaction to these prohibitions I was able to identify among the Tibetan women, was to see the good in their situation by comparing it to that of Tibet. When the topic of politics and the prohibition of Tibetans taking part in anything even vaguely political came up in the interviews, six out of ten participants brought up the fact that they can have the picture of the Dalai Lama on their wall. Many started smiling right away and wanted to show me the posters they have on their wall. “At least we can have this, and we can pray and gather in the monastery free,” explained Tashi, after stating that the situation is still a lot better than in Tibet. Religious freedoms of the Tibetans are something that, indeed, have not been violated by the Nepali authorities so far. One cannot say the same about Tibet, especially not after the self-immolations and the reactions of the Chinese authorities (see for example TWA 2013: 10 or CESCR Report 2013: 31-34). Focusing on the positive and on those rights that they still have, instead of wallowing in the loss of other freedoms, is a strategy to increase resilience. By doing this the women sort of downplay the importance of taking part in politics and it helps them to accept and live with the prohibition.

Finally, two of the participants mentioned the internet and the anonymity that is available there as a

means to go around the prohibitions to participate in politics and to assemble. Unsurprisingly, both of these interviewees are of the younger segment of my group of participants; both of them are under 40 years old. Access to computers and internet is not on the same level in Nepal as it is in the western world, but it is not that uncommon either to have a smart phone or a laptop, or access to one. These two participants had learned how to use online forums to learn and talk about the politics of Tibet, China and Nepal. As one of them said:

> *"They can't know who is writing online. In China they police the internet and block some pages, but not in Nepal. Not yet, at least. On the internet I can read about the situation in Tibet and I can talk with other Tibetan exiles. I can also see what the government-in-exile is doing. My parents can't read, but I can tell them what I learn online. This is a big advantage."* -Maya

The strategies to increase resilience in respect of the vulnerabilities caused by the prohibitions of political participation and assembly that the Tibetan women have developed are mostly connected with acceptance and obedience, except for the creative solution of using the internet for political activities. By accepting the given rules, conforming to them and trying to see the good in what is left, the Tibetan women are trying to withstand the situation and reduce their vulnerability within the narrow field of possibilities they have.

4. Limited access to education

With this vulnerability I mean both the illiteracy resulting from not having had the opportunity to go to school and the lack of access to higher education that Tibetans in Nepal are facing. Vulnerabilities are always socially constructed, and this one was perceived as a serious threat to future possibilities by the majority of my interviewees. The ones who had never been to school experienced their illiteracy as a major constraint, and the young ones who had finished their basic education but would have wanted to pursue higher education, were worried about not being able to do that since it requires moving to India or being very wealthy.

Considering moving to India to study can actually be interpreted as a strategy to build resilience. Since higher education is denied from young Tibetans in Nepal unless they can afford to pay for private schools, studying in India is a way of going around this vulnerability. Here of course the vulnerability

of not having much money comes to play a threat to the strategy. Moving to another country, away from one's family and home requires sufficient resources. However, even if the plan to move never realizes, simply having a plan and working towards it can build resilience. Instead of moping about being deprived of the possibility to study further, these Tibetan women are working and trying to save money to be able to fulfil their dreams.

As the young Tibetan women are working hard to provide for their higher education, likewise the older women are working hard to provide for the education of their children. The disadvantage of being illiterate has made them appreciate education so much, that they want to do everything they can to spare their children from the drawbacks of being uneducated. As noted in the theories chapter, the same entity can be both a source of vulnerability and a path to resilience. I believe this is the case here, where the illiterate mothers draw strength and tolerance to their own lack of education from being able to offer at least the basic education to their children. Also knowing that the children will learn about Tibetan culture and tradition and learn to read and write Tibetan language in the school, is something that increases the importance of education in the eyes of the illiterate Tibetan mothers. If I could only describe in words the pride in the expression and the voice of Karma, when she was telling me how her 12-year-old son had performed traditional Tibetan dances in a school celebration, it would be clear to the reader how highly appreciated Tibetan education is among the Tibetan women. They increase resilience to their own lack of education by ensuring that their offspring will be educated.

Finally, the illiterate women have naturally had to develop coping mechanisms to get by in their every day life without reading and writing. Here they rely on their social capital. All of the illiterate participants said that they frequently ask their children or friends to read and write things for them. As Karma told me, laughing: “I can speak three languages, so there is always someone I can ask to help me with reading!” There are other techniques too, like memorizing the order in which contacts are saved on the mobile phone, so it is possible to call the right person without reading the name. Learning to survive without the skills to read or write is something these women just had to do, and they do not perceive the vulnerability of illiteracy as being very high – perhaps because they are so used to living with it. However, sometimes not knowing how to read can be embarrassing and cause feelings of shame, like Dolma describes:

"Usually I ask my children to read things for me. If they are in school, I have friends I can ask. But sometimes there is no-one I know, and then I have to ask help from a stranger. This is embarrassing for me. People don't understand first, they ask 'why don't you read it yourself' and then I have to explain and I feel ashamed. It makes me feel stupid. This is why I don't like to leave the camp. Here I always have someone who I can ask and who don't laugh at me."
-Dolma

The strategies for increasing resilience to the vulnerabilities deriving from the lack of education or the restricted access to it that the Tibetan women have developed, are linked with hope in a better future or relying on social capital. Young women dream about studying in India in the future, which gives them strength to stand the present situation of not being able to study at the moment in Nepal. Older women focus their energy on ensuring that their own children will be educated. Knowing that in the future their children will know how to read and write helps the women accept and get along with their own illiteracy. Finally, the illiterate women have learned to rely on their social capital in getting by in the daily life without having to feel embarrassed.

5. Banishment from Tibet

When listing 'banishment from Tibet' as one of the five main sources of vulnerability for the Tibetan women in my study, I mean all those feelings of longing, sadness, loss, displacement and being an outsider, that can hinder these women living a full and good life. Being born in a country that your parents and the surrounding society tell you is not your own, and being stuck there according to the law, will surely have an effect on your personal development. Even more so for the women who were born in Tibet and still remember how it was to live there, how it was to make the dangerous crossing of the Himalayas, how it was to arrive in Nepal as a refugee and how the conditions for Tibetans in Nepal have slowly deteriorated. Having the sense of not belonging anywhere and being an outsider in someone else's territory for one's whole life, is clearly a threat to leading a satisfactory life.

The main path to resilience from the vulnerability of being banished from their own surroundings I was able to find these Tibetan women taking, has to do with emphasizing being Tibetan. What I am talking about here is a way of finding resilience from nationalism. As it has been demonstrated many times

already, expressions of Tibetan nationalism have to be kept hidden, because otherwise the Nepali police will interfere. This does not mean, however, that nationalism would not be there. Similar to the pride these women take from having the picture of the Dalai Lama on their wall, also having the flag of Tibet displayed somewhere in the house is a source of delight for them. It is especially appreciated since, again just like with the photos of the leader-in-exile, in the TAR displaying the flag of Tibet is an illegal act. Moreover, keeping the cultural traditions, such as songs, dances, suits and handicrafts, alive is perceived to be very important. The Tibetan schools play a significant role in this, as they teach those traditions to the children. Furthermore, cooking traditional Tibetan dishes and making the butter tea are ways of differentiating themselves from the surrounding Nepali culture and of keeping up the sense of being Tibetan. For example when I was having lunch at Karma's house, she especially pointed out for me with a proud voice, what is different in the Tibetan dal bhat (lentil and rice dish) compared to the Nepali one.

Besides these visible expressions of nationalism, the uniting Tibetan spirit is sustained through discourse. By this I mean the way these Tibetan women talk about “us Tibetans” and “the others”, meaning the neighbouring Chinese, Nepali and Indians. Although Nepali and Indian people are considered to treat Tibetans well, a difference is always made between the nationalities. When talking about the Chinese, resentment can be heard in the voices. One interesting observation I made was that regarding Nepali and Indian people, the women always made a clear difference between government officials and ordinary citizens – all the anger and grudge was held towards the authorities only. But when talking about Chinese people, no such difference was made - the women would simply refer to “the Chinese”. Perhaps this is one kind of a coping mechanism too. These women know that they will most likely never enter the territory of China, so maybe it is easy for them to hold resentment towards everything and everyone Chinese. Having someone to blame for the hardships in one's life can make it easier to learn to live with them. Also the perceived gender equality of Tibetan culture, which I discussed in connection with capability number ten, can be one way of differentiating themselves from the neighbouring cultures. Seeing the Tibetan culture as more gender equal than it actually is could be some form of unification, a means to portray all Tibetans, irrespective of their genders, as an unanimous front. Or possibly it is just another way of dis-identifying from the Indians and the Chinese, who are not known for gender equal societies; in the global gender gap index 2015 China ranks on

position 91 and India on 108 out of 145 countries (World Economic Forum 2015: 9).

The nationalist spirit is also supported by living surrounded by other Tibetans. The refugee camp is meant for Tibetan refugees only, and many of them seem to appreciate this. Several of my interviewees mentioned living with other Tibetans as one of the things that brings joy to their lives. This has to do with the fact that in the camp, the women get to speak Tibetan and maintain their language skills. Speaking Tibetan in the house is another source of pride for them. Also talking about Tibet is one of the only ways these women can hold on to the images they have about their home country. Having respect for living surrounded by other Tibetans originates also from a feeling of togetherness. As Sonam put it: "At least we are in this together." Living in the camp, the women know that they are never alone with their problems - they can be sure that the family in the neighbouring house is tackling similar hardships. This sense of shared misery can help them to accept the situation and to not give up. Regarding giving up, I could detect an interesting division in opinions about the future of Tibet; older participants had lost their hopes about ever returning to Tibet, while the younger ones still had their dreams. The following three quotes elaborate the points I made about keeping the memories from Tibet alive and about the differing views on the future of Tibet:

> *"I try to remember Tibet every day, but I am forgetting. It scares me. I talk about Tibet with others in the camp so we would not forget and so the young could hear about their home. But what can we do? There's nothing, there's nothing we can do. I miss Tibet so much."* -Mutup

> *"Autonomous Tibet would make me happy. Free Tibet, then I would be happy. Well, free Tibet is very difficult to get, but the autonomy, the Dalai Lama's way, that is what we want. We dream about going back home, about not having to stay in other people's country. That is my wish, my dream. It keeps me going when I think that one day we will go back with my whole family."* -Tsering

> *"I remember something from Tibet every day, but this is my home now. There's nothing we can do, we can never go back. I was very young when I was in Tibet, back then I thought I can do anything. Now I'm here and old and there is nothing I can do."* -Pempa

Photo 8: Pempa in front of her house in the refugee camp

Finally, engaging in religious activities is a way of dealing with the banishment from Tibet. Even the name of the religion, Tibetan-Buddhism, indicates that it is part of the Tibetan culture. Praying, going to the monastery and chanting mantras increases the resilience of these women in two ways; it supports the sense of nationalism and togetherness as an important part of Tibetan culture, and the religion itself gives them strength and courage. Especially the older participants brought up religion as a thing that

makes them happy. Some of the younger interviewees said that religion is not such a big part of their life, but they too pray almost every day. There is a multitude of social sciences research on the power of religion and the ways faith can help survive difficult times in life (see for example Ano & Vasconcelles 2005, Park 2005 or O'Donnell 2013), so I will not further discuss it here. Having the possibility to practice religion in the camp is undeniably an important source of resilience, as Sonam explains:

> *"It makes me really happy to stay near the monastery. I'm old and I can still walk to the monastery. When I die, the people from the monastery can come to my home and the lama can do the puja* [blessing] *and all that. Knowing this gives me hope."* -Sonam

Photo 9: The monastery at Tashi Palkhel refugee camp

The strategies that the women have developed for increasing resilience to the vulnerability caused by the banishment from Tibet are connected with social capital and religion. The ways in which these women, together with other Tibetan exiles, create a sense of togetherness and nationalism, can be seen

as a strategy to endure the reality of not being able to return to their home country. Having the possibility to practice Buddhism freely further supports the sensation of being Tibetan, despite being driven away from Tibet. Praying in itself gives the women hope for a better future and helps them to keep going in times when the future looks gloomy.

Photo 10: Mani doh – A Tibetan-Buddhist prayer stone in the camp

Summary

As noted in the beginning of this sub-chapter, all of the identified vulnerabilities of these Tibetan refugee women derive from statelessness in one way or another. This results in the women not having many means of getting rid of those vulnerabilities, since there is really not much they can do about their statelessness. Moving away to another country that would recognize their rights looks like the only way they could eliminate the vulnerabilities, but, as discussed above, this is not an option for them as long as they do not have passports. Thus, their strategies to increase resilience to these vulnerabilities have to do with finding ways of living as good a life as possible *with* the vulnerabilities. These strategies descend mainly from acceptance and adaptation, social capital, hope in a better future and religion.

6. CONCLUSION

To sum up my findings, the main impediment to leading a good and prosperous life for Tibetan refugee women in Nepal is their statelessness. This condition hinders various aspects of their lives and is exacerbated by the submission of Nepali authorities to the one-China policy. The main vulnerabilities of these women, that I was able to identify through Nussbaum's capabilities approach, are: Restricted mobility; Lack of income, employment and property rights; Prohibition to participate in politics and assemble; Limited access to education; and Banishment from Tibet. The paths these women have taken from their vulnerabilities towards resilience relate essentially to withstanding and putting up with the vulnerabilities, rather than getting rid of them. Their strategies to increase resilience are mostly rooted in acceptance and adaptation, social capital, hope in a better future and religion. In addition to these widely shared strategies, the women also have some creative individual solutions to reduce vulnerability.

My findings are based on the empirical data that I gathered, principally on the ten interviews. Therefore I cannot generalize the results and make claims about all Tibetan refugee women in Nepal. I do, however, believe that if this research were to be repeated on a larger sample of interviewees from different parts of Nepal, the findings would be in line with those of mine. I base this assumption on the fast data saturation reached in my empirical work and on the visit I made to a Tibetan refugee camp in Kathmandu. This would actually be an interesting topic to research; whether or not my assumption is right, and the vulnerabilities and strategies to increase resilience of Tibetan women are, indeed, similar in different parts of Nepal. Furthermore, it would be fascinating to see what the results of a similar study conducted in India would be.

The results of this study serve three important purposes. First, understanding better the living conditions and the strategies to increase resilience these Tibetan women have, makes improving their situation easier. Even though I do not have a specific agent interested in establishing a development project to help Tibetan women in Nepal for whom I would have conducted the study, it does not make gathering the information any less significant. Perhaps someone with the power and the resources to seek change will read this thesis and get inspired to take action. This paper can also be used to convince

policy-makers, the international community or possible financiers to lend a hand. Second, giving these Tibetan women a voice and expressing interest in their lives is of intrinsic value. Simply conducting the research may have empowered them and given them hope for a better future.

Third, my combination of the capabilities approach together with the theory of vulnerability and resilience contributes to further research and opens up new theoretical possibilities for social sciences and development studies. As mentioned in chapter four, the conceptual pair of vulnerability and resilience comes from the research of natural disasters, and has only recently been adopted to social sciences. The theory in itself is descriptive and does not provide the researcher with tools or techniques on how exactly to identify vulnerabilities and strategies of increasing resilience. Thus, I had to create my own way to their identification. I did not consider merely asking the interviewees “what do you perceive as your vulnerabilities?” as a viable option for two reasons. First, the language barrier may have emerged and caused difficulties in understanding the concept of vulnerability. Even if I would have been able to conduct the interviews in the native language of the participants, the way each individual understands the concept of vulnerability could have, and most likely would have, differed. Second, I believe that the analysis of empirical data ought to always be guided by some kind of theoretical framework. Hence, I decided to try a completely new approach, or at least I have not been able to find previous research using the capabilities approach in combination with the vulnerability and resilience -theory. I believe the analysis above proves that this is a feasible solution to the research of vulnerability and resilience; Nussbaum's capabilities approach serves well the purpose of identifying vulnerabilities. Thus, this study goes beyond the problem formulation by providing a new theoretical tool to the research of vulnerability and resilience.

APPENDIX

The frame for the interviews

Basic info

- Name, age, education, family (who you live with)
- How did you end up in this camp?
- What is your religion? Do you practice it actively? What does it mean for you, is it important / a big part of your life?
- What languages do you speak?
- Do you have a passport or a refugee card? How about your family members?
- Do you have family in other refugee camps (in Nepal, India or Bhutan)?
- Do you have family still in Tibet? Any contact with them?

Economic situation

- What do you and your family do for a living?
- Do you earn enough to get by?
- If you don't have a job, what are the possibilities / challenges of getting one?
- Where does most of the money go (e.g. children's education, rent, food)?
- Do you receive any external economic assistance? (e.g. family members abroad, aid from NGOs)

Sources of stress and worry

- What worries you in life? “The daily sources of stress” (e.g. money, family back in Tibet, health, police harassment)
- What kind of encounters with the police have you or your family had? Has the situation changed in recent years?
- What restrictions / challenges do you face in every day life as a Tibetan (compared to Nepalis)? How does statelessness limit your possibilities?

- What makes you sad?
- What makes you miss Tibet? Have you ever been there?

Social status

- Do you see yourself as a refugee? A Tibetan? A Nepali?
- How do Nepalis treat Tibetans? Do you feel accepted, discriminated, supported...?
- Do you feel at home here?
- What kind of assistance is there available? Any help from the Nepali government, the government-in-exile, NGOs, the camp community?
- How is the role of women in the Tibetan community? Do you feel equal with men? Can men and women do the same things, do they have similar opportunities? Can women apply for all the same jobs as men?
- How and by whom are decisions made in your family?

Sources of joy and comfort

- What gives you hope and joy in life? What makes you happy? (e.g. family, social ties, community, religion)
- How do you see your future?
- What do you dream about?
- What do you do in your free time? Do you take part in any community activities? Any hobbies? Women's groups?
- Do you feel like you have a say in the direction of your life? Do you feel like you have freedom of choice?

Recent developments

- How did the earthquake and the fuel crisis affect your life?
- Have the Nepali government's strengthened ties with China (“back off India”) affected your life somehow?
- Anything new for refugees in the new constitution of Nepal?

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Photos

All the photos were taken by myself and are attached in the paper with the permission of the interviewees. The younger participants did not want their photos to be published, and that is why there are photos of only the older interviewees.