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RICH AND UNIQUE

Bhutanese Nationalism and Ethnic Exclusion in the Kingdom of Happiness

Malin Corlin
Master's Thesis
Roskilde University
International Development Studies
Academic advisor: Ole Bruun
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the Royal Government of Buthan controls the framing of the national identity through newspaper media in order to exclude certain ethnic groups of the nation. Being a nation of many ethnic groups, the country outwardly praises diversity, but internally, a power struggle of ethnic hegemony leads to marginalization of citizens not fitting into the desired national identity. The analysis of this, is conducted on a empirical basis of 454 newspaper articles retrieved from three online Bhutanese newspapers and analyzed with the theoretical concepts of nationalism, more specifically with the theories of Benedict Anderson, Michael Billig, and Anthony D. Smith. This analytical framework provides the means to look for invented permanencies, symbols, cultural artefacts, and special words and phrasings that all support a desired national identity constructed by the government. The findings show that the Royal Government of Bhutan is actively molding media discourses to fit the ethnic identity of the ruling elite and presents it as the national identity. This they do by a persistent use of small, insignificant words to establish a sense of solidarity amongst the citizens, combined with an imminent use of grand words to describe the nation's love of her Kings and the citizens' love of the homeland. Through specific representations of cultural heritage, the royal monarchy, and Gross National Happiness, the ethnic Drukpa elite is framing Drukpa culture as national culture; which is ultimately described as 'rich' and 'unique'. Strengthening the one narrative of Bhutanese national identity, the government effectively excludes other ethnic groups of Bhutan, who in turn are underrepresented, marginalized, and kept from political participation. This persistent deprivation of democratic rights is threathening a democracy still in its infancy.

Political map of Bhutan

(Source: www.maps-of-the-world.net)

Content

1 Introduction

Our culture and tradition provide us with a unique identity to help us to protect our sovereignty. That is why we give so much attention to them. We must feel Bhutanese. Otherwise we will not be able to survive
(Fourth King of Bhutan in a public address in 1989 in Pattanaik 1998)

On the website of the Tourism Council of Bhutan, anyone interested can read about the *Zorig Chusum,* the thirteen traditional arts and crafts that have been practiced in Bhutan "from time immemorial" (Tourism Council of Bhutan 2017). Bhutanese culture is built on time-old traditions and customs passed on through centuries. Although the modern nation state Bhutan was established in 1907, old myths of origin still flourish and sustain the idea of a certain national identity of the small, Himalayan Kingdom. Having undergone immense social change during the last four decades, Bhutan has amazed the world with her rapid socio-economic development (EIU 2017; RGoB 2013). However, although democracy was introduced in 2008, the small Himalayan kingdom still faces problems on issues such as ethnic discrimination and exclusion; which has severe consequences for the democratization process of the country (Freedom House 2016). Therefore, this thesis evolves around the power relation between media and the state of Bhutan in the promoting of a certain national identity to exclude ethnic minorities; how the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) communicate the values that constitute the Drukpa national identity through public media; identifying in what ways that national identity is ethnically exclusive of minorities and creating Drukpa hegemony; and finally, what consequences this ethnically exclusive narrative can have for the ethnic minorities in terms of lack of political participation and freedom of expression. Hence, the main argument of this thesis is that in its straining to keep control over the media to facilitate the constant pertaining of a certain national identity, the RGoB exercises ethnic exclusion, which poses severe threats to the democratic process of the country.

With the 'one nation, one people' development plan of the late 1980s, all citizens were obliged to observe traditional etiquette and wear the traditional Drukpa dress, regardless of their otherwise cultural customs, as well as enforcing strict policies of compulsory language classes to streamline all communication to the use of one official, national language (Hutt 1996). In this thesis, I argue that the effects of the *'Bhutanization'* of the 1980s and 1990s are still very

much present in society and in public media. With the help of Benedict Anderson (2016 [1983]), I decipher the factors that the RGoB use to create the fabric of a desired Bhutanese national identity in order for the 'true' citizens to feel part of a community, to feel a sense of belonging. With the framework of Michael Billig (1995), I identify the small, every day, less visible forms of nationalism that are unconsciously but nevertheless deeply imbedded in Bhutanese media, and routinely reminding the Bhutanese of their supposed national identity (Anderson 2016 [1983]; Billig 1995). The 'banal' nationalism is strong in Bhutan, and Drukpa history and culture is used to exclude ethnic groups from feeling included in a desired national identity. Through the ethnosymbolism of Anthony D. Smith (1998, 2001), I focus on the myriads of shared memories, ancestral myths, cultures, and symbols manifested in local festivals, folksongs, arts and crafts, legends, dances and much more – all used by the RGoB to promote a certain *ethnie* and legitimize the domination by said ethnie.

My own interest in Bhutan stems from a five months Youth Leader exchange done in 2014, in which I lived and worked in the capital of Thimphu. Working closely with the Bhutanese youths of Bhutan Scouts Association and Community Based Scouts, traveling across the country, as well as carrying on my daily life and routines have opened my mind to the effects of the ubiquitous manifestations of national identity imposed by authorities; from language, etiquette and dress; over folktales, songs and dances; to dragons, tigers, and Buddhist monks. I have experienced a people, who blindly and unknowingly assist in reproducing the same nationalism as provided by the ruling elite for centuries. The stay has provided me with an overall feeling of both the frustrations amongst marginalized citizens, but also the ignorance amongst those belonging to the dominating ethnie. In this thesis, I draw on conversations with Bhutanese acquaintances and their thoughts on national identity; as well as experiences with the Bhutanese authorities and bureaucracy. Interacting with the Bhutanese has been educating, enlightening, challenging, and at times, frustrating. Reading up on newspaper coverage from this period, I recognize many a scene from my work with the scouts, my walks around town or my visits to local, rural homesteads as well as many a tale told by my Bhutanese friends and colleagues.

1.1 Research statement

In the thesis, I identify three important aspects of the desired national identity in Bhutan imposed by the dominating ethnie on all other ethnies of the nation:

1) The *cultural heritage*, which is persistently presented as 'rich' and 'unique', and as the constituent of Bhutanese happiness, peace, and prosperity. The media frames the cultural legacy of the Drukpas as national history and valuable to the Bhutan of today.

2) The *Drukpa monarchy*, which is framed as a vital part of the desired national identity and a driving force in the preservation and promotion of Bhutanese culture. The Kings of Bhutan are featured as the true rulers of Bhutanese people, and by this imposing Drukpa culture on all ethnies of the nation.

3) A focus on *happiness*, which is omnipresent in Bhutan. In the media, happiness is narrated as the end goal of preservation and cultivation of traditional culture. Happiness is linked to cultural norms and traditions, cementing the values of the ruling ethnie as 'true' Bhutanese values.

This story of cultural heritage and love for a cherished King as instrumental in achieving happiness, portrays Bhutan in a certain way whether the receiver of the message is an international high level actor or a local subsistence farmer. The desired national identity is articulated through the media in a specific narrative that includes some ethnies and leave out others. Therefore, through the theories of Michael Billig, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony D. Smith, this thesis looks at the framing of certain ethnic values as Bhutanese values in a nation-building process; at the cultural heritage, happiness, and monarchy as constituents of Bhutanese nationalism; at how this come in the form of a specific narrative communicated through online newspaper media; and how this poses a threat to the democratic participation of the ethnic minorities. This will be structuring the thesis to subsequently answer the overall research question:

How is the government of Bhutan actively using newspaper media as way of nation-building and reinforcement of a certain national identity; and what are the democratic challenges of such state ruled nationalism?

1.2 Methodology

Studying how the RGoB exercises state ruled nationalism, I turn to newspapers published in Bhutan as they are directly and indirectly subjected to state control (Freedom House 2016). As the initial intent was to only study the framing of happiness as ethnically excluding, the collected data consists of texts containing the word 'happiness' as entered in the search field on their respective websites. However, as it quickly turned out, the framing of the cultural heritage and the royal monarchy is just as important in the framing of the desired national identity. Therefore, I added the concepts to the analysis. Based on a chosen sample of 454 Bhutanese newspaper articles chosen from the larger body of empirical data collected online, I perform my analysis.

Whilst it would be ideal to analyze the media's framing of the three themes spanning the last four decades of social change in Bhutan, this has not been possible. Firstly, due to the fact that public media (and private for that matter) did not exist in Bhutan until the launching of the public newspaper Kuensel in the 1980s (Rinchen 2007), and secondly, because it has been impossible to gain online access to newspaper archives going back more than two years for *Kuensel*, five years for *The Bhutanese* and ten years for *The Bhutan Observer* respectively. Subsequently, I will analyze the general use of the three concepts as it looks today. Media is highly regulated by the RGoB and so, ultimately, the framing of the concepts must be said to be controlled by the RGoB. It is, however, not possible for me to conclude to what degree the RGoB directly influences media discourse and the daily work of journalists; and to what degree the influence is indirect through threats of reprisals, which it has been known to make use of (Freedom House 2016; Reporters Without Borders 2016). This is partly due to the fact that it is not easy to document what "lower-level officials actually do in the name of the state" (Gupta 1995: 376). I will elaborate more on my text analysis, media in Bhutan, and on the empirical data collection in the coming sections.

1.3 Text analysis

In this thesis, I focus on text analysis of a sample of articles from Bhutanese newspapers. Chapter 4 contains *Part 1* of the analysis, which centers around three discursive themes and the way they linguistically support the desired national identity of Bhutan. Chapter 5 consists

of *Part 2,* in which I explore the imagined community of Bhutan, the visions and values of Bhutanese media, the RGoB's gatekeeping strategy, public participation in media, and the presence or rather non-presence of ethnic diversity in Bhutanese media.

The analytical framework of *Part 1* is loosely based on a checklist from Fairclough's *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), which tries to account for all relevant aspects of linguistic text analysis in a social change context. However, as Fairclough only serves as inspiration, I have added other elements I find useful, as well as I have left out others. Additionally, I use the key concepts by Smith, Anderson and Billig described in chapter 3 as a driving force in the analysis. I will not analyze each text fully for itself, as it is not the individual text so much as the sheer number of texts that serves to maintain the desired national identity of Bhutan. The constant stream of texts is serving as a constant reminder of the imagined community of Bhutan as a Drukpa nation. Instead, I view the sample as a collective expression of nationalism – and use examples from the texts whenever relevant. In addition, I draw on the academic body of research on media, nationalism, and nation building in Bhutan as well as my own observations and conversations with Bhutanese citizens during my stay in the country.

Fairclough (2010) defines three main events in which a text figure: *acting, representing,* and *identifying.* Basically, producing a text is a way of acting; moreover, the text represents different aspects of the world; and simultaneously the text identifies social actors as well as contribute to the constitution of personal and social identities. These three events are established and stabilized as parts of the social practice. In this thesis, all texts are acting as communication from the (national) newspapers to the citizens of Bhutan. In my analysis, I seek to determine what aspects of the world, the texts present to the Bhutanese; as well as identifying what Bhutanese social actors are involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of the articles. Apart from this, I will look for the following properties:

- **Themes** and the patterns of narratives
- **Language** and the choice of wording and phrasing
- **Transitivity** and **modality** to identify the general choice of participants in the texts and their agency, causality, responsibility as well as social relations and controlling representations of reality (Fairclough 1992)
- **Invented permanencies** in the mentioning of symbols, artefacts, objects, traditions or customs that support the Drukpa national identity (see chapter 3)

- **The intention** to make the reader feel part of a certain community by supporting the national narrative in a way to exclude some groups and include others
- **Support of national narrative** by showcasing the three themes and its critics
- **Signs of gatekeeping** or other signs of limited freedom of the press or government control

1.4 Newspapers as empirical sources

Newspapers as a source for empirical data in academic research has often been questioned due to the dependence of secondhand observations by reporters and the commitment of journalists and editors to journalistic goals and standards – rather than commitment to goals of social science (Mueller 1997). Reading newspapers, the researcher has no control over the data, on which the analysis depends, as the reporters and journalists are the ones deciding which experiences will be available for studying. Newspapers cannot be seen as neutral channels of information due to issues of biases based on cultural hegemony, political or economic interests, social practices, and the social order of the newspaper room (Andrews and Caren 2010; Mueller 1997). The gatekeepers of newspapers in forms of editors, journalists, and publishers shape the discourse of the newspaper by selecting content based on the specific purposes of the newspaper (Baumgarten and Grauel 2009).

We can, however, argue that newspaper data is valuable in social sciences to investigate discourses as they function as communication that "conceptualises public opinion and political decision making" (ibid.: 95). Gupta (1995) also argues that mass media plays a large role in the discursive construction of the state, which in this case is the construction of culture, happiness, and monarchy as a part of the national (Drukpa) identity of Bhutan. What we cannot assess is the internal process of information for external use, but the external communication is telling of the existing discursive practices that the sender uses to convey his message (Fairclough 1995). Baumgarten and Grauel (2009) even argues that when it comes to discourse analysis of actors' interpretive frames of political issues, newspapers can be better sources than qualitative interviewing since an interview will be shaped by the interviewee and the interviewer, the interview situation as well as the fact that an interview cannot account for past communication. Furthermore, it is impossible to grasp the dynamics of

discourses through interviews as discourses are "phenomena that transcend the individual" (ibid.: 97). Therefore, newspapers are a valuable source of information on the discursive practices in a specific social practice. Moreover, newspapers are often the only data source that possesses strict continuity over time, consistency in information assembling, and accessibility by the public (Mueller 1997). Of course, other channels of communication can add to the exploring of a discourse, e.g. political campaign posters, debates, TV spots, interviews, and reader's letters. As anyone, private person or organization, can own and run a website, public claims can be placed by any actor in theory. Whereas this is true for some societies, many states try to ban certain forms of online content as well as reprising actors who publish critique of the authorities (Baumgarten and Grauel 2009).

We generally perceive gatekeeping in traditional newspapers (both print and online) as the very thing that ensures the quality of news. But as social science researchers, the same gatekeeping is what affects the quality of newspapers as a data source. Debates in newspapers are biased, and certain opinions are more welcome in a newspaper than others and more likely to be represented (ibid.). But whereas newspapers are not objective data sources on the truth of social life, the way narratives are sifted through institutional filters is an asset for discourse analysis in the way that it reflects the "discursive form through which daily life is narrativized and collectivities imagined" (Gupta 1995: 385). Gatekeeping is a powerful mechanism and it results in a preference for authoritative or official sources even if it threatens the dominating narrative. Also, journalists will often have a preference for certain values and will discard ideological excess and social disorder, which ultimately results in support of a specific discourse (Andrews and Caren 2010).

The state of media in Bhutan

In Bhutan, criticizing the monarchy is illegal, as well as media being subject to self-censorship. This results in Bhutan ranking only 94 in the World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders 2016). Therefore, I went into this imagining that the overall portrayal of happiness would be positive. I was not disappointed. Happiness, cultural heritage, and the Royal monarchy are intrinsically linked together in Bhutanese media, which I will elaborate on in sector 1.5 on processing and coding of data as well as in my analysis. In a rapidly changing society, Bhutanese media has faced challenges over the last 20 years. The transformation from a traditional rural society to a modern globalized nation has pinched the media sector

between "powerful forces of state control and commercial drive" (Dorji and Pek 2005). While experiencing immense growth since the mid-1980s with the foundation of Bhutan Broadcasting Service (radio) and the 1990s with the birth of Bhutanese television and introduction of the Internet (Rinchen 2007), the media sector is still subject to state control and censorship (Reporters Without Borders 2016). In 1992, the media gained its official independence from government, however, today the RGoB still exercises large influence on both public and private media through advertisements and subsidiaries (Freedom House 2016). The access to Internet has in many ways changed the lives of many Bhutanese, and according to the Bhutanese Media Impact Study (MIS) of 2003, the Internet has "broken down a hierarchical society and is promoting transparency in governance" (Dorji and Pek 2005: 81). There are, however, still barriers to overcome. Although the present prime minister Tshering Tobgay has made efforts in fighting corruption and promoting greater public transparency, journalists of Bhutan still report to be working under threats of reprisals if they publish any critique of the RGoB or monarchy (Freedom House 2016). A study done by Journalists' Association of Bhutan (JAB) in 2014 showed that 58 % of currently working and 71 % of former journalists in Bhutan found it "unsafe" to write critical journalism; and 47 % of currently working journalists reported being threatened for publishing critical news stories (The Bhutanese 2014a). Though the constitution states freedom of expression and beliefs for all Bhutanese citizens, the National Security Act deals prison sentences for 'defamations' (Freedom House 2016). As an example, in 2008, access to the Bhutantimes.org was blocked on grounds of defamations. The claim was that the online news service was publishing aggregated news stories and questioning authorities (Pek-Dorji 2008). According to Dorji (2007), it serves to be aware of biases in Bhutanese media whether religious, political, elitist, gender based, ageist, or others: "When we talk about Bhutanese media, we talk about ourselves. And we are expressing values all the time. We are cultivating the public mind. We are performing a public function" (ibid.: 501).

According to Gupta (1995), a regional or local newspaper will show a larger variation in representation than national or international newspapers. As local news does not exist in Bhutan as independent newspapers, but rather as local editorial teams, this was not feasible to take account for in this thesis. In addition, newspapers are a relatively new concept in Bhutan (Rinchen 2007); as well as online access to old news is fairly limited in the sense that

no library in Europe could provide me with access to archives older than what was available at the newspapers' own websites. This is a common problem when studying online newspaper communication, as older versions of websites tends to be made unavailable when organizations or newspapers update to newer platforms, thus making longitudinal research difficult (Baumgarten and Grauel 2009). In this case, as it was not possible to look so much at tendencies *over time*, I had to look at tendencies *across* news sources. Meaning that instead of going back in time when collecting data, I was forced to spread out over several sources of news. As *Dzongkha* is not ideal as a written language, most news in Bhutan is in English, which was a clear advantage for me. In general, the English proficiency amongst educated Bhutanese is high, and I had no language issues. Radio is still a popular media form in Bhutan as radio news travels faster across the mountains than traditional print media. Although the Internet in recent years have helped spread written news, radio still persist to be highly listened to especially in rural and remote areas – moreover, radio offers better opportunities for news in Dzongkha than print media (Rinchen 2007). However, I was not able to access much local radio from Denmark, and so have chosen not to follow this path.

When doing ethnography in postcolonial countries, we have to consider the "legacy of Western scholarship on the state" (Gupta 1995: 376). Bhutan was never colonized, true, but nonetheless its state institutions, bureaucracy, and media is highly influenced by Western models (Wangchuk et al. 2017). After the introduction of democracy in 2008, Bhutanese media have largely been adopting Western models and approaches in journalism (Kuensel 2016c; Lhamo and Oyama 2015). But as Bhutan has a long history of independence, the Bhutanese media do not feel that the euro-centric media models developed in the West will be fully applicable in their country (Wangchuk et al. 2017). Therefore, in 2016 a media conference was held at which several journalists agreed on 'middle-path journalism' factoring in indigenous values and visions as well as Buddhist philosophy in four dimensions of communication: *contentment, commitment, community*, and *compassion* (Kuensel 2016c; Wangchuk et al. 2017). Up until 2006, Bhutan had only one newspaper, *Kuensel*, founded in the 1980s. However, in 2006 the liberalization of the media market resulted in a boom in newspaper services. Many of these private newspapers were relying on government subsidiaries through advertising, but as the number of newspapers rose, the market for advertising got overcrowded. Subsequently, the RGoB cut back on advertising, leaving many

smaller newspapers to fight for their survival; many were forced to downsize, shift to only online publishing, or to close all together (Wangchuk et al. 2017). This unfortunately includes the Bhutan Observer which has been a great source of empirical data from 2007-2015 and could possibly have contributed with even more useful empirical data if it had not been closed.

Selected media

I have made very short reviews of each source that I have used to collect empirical data. In chapter 5, I elaborate on the visions of the newspapers.

Kuensel: The official newspaper of Bhutan was founded as a monthly government bulletin in 1967, and in 1987 it was relaunched as the national newspaper of Bhutan. In 1992, it gained autonomy from the RGoB and was the only newspaper until 2006. In 1997, Kuensel was the first Bhutanese company to go online, two years before internet were generally introduced in Bhutan (Dorji and Pek 2005; Kuensel 2017a; Lhamo and Oyama 2015). Archives on the newspaper website only go back to January 2015 though.

The Bhutanese: Launched in 2012 as a private news media, The Bhutanese catchphrase states it being "the paper that makes the biggest impact in Bhutan" (Facebook page: The Bhutanese). Twice, the newspaper won in the Annual Journalism Awards for Bhutan for best investigative story. The archives on the website date back to the beginning of February 2012.

Bhutan Observer: Published from June 2, 2006 to July 2015, this private bilingual Thimphu-based newspaper had a Dzongkha print edition as well as an online English version. It was founded in the wake of the Fourth King's decision to democratize Bhutan (Bhutan Observer 2017). Even though being commended for providing the most critical coverage of Bhutan's first parliamentary elections and winning several journalistic prizes, the Observer was heavily subsidized by government advertisements, and when the RGoB cut back on subsidiaries the newspaper slowly dwindled into nothing (Wangchuk et al. 2017). However, the full online archives are still accessible.

Several newspapers have been closed in recent years, including *Bhutan Times, Bhutan Today* and *The Journalist* (Wangchuk et al. 2017). Obviously, I had to exclude newspapers in Dzongkha such as *Druk Neytshuel, Druk Yoedzer,* and *Gyalchi Sarshog*, as the language barrier is too immense, however, I do not believe this to be very problematic as English is the prevailing official language in Bhutan, and so I do not believe that I have missed any important stories by only reading newspapers in English.

In Bhutan, people only have two given names and no surnames – in addition, the selection of first names is limited and they are often unisex. Therefore, we often encounter persons of both genders bearing the same two names as others and in some instances, we cannot identify the gender of the person in question. For example, just in my small circle of acquaintances in Thimphu, I knew two named Pema Dorji (1 male, 1 female), two named Kinley Dorji (1 male, 1 female), and three named Choki Wangmo (3 females). In time, I learnt which names are female, which are male, and which are unisex, but then I still run into the problems of several persons named the same and how to differentiate between them. For the unknowing, it can be confusing, especially when handling newspaper sources, as it is hard to know if the person in question is a new Tshering Lhamo (female) or the same as before. Therefore, I have chosen not to focus so much at the identity of the sources featured in the articles, but more on their function in society. Likewise, I do not focus on the individual journalists, as much as I focus on the media in question. The same goes for the bibliography, in which several names will occur more than once without being the same scholar or journalist – which I have tried to account for when referencing. Additionally, many articles had no bylines, and are subsequently referenced by the name of the newspaper.

1.5 Coding and processing of data

To find all relevant articles for this thesis, I chose a rather simple point of departure: to enter the term "happiness" in the search field on each of the newspapers' websites. As happiness is much talked about in Bhutan, this provided me with a large quantity of articles (see table 1). As the newspaper *Kuensel* only had archives going back two years, I chose not to streamline the number of years, as this would limit relevant articles on the other two newspaper websites. For all three newspapers, I jumped to the last search page to start from the beginning. At *Kuensel* this was January 1st, 2015, for *The Bhutanese* February 21st, 2012, and

for *Bhutan Observer* July 6th, 2007. Reading and skimming articles, I quickly developed a system of coding as I went along, registering all relevant articles in an Excel-sheet, and counting all non-relevant articles to paint a picture of in what contexts the term is mentioned. The main reason for also sorting non-relevant articles is the idea, that even though they may be deemed irrelevant for this thesis, the sheer number of mentions of the word happiness is telling in itself. Thus, I wanted to be able to see in what contexts the term was generally used. Articles that I found relevant for my analysis, I coded according to different themes, underlying message and positive/negative/neutral take on happiness, cultural heritage and monarchy (appendices 1-3). As I went along, I developed more themes as I began to discover connections and "glimmerings of new ideas" (Cook and Crang 1995: 82). This way, what started out as individual articles on happiness shifted to represent relating concepts of happiness as they were articulated in a discourse. Coding your data is essentially to describe it and it is the first phase of the analysis process, and as coding the articles gave me new ideas on how to sort my empirical data, it served as a "foundation for further data collection and analysis" (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 7). Themes would change during the process, when I saw the need for narrowing them or broadening them, and thus I developed the three themes for analysis. Early on I identified the monarchy as an integral and important part of the national identity of Bhutan, and as such the "Royal monarchy"-theme originally started out as a part of the larger "National narrative & cultural heritage"-category, but at some point, I separated the articles which focused directly on the Kings out, to be able to use them as an independent theme. Even though I already knew of the almost manic praising of the monarchy and have experienced this firsthand when living in the country, I was surprised by the number of articles on the monarchs. Consequently, this also gave me the third theme of cultural heritage, which were the articles left from the original category.

Of course, just as some of the non-relevant articles fitted in more than one category of rejection, many relevant articles fitted into more than one theme. Hence, I started giving my articles "tags" to be able to sort them differently if I wished to do so. The Bhutanese had overall fewer articles containing the search word, however, their readers were much more active in the comments' segments to each article especially during 2012 and 2013[1]. Especially articles on the concept of Gross National Happiness, or articles containing critique of the

[1] Today, readers have moved to comment on Facebook instead (Wangchuk et al. 2017).

concept. The commenting readers also expressed critique of the RGoB as well as some commentators expressed discontent with The Bhutanese, feeling it was covering political issues too critically. However, in all articles and commentaries read, I never once found any critique of the monarchy and the kings. All this I will elaborate on in my analysis.

Table 1: Overall count of newspaper articles

	Kuensel	**The Bhutanese**	**Bhutan Observer**	**Total**
Number of articles with search word	483	374	504	1361
Number of 'relevant' articles*	185	108	161	454
Number of 'non-relevant' articles:				
1. GNHC/GNH	232	149	217	598
2. CBS	2	0	0	2
3. Firms, organizations, etc.	28	12	3	43
4. Non-relevant use of the word	36	100	106	242
5. Letters, essays, etc.	0	5	17	22
Accessible archival time period	1.1.2015-May 2017 *(2 yrs, 5 mths)*	21.2.2012-June 2017 *(5 yrs, 5 mths)*	6.7.2007-July 2015 *(8 yrs)*	
Period of retrieval	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	

*For elaboration see appendices 1-3.

1.6 Structure of thesis

In this first chapter, I have presented the focus of attention of this thesis. In this, I have introduced the empirical framework, the newspaper context, as well as my methodological choices. Moreover, I have outlined the tools for my text analysis.

In chapter 2, I provide a broader historical and contemporary context of Bhutanese power dominations. All to create a basis for the broader understanding of my focus on ethnic exclusion and banal nationalism. The context of newspaper media in Bhutan is outlined in chapter 1.

Chapter 3 focuses on my theoretical framework presenting the choice of theory as well as its context in the field of nationalism research. This framework will together with the empirical framework in chapter 1 form the analytical basis for the thesis.

In chapter 4, I conduct the first part of the analysis focusing on the specific words and phrases used by the media to establish the desired national identity. The chapter is tripartite focusing on each of the three themes mentioned in 1.1 in turn.

Chapter 5 constitutes the second part of the analysis, in which I zoom out to focus on what defines Bhutan as a nation as well as the relationship between the Bhutanese media and the RGoB. Moreover, I direct attention to public participation in political debate as well as ethnic exclusion of minorities.

Chapter 6 frames the discussion on how the persistent underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in Bhutanese media is furthering the divides inside the nation, and how limited options of political participation poses a threat to the Bhutanese democracy.

Chapter 7 consists of a general conclusion connecting all threads of the thesis.

2 The Land of the Thunder Dragon

Being one of the world's smallest nations and sandwiched between the two giants of China and India (see political map), Bhutan might seem insignificant, but holds strategic, military value. Currently, Bhutan has no disputes with either of its neighbors and the country lives in peace, however this was not always the case (Upreti 2004). The geographical territory now known as Bhutan was populated more than 4000 years ago, but its cultural history begins when lamas and other religious people fled Tibet after a ban on Buddhism in the 9th century. The monks blended with indigenous people, founded monasteries and religious schools and helped spread the teachings of Buddhism. At that time, Bhutan was a patchwork of smaller fiefdoms always in conflict and it took a strong leader to unify them in the 17th century, when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal became the founder of Druk Yul or *The Land of the Thunder Dragon* (Wangchhuk 2010). However, again and again Bhutan was subject to invasions from Tibet, internal conflicts and civil wars, as well as the beginning of British political missions in the 1770s. Clashes with the British lasted till the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865, in which "permanent conditions of peace and friendship" was established (ibid.: 21). Following an unstable period in which civil wars and internal conflicts marred the country, one strong political leader named Ugyen Wangchuk won the battle of Changlimithang in 1885, hence unifying the country. In 1907, he donned the *Raven Crown* and became the first *Druk Gyalpo* (Dragon King), and so established the modern, hereditary monarchy of the Kingdom of Bhutan as well as cemented Drukpa rule (ibid.).

2.1 The modern nation Bhutan

The fact that Bhutan was never subject to colonization also means that the industrialization that happened in the rest of the world during the 19th and 20th century never came to the remote nation. This resulted in preservation of ways of living which the Bhutanese today deem "traditional" but to Westerners would seem utterly backwards. Today, this way of living is seen in many remote areas of rural Bhutan, thus creating a significant rural/urban bias in the country (Hanasz 2012; Upreti 2004). Despite its small size, Bhutan is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious consisting of several ethnic and cultural groups with roots in the Himalayas (Mathou 2000; Upreti 2004). One large group is the ethnic Nepali

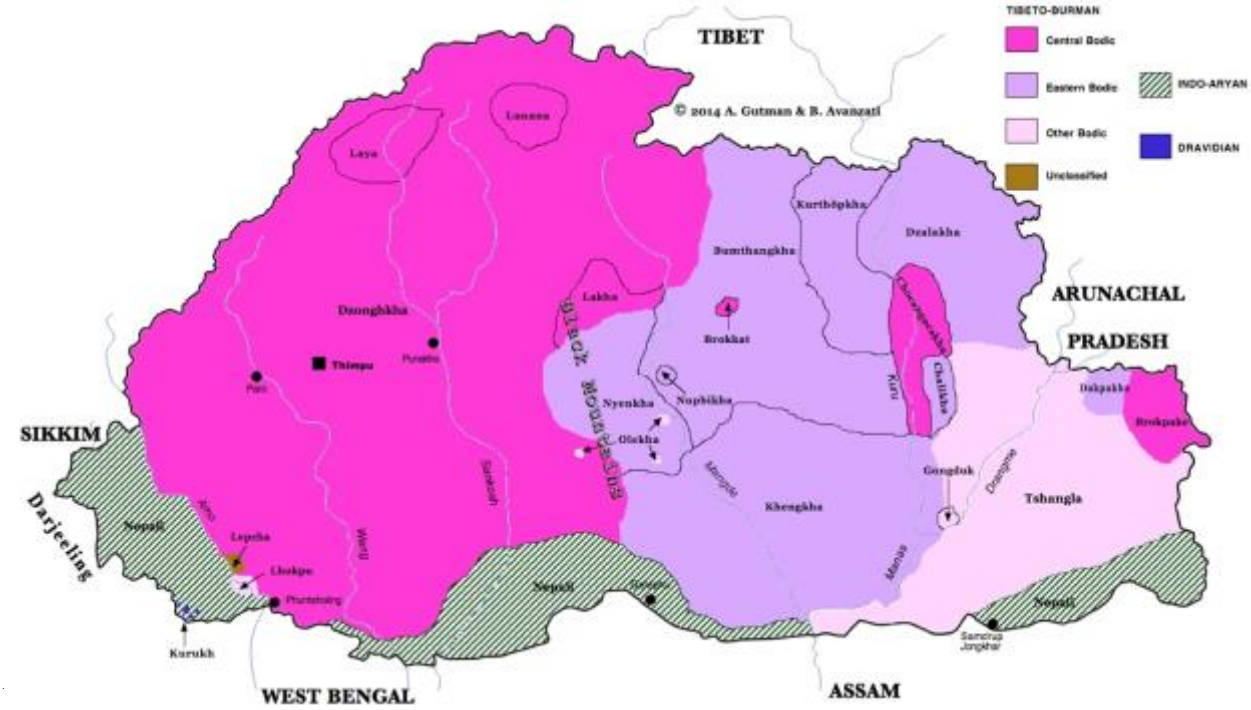
Bhutanese[2], who migrated to the plains of Southern Bhutan during the 18th and 19th century, bringing with them a cultural tradition very different from the *Drukpas* and *Ngalongs/Ngalops* inhabiting the West and North of Bhutan. Under the name of Drukpas these two ethnic groups have been the ruling elite in Bhutan for centuries. Until the 1980s, the ethnic Nepali Bhutanese co-existed relatively peacefully alongside the Drukpas, but with the modernization process of the 1960s, and with it the bureaucratic and economic development of the country in the 1970s, unrest developed amongst the Nepali population in Bhutan, which in turn made the Drukpas feel threatened. The challenging of Bhutanese identity led the Drukpas to practice an extensive *'Bhutanization'*, in which 'true' Bhutanese culture (hence: Drukpa culture) was forced upon the Nepali Bhutanese. The result was the mobilization of a resistance movement by Nepali Bhutanese, which further enforced the feeling amongst Drukpas of being threatened. By framing the resistance as terrorism to the rest of the world, the RGoB justified the deportation of thousands of Nepali Bhutanese (Giri 2004; Hutt 1996). To this day, the figures has not yet been confirmed, but most researchers agree that around 100.000 Nepali Bhutanese have lived in refugee camps in Nepal and India since the early 1990s – and the ones left in Bhutan are subject to public discrimination and persecution, though they constitute more than a third of the Bhutanese population (see figure 3) (Hutt 1996; Rizal 2004). Without doubt, the ruling elite of Bhutan sees the national identity as synonymous with Drukpa identity, and the extensive campaigning of the RGoB to promote 'true Bhutanese culture' has by several scholars been deemed an attempt to promote a homogenous national identity (R. Evans 2010; Pattanaik 1998). A 1961 royal decree stated *Dzongkha* as the national language of Bhutan, which is the language of the Western and Northern inhabitants, the Ngalops and Drukpas (se figure 1). Since the 1970s, the official approach has been to translate everything into Dzongkha to promote the use of the language, and with the 'one nation, one people' plan of 1989, non-Dzongkha speakers were forced to attend mandatory language classes in order to streamline the use of Dzongkha (Hutt 1996; Simoni and Whitecross 2007). However, this has its problems, namely: the amount of text to be translated versus the number of qualified translators; the hurdles of standardizing the language to avoid contradictory spellings and grammar; and the fact that Dzongkha might be

[2] In Bhutanese, these are referred to as Lhotshampas/Lhotsampas, meaning "people from the South", however the people of the ethnie refer to themselves as Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, and so, I refer to them as Nepali Bhutanese (R. Evans 2010; Pulla 2016)

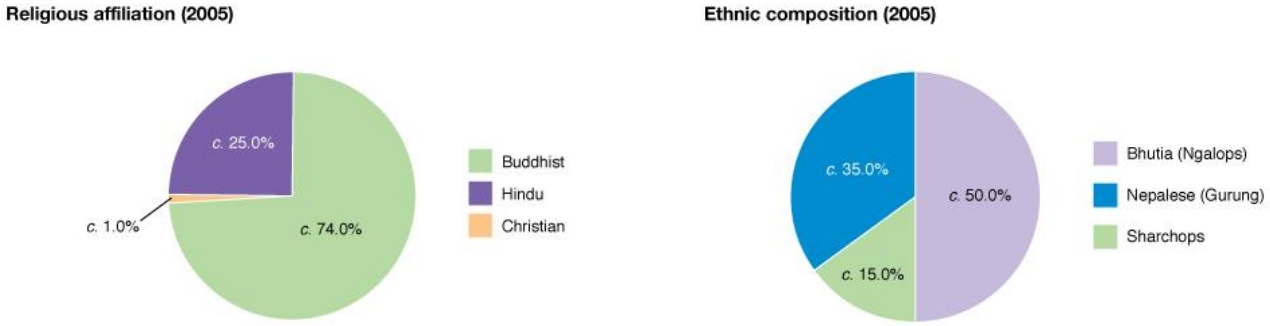
promoted as the official national language, but is only the mother tongue of estimated 160.000 citizens[3] out of the approximately 740.000 inhabitants of the nation (Simoni and Whitecross 2007; Wangchuk et al. 2017). Since 1984, the RGoB has been actively tending to a program of promoting Buddhist customs and rituals, in order to establish religious superiority, even though a quarter of the population shares other beliefs (see figure 2) (S. A. Evans 2006; Giri 2004). This targeted promotion of Buddhism as the only 'true' religion of Bhutanese (EIU 2017), dictates that the Buddhist mindset and values must permeate all actions, thoughts, and decisions for the Bhutanese. This is embodied in the Bhutanese development philosophy, GNH, in which lies a Buddhist principle of seeking the collective happiness before your own, and therefore a true Bhutanese cannot act without the collected happiness of society in mind (Ura et al. 2012b).

Bhutan has seen tremendous social change during the recent decades; through a large GDP growth (EIU 2017) as well as impressive socio-economic development, which has especially benefitted the urban Bhutanese (RGoB 2013).

Figure 1. Ethnic languages in Bhutan *(Source: languagesgulper.com)*



[3] 2006 numbers (Simoni and Whitecross 2007)



(Source: Encyclopædia Britannica)

2.2 Governing Bhutan

The fifth King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, was crowned in 2006 (The Bhutanese 2012c) just one year before the country could celebrate 100 years as a nation. In 2008, the country saw its first national assembly elections, which was won by the *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* (DPT), who ruled for five years. By 2013, the opposition party, *People's Democratic Party* (PDP) had gained a solid majority in the national assembly and is now governing until 2018 (EIU 2017). In general, Bhutan enjoys great political stability, although there have been several scandals involving ministerial malpractice (ibid.). Though newspapers are largely controlled by government forces, ministerial scandals are extensively covered, and so former foreign minister Rinzin Dorji was heavily featured during his conviction of political malpractice in 2015 (The Bhutanese 2015a, 2015b). Despite this, the corruption level in Bhutan is relatively low compared to its other Southern Asian neighbors and the country ranks 27th on a global scale in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 (Transparency International 2016).

Bhutan's parliament is party-based with DPD and DPT as the largest parties. Up until 2007, political parties were banned, and so both parties were only formed that year, which makes them relatively new and as for now the party loyalty amongst the Bhutanese is very weak. As the RGoB needs to approve of all new parties, the development of new political parties is severely hindered. Bhutan is a constitutional monarchy, and the King is head of state – not

only by name. The parliament consist of both members elected by the public and members appointed by the King, who still exercises large influence on domestic politics (EIU 2017; Freedom House 2016). Therefore, when talking of RGoB, we also talk of the King.
The transition into democracy has proven tough, and today Bhutan only ranks 98th of 167 countries in the Democracy Index 2016 (EIU 2016). The ranking puts Bhutan in a category of 'hybrid regimes', which means that it has both democratic and authoritarian traits. The ranking also covers the low turn-out in especially local, non-partisan elections, which shows that the future of democracy in the country dependent on the participation of the people. The prospects are, however, slightly positive as the score for Bhutan has improved marginally every year since 2008 (EIU 2017). The other main problem with democracy in Bhutan is the constraints on civil liberty regarding restrictions on freedom of speech and freedom of the press as explained in 1.4. According to electoral rules, all regional, ethnic and religious groups can form political parties and vote. However, no parties represent the large minority of Nepali Bhutanese, as well as Nepali-speakers have reported harassment when voting. And although the constitution protects freedom of expression and beliefs, non-Buddhist have reported to have endured harassment from local authorities (EIU 2017; Freedom House 2016).

3 Theoretical framework

Picturing nationalism, we often imagine wavering national flags held by brute separatists or activists fighting for independence from repressing colonial regimes. Or we see for our inner eye right-wing marches and parades of stern discipline saluting the all-ruling monarch or dictator. These extreme, yet obvious, forms of nationalism are not the focus of this thesis. Rather it is the everyday nationalism as expressed by Michael Billig in *Banal Nationalism* (1995): the national flag hanging on a public building, the celebrating of national sporting triumphs, or the mentioning of cultural artefacts in newspaper articles. Billig's work is a critique of the lack of attention to contemporary, invisible, everyday nationalism in modern nation states. Additionally, I use the work of Benedict Anderson, who broke ground in human and social sciences in 1983 with his work *Imagined Communities* (2016 [1983]) on the origin and spread of nationalism as he largely attributes the forming of nation states to the development of the printing press and newspapers. Lastly, I largely draw on the theories of Anthony D. Smith in *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998) and *Nationalism* (2001) to explain the extensive use of cultural artefacts and symbols in Bhutanese media from an ethnosymbolism viewpoint.

3.1 Nationalism paradigms

Of course, nationalism has been discussed academically for more than a century, often flaring up after a world war or other significant events with consequences for the world's nations. But after the 1983 publications of Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and the equally important *Nations and Nationalism* by Ernest Gellner, studies in nationalism really took off. The two books spurred an scholarly interest that only grew with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Zuelow 2007). In studies of nationalism and national identity, researchers generally debate on four core questions: 1. How do we define 'nations' and 'nationalism'; 2. When did nations first appear; 3. How did nations and nationalism develop; and 4. Is nationalism a Western construct? (ibid.). The main debate however, lies in question 3. As Zuelow explains it: "If nations are naturally occurring, then there is little reason to explain the birth of nations" (ibid.: subpage) and conversely, if nations *are* a construct then it is important to explain *how* they came into being.

Explaining nationalism, Smith (1998) separates the major schools of thought into paradigms: the *perennialists* argue that nationalism and national identity have roots in medieval history, but are contested by *modernists* who claim that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, constructed by nationalist movements. The *primordialists* believe that nationalism and national identity are necessary for human self-understanding, and argue against *modern instrumentalists* who consider nationalism necessary for the existence of the modern, capitalist society. As an alternative to all these, we find *ethnosymbolism*. According to Smith (2001), modernism is currently the dominating ideology within nationalism research, nevertheless he himself believes in the paradigm he calls ethnosymbolism. In this thesis, I use the work of two modernist nationalism thinkers, Benedict Anderson and Michael Billig, as well as Smith's ethnosymbolism. In the following, I will elaborate on the four major paradigms in nationalism: perennialism, primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism, however, I shall only briefly account for perennialism and primordialism but dive deeper into the paradigms of modern nationalism and ethnosymbolism.

Perennialism

Pre-World War 2, historicists agreed that albeit nationalist ideology being new, nations have always existed. Perennialism cultivates the idea of a social evolution through the ages; supported by great advances in disciplines such as archeology and historiography, whose findings was food for thought for nationalist thinking. Perennialism popularly juxtaposes 'race' with 'nation' putting weight on cultural rather than biological features. One group of perennialism thinkers claims that certain nations can trace their origin back to medieval or even ancient times. The important issue is whether the nation has existed *continually* throughout history as the unbroken lifetime of a nation gives the nations inhabitants a historical feeling of the nation. The other group of perennialists believes that nations are *recurring*; though changing, the nation is always present as a collective cultural identity expressed in different ways in different periods of time (Smith 2001).

Primordialism

Primordialism is generally traced back to Rousseau, who called for a return to 'nature' to regain man's lost innocence. The naturalistic spirit is the essence of a nation, as nations existed at the beginning of all time and are the origin of all things – a property they share with God. Thereby, nations are the roots of all development, and this justifies the absolute sovereignty of a nation. Prominent scholars of primordialism such as Johann Herder and Johann Fichte claimed that language is synonymous with thought, and as languages are learnt in a community, different communities must think differently. This meant that the community was 'fixated' as a nation over time (Smith 2001). Pierre Van den Berghe puts emphasis on sociobiology claiming that nations, races, and ethnic groups can be traced back to the underlying genetics of our reproductive instincts. These reproductive strategies are used as markers of biological affinity. Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of industrialism regarding nation building, but demonstrated how primordial ties continued to exist next to the new secular order of society. Especially Geertz saw primordial affiliations as opposite to the rationality of the modern society. Today, primordialism trigger negative connotations of immutability, essentialism, and naturalism (ibid.).

Modernism

According to modernists, nationalism is a product of modernity. The phenomenon of nationalism was born with the new era of nation building starting with the French Revolution in the late 18th century. True modernists adhere to the idea that nationalism is something entirely new, and not just a reproduction of something older. Nations, nation states, national identities, even the *inter*-national community are new constructs. And not just *chronologically* new, but *qualitatively* new. With the French Revolution, the world did not only find a new ideology, it found a new form of collective identity with new nation states resulting in a new *inter*-national order (Smith 1998, 2001).

Of course, within the modernist paradigm we find different variations of the overall view on nationalism. Albeit different, they all share a common idea of structural modernism, with the belief that nationalism is inherently modern. Modernity had to take the form of nationalism as well as nationalist movements and ideologies were inevitable (Smith 2001).

During the 1970s, Tom Nairn and Michael Hechter was advocating a *socio-economic* take on modernist nationalism, believing that new economic and social aspects such as class conflicts, regional inequality, and industrial capitalism led to nationalism and the building of nations. The notion here is that national ideals are provoked from the relative inequality *within* a nation, which mobilizes the 'masses' (Smith 1998).

Later, Ernest Gellner was the main proponent of a more *socio-cultural* view of modernist nationalism, claiming that nations are a sociologically necessary phenomenon spurred by industrialism. According to Gellner, the spread of nationalism is to be seen in connection with industrialism which is encouraged through public education (Smith 2001).

The *political* view on modernist nationalism adheres to the belief that nations and nationalism is formed by the modern, professional state. During the 1980s and 1990s, Anthony Giddens and Michael Mann were the more prominent scholars of this view, stating that the relationship between states are what encourage feelings of sovereignty (ibid.).

The focus of the *ideological* outlook is the European origin of nationalism and modernity and its role in creating new nations. Elie Kedourie showed in his work how European Christian doctrines and the Age of Enlightenment had a devastating effect on the ethnic and religious traditions of non-European nations (Smith 1998).

Constructionist modernist nationalism is distinguishing itself from the four other variations as it proposes a lighter take on modernism; claiming that though modern, nations are constructed in certain psychological ways. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger talked about 'invented traditions' as building blocks of a nation, created out of social manipulation to serve the interests of the ruling class; whereas Benedict Anderson launched his idea of 'imagined communities', which I will elaborate on later in this chapter (Smith 2001).

Ethnosymbolism

Stressing the importance of myths, values, symbols and traditions of modern nation states, ethnosymbolism forms the last paradigm of nationalism. Ethnosymbolism is critical of modernism, and is mainly focusing on subjective elements in the upholding of *ethnies* or ethnic groups. Three scholars are generally dominating the school of ethnosymbolism, John A. Armstrong, John Hutchinson, and Anthony D. Smith. Ethnosymbolism is concerned with *la longue durée* of social and cultural analysis of nations. According to Armstrong, ethnic consciousness is time-old and nationalism is just the final stage of collective organization; just

as the perceptions of ethnic identities are shifting. This means that nationalism is formed by early cultural identities of certain ethnic groups; which explains why nationalists often tries to use their prehistoric nation's cultures and symbols to explain cultural continuity. According to Smith, the ethnosymbolism paradigm explains the intensity and content of current ethnic conflicts in alternative ways to (the usual) economic or political explanations. To Smith, ethnosymbolism is an alternative to the rivalry of modernism and perennialism as well as the lack of explanatory power of primordialism. If nations are neither ancient nor recurrent nor entirely new constructs, we need another paradigm to contain the duality of nationalism (Smith 2001). In 3.5, I will elaborate on Smith's theory.

3.2 My choice of theorists

In his work, Anderson (2016 [1983]) seems to search for the middle path between the functionalist modern view of nationalism by putting weight on communication and what he calls 'print capitalism' and the primordial position on the subject with his emphasis on the imagined community as important in our constant reassurance of our national identity. I would, however, mostly regard him as a modernist in the way he adheres to the thought of national culture as recent and modern constructs. Working with mass media content as empirical data, Anderson seems fitting for this thesis. Billig (1995) on the other hand shows a solid, modernist standpoint from which he views nations as new constructs designed to impose hegemony in the world. This is, however, not his main concern, but for the small, everyday use of language and words that cement national identity. His work on language used in newspapers to foster nationalism, I find very useful for this thesis. The last theorist is Smith (1998, 2001), who with his work on ethnosymbolism challenges the modernist view of nationalism by only allowing the modern nation to exist based on pre-existing ethnic components. The shared myths and memories of an ethnic group is extensively used in Bhutanese media to reinforce national identity. Therefore, Smith's theory fits into this thesis as an explanation of this.

Both Billig and Anderson adheres to the modernist thought that nationality was not much considered until the rise of nation states. Billig argues that before nation states, people did not give national identity much thought, as their immediate loyalty was directed at the nearest

authority in the form of local lords or clerics (Billig 1995); but with the coming of modern nation states, people largely adopted the view that nationality is as natural as for example gender. Anderson argues that modern states evolved with the invention of the printing press as this provided a platform for communicating a national identity (Anderson 2016 [1983]). Both theories share the same paradox: despite nations being a modern construct, most people think of them as timeless and old. This reflects the core of nationalism: that the national people living within the nation feel they *deserve* the national states based on historic events. Therefore, nationalism is not only about the construction of a national identity, it is also the legitimization of a people of a nation possessing a nation state (Billig 1995). The process of nation-building is basically the process of using the power of the state to construct a national identity. I will elaborate further on their individual works in 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5.

Arguably, parts of the works of scholars such as Anthony Giddens or Pierre Bourdieu could have contributed in this area. Concepts such as Bourdieu's *habitus* is used by Billig to explain how the past is embodied in our daily routines and habits and in this way, contribute to the collective forgetting of crises as well as the daily reminders of nationhood. Billig also draw on Giddens in his attempt to define a nation: "a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence" (Giddens in Billig 1995: 20), and uses Giddens to explain the use of violence in forming and protecting the boundaries of nation states, but also how the fall of boundaries in the post-modern world has resulted in psychological insecurity amongst citizens forcing them to look to strong symbols of nationhood to identify with in an attempt to feel less lost (Billig 1995). However, as my focus is on language use and cultural artefacts and symbols in newspapers, I have chosen to focus on Billig, Anderson, and Smith.

3.3 Imagining a nation – Benedict Anderson

Anderson considers a nation not as an *objective* community but as an *imagined* political community in which people of a nation share common notions, such as assumptions, beliefs, habits, practices and presentations. The community is imagined in the sense that most of its inhabitants will never meet all other inhabitants, but still "the image of their communion" (Anderson 2016: 6 [1983]) lives in the minds of all inhabitants. Moreover, the nation is

imagined as *sovereign*, and regardless of size, a nation is imagined to have boundaries separating it from other nations; which means that the nation is imagined as *limited* (ibid.). Despite Anderson's idea of imagined communities in which people share common language, beliefs, and assumptions, he views nations as strictly a modern phenomenon. Nations did not rise out of shared languages, religion, or culture from a distant past, instead nationalism is the product of a process of a new radical form of consciousness arriving with modern time. The fall of religious hegemony, dynastic empires, and the invention of modern time are what made nations possible (Anderson 2016 [1983]; Ivarsson 2007).

The main argument of Anderson's work is centered around what he calls *print capitalism*, which is the idea that the invention of print and mass reproduction of texts spurred nationalism[4]. He argues that in pre-nations, sacred religious languages constituted a superterrestrial power to keep order in society. The languages were unique and submission into society relied on the mastering of the languages. Hereafter, Anderson links the evolution of nation states to the invention of the printing press and with it mass media: books and newspapers are providing platforms on which to communicate imagined communities and national identities. Most importantly, it provides a platform to communicate in a national language, which unifies speakers of the language in question. Together with novels, newspapers provided a medium for the *simultaneous* representing of the imagined community. A citizen might not see or know the activities of all other citizens of the nations, but he or she can imagine their actions as simultaneous to his or her own and by reading of events in the newspaper simultaneously with other citizens. Moreover, this is repeated daily with regular intervals, envisioning the "secular, historically clocked, imagined community" (Anderson 2016: 35 [1983]). This routine and the visibility of newspapers in the public sphere, reassures the citizens of the continuous existence of their imagined community. The creation of nationalism might be spontaneous; however, once imagined, the experiences of a nation become 'modular' and can be transplanted to another place in another time. The discourse shifted from a *national* stance to an *international* and through print capitalism, a certain nationalism can be adopted by other nations and 'molded' to fit their special

[4] This is a notion Anderson shares with other nationalism thinkers such as McLuhan and Eisenstein (Ivarsson 2007).

circumstances (Ivarsson 2007). Anderson claims that by the second decade of the 19th century, "a 'model' of 'the' independent national state was available for pirating" (Anderson 2016: 81 [1983]). A model now known as the standard nation form without much room for deviation.

One significant critic of Anderson's work is the Indian sociologist Partha Chatterjee, who does not buy into the idea of an imagined community and accuses Anderson of perceiving nations as homogenous and uniform (Chatterjee 1996; Ivarsson 2007). Chatterjee's main objection to Anderson's theory is that if former colonies are to build their new imagined community on modular forms imagined by the West, then what is left for the colonies to imagine themselves? That would mean that even in a post-colonial world, the former colonies are still subjected to Western models – "even our imagination must remain forever colonized" (Chatterjee 1996: 216). Chatterjee's argument is that the best examples of nationalist imagination in Africa and Asia are those born from identification with something *other* than the national society invented by the modern West (ibid.).

Despite his thorough work on imagined communities, Anderson does not offer up many concrete tools for analyzing nations as imagined communities. It is, however, interesting to see the development of Bhutan in the light of print capitalism, which came relatively late to the Kingdom.

3.4 'Flagging' a nation – Michael Billig

Building upon the relationship between ideology and common sense, Billig argues that nationalism must depend upon basic ideological foundations of familiarity so that no national citizen is questioning his or her loyalty in the event of a crisis. Therefore, everyday objects, notions, and habits permanently reproduce the same story about the nation. Nation states are created and maintained by nationalism, but to express nationalism, one must have nationalist phrases and discourses to draw from: a *national narrative*. The discourses seem natural to the citizenry of the nation and are more than often subconsciously expressed and reproduced. Just like Anderson, Billig considers shared language as highly important to foster a sense of unity and constitute the special 'bonds' within a nation (Billig 1995).

Billig's main concern is to separate the everyday, mundane nationalism from the extreme nationalism. In this lies a critique of the academic and journalistic writers of the 1980s and 1990s for only featuring the latter kind, and forgetting about the hidden nationalism in our everyday life. His main argument is that to remind the citizenry of their national identity and their place amongst nations, nations continually 'flag' little reminders of this identity. Because nationhood would not make sense if not for the existence of other nations with other distinct identities, languages, and histories, and so the banal nationalism of everyday life is reminding the citizenry of "their national place in a world of nations" (Billig 1995: 8). To keep the assumptions of nationhood in place, they need to be flagged discursively – through "banal words, jingling in the ears of the citizens, or passing before their eyes" and "prosaic, routine words, which take notions for granted" (ibid.: 93). In short: through mass media. To detect the banal nationalism, it is necessary to explore the use of language in mass media. The smallest words can carry immense meaning, Billig shows us, as he draws our attention to the use of 'the' in front of 'people' to cement that this is *the* people and not just *any* people. Or the usage of 'we' and 'ourselves' opposite 'them' and 'their'. The routine use of *deixis* as well as *topoi* is quiet but effective (ibid.).

Billig explains national identity as a "series of familiar assumptions about nationhood, the world and 'our' place in that world" (ibid.: 93). These assumptions and notions are, what Billig calls, *invented permanencies*: small ever present reminders that seem innocently banal and mundane, but are "ideological constructions of nationalism" (ibid.: 29), that citizens believe have always existed; but rather they were created in the age of modernity to impose national hegemony. The notions and habits are so strongly embedded in our common sense that we forget that they were invented for this purpose, they go unnamed and unnoticed without us realizing that they reproduce nationalism daily. The narrative shows the nation as a subject with continuity in characteristics, 'personality', and essence throughout history (ibid.).

The French philosopher and orientalist, Ernest Renan, famously stated that a nation's existence is a "daily plebiscite" and without the daily choice to continue the nation, the nation disappears (Renan in Billig 1995: 95). According to Billig, this proves to be untrue, as he argues that citizens of a nation do not have a conscious choice as to whether they want to

continue the nation or not: “The citizens of an established nation do not, day by day, consciously decide that their nation should continue” (Billig 1995: 95). He argues that the banal practices of reproduction of the nation is needed to uphold it. In this also lies a critique of Anderson’s imagined communities, as “collective acts of imagination” is not enough to secure the nation.

3.5 Symbols of a nation – Anthony D. Smith

Smith’s ethnosymbolism is an alternative to modernist views of nationalism that considers the subjective elements in the persistence of ethnic groups as well as the forming of nations. Smith does not discard the modernists objective standpoint entirely; instead he seeks to explain the essence of ethnicity and nationalism by focusing on pre-existing ethnic components such as memories, values, feelings, myths, and symbols (Smith 2001). His main problem with modernism is the Eurocentric definition of a ‘modern’ state, because as he argues, the use of the word ‘modern’ implies that the character of a nation is by definition European (Smith 1998).

Smith introduces the term *ethnie*, by which he means an ethnic group, to describe pre-modern communities that share ethnic properties. These ethnies are constituted, “not by lines of physical descent, but by the sense of continuity, shared memory and collective destiny” (Smith in Smith 1998: 192). These shared features he identifies as “named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity” (ibid.: 191). And so, to define a nation, we need to look at:

1. A collective name
2. A myth of ancestry
3. Historical memories
4. Shared culture
5. Association to a territory or ‘homeland’
6. A sense of solidarity

All these attributes are powerful reminders of an ethnie, and to renew them, we constantly share them by using symbols such as “emblems, hymns, festivals, habitats, customs, linguistic codes, sacred places and the like” (ibid.: 191). In short, Smith puts the *social memory* of an ethnic group as the important factor in the pertaining of nations. Nations and ethnies are,

however, not to be used interchangeably. Though some will view nations as specialized forms of ethnies; others will view both as forms of collective cultural identity, often with more than one ethnie inside of the political boundaries of a nation, that can either co-exist or fight each other (Smith 2001). In some cases, the state is responsible for reproducing the national identity of *one* specific ethnie to dominate the other ethnies inside the nation – and so the state puts more weight on pertaining that certain ethnic identity than on sustaining a unified nation with room for all ethnic identities, which leads to ethnic exclusion, and ultimately, displacing of persons (Smith 1998). Smith explains this as *ethnic nationalism:*

> ... ethnic nationalism does not involve a specifically racist component, but manages to exclude non-members within and deny their rights, while preserving their essential humanity. Instead of being exterminated, they are rendered homeless. As indigestible minorities in their own homes, they suddenly find themselves deprived of a homeland. They are felt to constitute a threat to the continued existence, and purity, of the emergent ethnic nation. They must therefore be denied citizenship in their own land, rendered defenceless and homeless and ultimately driven out (Smith in Hutt 1996: 195)

To understand why a nation emerges, Smith has identified three routes to a nation depending on the ethnic point of departure. The first route involves what Smith calls *bureaucratic incorporation*, in which a bureaucratic state ruled by aristocratic ethnie gradually forges the nation by penetrating outlying regions imbuing the ethnic culture of the aristocracy on the middle and lower classes. All to be able to mobilize the people for wars and displays of wealth in front of other nations. The result of this is a national identity nurtured by territorial nationalism (ibid.). The second route is the route of *vernacular mobilization* which involves the return to 'an ethnic past', rediscovered and appropriated by the native intelligentsia in a quest for authenticity. The 'people' is mobilized in a transformation through their own history and culture to find a basis for national identity solidly established on a worshipping of 'our' indigenous history, culture, and language, which is the 'genuine' one (Smith 1998, 2001). Lastly, the third route to nationhood is the *immigrant nations* that are comprised of fragments of different ethnies, i.e. Australia, Canada, and the United States, where culturally different colonist-immigrants "pioneered a providentialist frontier nationalism" (Smith 1998: 194), which in turn led to an encouragement of ethnic and cultural diversity in a plural conception of the nation. Naturally, none of the three routes can guarantee nationhood; other factors such as market capitalism, bureaucracy, and secular mass education show significance in the

formation of nations. As well as chance and accidents, and notwithstanding human agency (ibid.).

3.6 Concepts for analysis

In this thesis, I do not take a solely modern or solely ethnosymbolic stance, but rather I combine the works of the two paradigms to understand and describe the tendencies of Bhutanese nationalism as expressed in newspaper media. Therefore, my theoretical basis is built on nation-building as the process in which the state uses its power to construct national identities for its citizens; and the imagined political community of a nation is perceived as sovereign and limited and inhabited by ethnies with a shared cultural history. However, often a nation will consist of more than one ethnie, which can lead to the dominating ethnie imposing its own identity on the other ethnies framing it as the *national* identity. Print capitalism is the invention of print media, which fostered nationalism as mass media such as books and newspapers became platforms on which imagined communities and national identities are communicated – preferably in a national language. Therefore, based on a combination of the three theorists, I will use the following key concepts in my analysis of how the RGoB is using media to support and reinforce the national identity of a certain ethnic group and how this challenges the democratization process of the country:

- **Simultaneity** in representation of the national identity through newspapers is important for the perception of an imagined community
- **National narrative** needs nationalist phrases and discourses to express nationalism to maintain the national identity of a nation
- **'Flagging'** of little reminders of national identity is a continuous process to keep citizens in place
- **Invented permanencies** as the familiar assumptions and notions of nationhood serving as small reminders of national identity
- **Ethnic nationalism** as the mechanism signified by a state excluding certain ethnies by imposing their own ethnic identity on them
- **Constant repetition** of small, insignificant words (deixis and topoi) serves to manifest a national identity

- **The social memory** consists of pre-existing ethnic components that both form the basis of the nation and serves to pertain the nation
- **Memories, values, feelings, myths, and symbols** are all part of a shared sense of continuity
- A nation needs **basic attributes** to call itself a nation: collective name, myth of ancestry, historical memories, shared culture, territory or 'homeland', and a sense of solidarity.
- **Symbols** serves as reminders of national identities, and can be festivals, emblems, customs, songs, language, holy places, etc.
- Nations can **contain several ethnies** that either co-exist or fight each other.

The national identity is something shared amongst the citizens, something to unite them as a national people. But since the national identity articulated in Bhutanese media is constructed by the RGoB to express the domination of a certain ethnie, I have chosen to distinguish between three forms of national identity in this thesis:

- *Desired national identity:* the identity that the RGoB wishes to promote as the 'true' identity of Bhutanese national citizens, namely Drukpa identity.
- *Supposed national identity:* the identity that the citizens feel they are supposed to identify with, and which they observe to avoid implications.
- *Actual national identity:* the identity which the individual citizen will truly identify with as their national identity, whichever ethnie they belong to.

4 Part 1: Newspaper narratives

In this first part of the analysis, I focus my attention to a linguistic analysis of the many ways Bhutanese media promotes the desired national identity using my empirical sample. Point of departure is the three overall themes that I mentioned in the research statement making this chapter tripartite in its structure focusing on each of the three themes in turn. In the individual analyses of the themes, I look at the linguistic choices made by the media using the analytical tools described in 1.3 as well as the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3. Identifying the words used to promote the desired national identity, I will be able to ascertain if this identity is ethnically excluding of smaller ethnies of the nation.

Anderson (2016 [1983]) states that books and newspapers are platforms to communicate the imagined community of a nation, preferably in a national language. Despite this, news in Bhutan are mostly in English, mainly due to the nature of Dzongkha (Bhutan Observer 2011b), and its limitations as written language. All articles of my sample are in English, and only a handful of them feature short paragraphs in Dzongkha mainly in religious context. Debate has been ongoing in Bhutan whether the extensive use of English is a problem in preserving the national language. Mancall (2004) has an interesting point when claiming that the struggle to establish Dzongkha as prevailing over English is a sign of a larger struggle to avoid global cultural homogenization: As long as English dominates in the daily life of the state, Bhutan has a hard time claiming cultural self-reliance and independence. It seems that the imagined community of Bhutan has a hard time finding a shared language to communicate in, making it difficult to maintain the illusion of a tight knitted community. This might be because Dzongkha is not the mother tongue of large parts of the population, and traditionally the language of the Drukpas. The special *bonds of unity* created by shared use of language (Billig 1995) are simply not present in the general population. Since there is no national language to be used in the maintaining of the desired national identity, special nationalist wording and phrases in English must take over the job of expressing it instead. These words and phrases will be the focus of this part of my analysis centered around the themes of my sample.

In all my sample texts, it is taken for granted that the reader overall knows about GNH. The assumption that all readers of the newspaper possesses this knowledge, shows that the intended audience of the newspapers are citizens that: 1. Can read; 2. Have access to newspapers either in print or online; 3. Are able to comprehend a complex concept such as GNH; and 4. Have an interest in GNH politics. With an adult literacy rate of around 52 percent and only just over half of the population schooled past primary school (Unicef 2012) – combined with the limited access to internet in rural areas (Faris 2005; Lhamo and Oyama 2015), it is fair to conclude that the newspapers are mainly targeting the educated elite of urban areas, which roughly translates to the Drukpa communities in Thimphu, Phuntsholing, and Punakha.

Introducing the themes

Reading the newspaper articles of my sample, some themes seemed to recur repeatedly in a steady attempt to support a certain discourse. From my coding, I have identified three main themes as the most important based on the number of articles covered by the themes: *cultural heritage, royal monarchy,* and *happiness*. Of course, most articles show attributes of more than one theme, therefore the themes are identified based on my overall impression after reading all articles. Overall, the three themes serve one common purpose: to support a desired national identity of Bhutan being a unique, culturally rich, happy nation led by a cherished and benevolent male monarch. However, the themes are used in different ways. Whereas *royal monarchy* and *cultural heritage* are very explicit displays of Bhutanese nationalism – and even Bhutanese *ethnic* nationalism – *happiness* is used to describe the end goal. This way, the two first themes are instrumental in achieving Bhutanese happiness – the ultimate happiness that the Bhutanese will achieve if they adhere to their supposed national identity. This I elaborate on in 4.3. In the sample, we are constantly reminded that aspects such as environmental protection, community service volunteering, religious observance, and preservation of cultural heritage are important values in upholding the distinct identity of Bhutan. Coincidentally, these values are identical to the ones found in the nine domains of GNH (Ura et al. 2012a). So, identifying the three themes, they all seem to be expressions of invented permanencies as they are constantly reminding the readers of their supposed national identity (Billig 1995). And sure enough, several articles highlight the naturalness of

the Bhutanese citizens inhabiting this nation as their forefathers before them – with the Kings as the uniting figures. As exemplified with this quote from The Bhutanese that embraces all three themes:

> Over the century, our great Monarchs have led the country into peace, stability and prosperity. Although a small nation, we are a unique nation – rich in our culture and traditions, fortunate to have the wisdom to pursue development with care for all beings and the environment. The National Day inspires us to become one people, one nation (The Bhutanese 2014b)

First off, the use of strong adjectives such as 'great', 'unique', 'rich', and 'fortunate' underlines all that is good about Bhutanese culture, which I will explore in 4.1 along with why 'unique' is equated with having rich cultures and traditions; secondly, as we will come to see in 4.2, the Kings are constantly listed as responsible for 'peace, stability and prosperity' ignoring all other problems of the nation; and thirdly, the last sentence mentions both 'National Day' and 'one people, one nation', which are clear references to the establishing of Bhutan in 1907, the continued independence of the nation, and the shared myths of ancestry that the RGoB wants the Bhutanese to believe. The last expression 'one people, one nation' is paraphrasing the development plan of 1989, popularly known as 'one nation, one people', which I mentioned in chapter 2. It is telling that this obvious expression of ethnic nationalism is still prevailing almost 30 years later. It shows that Bhutan is still very much governed by ethnic Drukpas. Therefore, in this chapter, I will dive into more examples of the use of small words to signify great things: analyzing the use of symbols and cultural artefacts as representatives of a certain 'Bhutanese' cultural identity – *the desired national identity* – defined by the ruling elite; exploring how this is framed as the road to happiness; and identifying in which ways this framing is ethnically excluding.

4.1 Theme 1: Cultural heritage

In 1549, a group of lamas assembled in the Chokhor Valley in Eastern Bhutan to select a new site to build a monastery, amongst them Ngagi Wangchuck, the great-grandfather of the Zhabdrung. During their meeting, a big white bird suddenly rose high into the air and where it finally settled on a hill, the lamas built their monastery (Lonely Planet 2017). The legend of Jakar Dzong is only one of thousands of legends, myths, folktales, and stories describing the country that became Bhutan, and one of the many I was told when traveling across Bhutan.

Traditionally, these stories were passed down orally through generations, and before the age of radio and television, legends were told, sung, and danced in the households of Bhutan (Evans 2006). The shared myths and memories served to unite the people and instill in them a shared sense of continuity. Of course, the many different ethnies of the geographical entity now known as Bhutan have their own myths and legends to support their specific ethnic identity (Hutt 1996; Pattanaik 1998). Today, however, the *Drukpa* myths of ancestry are promoted in public media as *Bhutanese* myths of ancestry, without regards to the many ethnic minorities that do not share these. With the emergence of mass media in the country, the ruling elite found a new tool to constantly accentuate the 'true' Bhutanese culture. It has become easier to promote a certain desired national identity, and through it convince the public that the Bhutanese identity is 'special' and 'unique'. The RGoB incessantly uses the media to promote Bhutanese culture repeating the same arguments as to why it should persist. In the following, I look at those arguments for preserving Bhutanese culture, how the culture is narrated and depicted, and how this accentuating of uniqueness is excluding of other ethnies.

Language

In my coding process, I had a theme called 'National narrative & cultural heritage', and it was by far the largest category. Article after article told of the greatness of the Bhutanese cultural heritage, and how preservation of it is crucial. Something that is also highlighted in the GNH framework (Ura et al. 2012b). Therefore, finding examples of language used to promote the cultural legacy have not been difficult, rather overwhelming. Therefore, instead of analyzing a select few articles for this section, I will focus on select paragraphs from a range of articles illustrating how the same wordings and phrases are used time and again to cement the desired national identity across all three newspapers. We begin with a longer paragraph from a speech given by the King to 174 scholarship recipients soon leaving to study abroad brought in Kuensel in March 2015 (Kuensel 2015e):

> "What we call "*Driglam-choesum*"– the manner with which we work, communicate, interact and behave with each other, is a precious legacy, safeguarded and passed on for generations by our ancestors, and there is great wisdom in it," His Majesty said. "The Bhutanese have high emotional intelligence, because we have been brought up with *Driglam-choesum*. As a result, we have safeguarded and protected our country successfully for millennia. If we value our cultural legacy, and recognize its importance, we will continue to succeed, as individuals and as a

> Nation." His Majesty said as ambassadors of the culture, people and nation, the students must represent the country well wherever they went (Kuensel 2015e)

Before going abroad, the King obviously wants to remind the students of their supposed national identity. This he does by highlighting the small deixis: '*we*' are a nation, '*we*' are in this together, and '*we*' are responsible for the continuation of the nation, therefore '*we*' must value our 'cultural legacy'. With this, the King equals himself with the citizens of Bhutan, underlining that everyone is obliged to partake in the nation-building. The 'precious legacy' that the Bhutanese share has been 'safeguarded', 'protected' and 'passed down' by the ancestors for millennia, and this ensures the continued success of the nation. Moreover, due to this special, traditional way of conducting oneself called '*Driglam-choesum'*, the Bhutanese are highly emotionally intelligent and wise. This is a highly obvious form of nationalism, in which the King accentuates the uniqueness of the nation and its people. The Bhutanese culture is so special that it needs to be presented 'well' to other nations to show the sovereignty and superiority of Bhutan as a nation. Although modern Bhutan was established only in 1907, the King refers to 'millennia' of cultural legacy reproducing the myths of ancestry that form the basis of the desired national identity. This is further manifested by the King telling the students to remember that:

> Our country is a jewel of the world […] and has always remained a proud sovereign nation, where the people enjoy happiness and peace today due to the labours of our ancestors (Kuensel 2015e)

According to the King, Bhutan has 'always remained a proud sovereign nation' due to the hard work of their ancestors – and the best way to honor them is to continue the hard work of nation building. The happiness enjoyed by Bhutanese today is owed to the 'labours of our ancestors'. *Our* ancestors. The *Drukpa* ancestors. With this he implies that the hard work of nation-building should continue to achieve even more happiness. The example shows that the monarchy is narrated as an important contributing factor in preserving the cultural legacy of Bhutan. This is not surprising, as the Kings are effectively controlling the formulation of the desired national identity, ever supported by the RGoB. However, the narrative can be retold without the mention of the royal monarchy, but still with the emphasis on the role of the ancestors as in this tribute to Bhutan on its National Day in December 2009 published by Bhutan Observer:

> This is just a sample of the events that unfold, but nonetheless events that signify, speak and show that we are one nation, culturally rich and descendants of "those" who never succumbed to imperialism. Yes! We were never

colonized. We did not need a "Mahatma" or a "Mandela" to struggle for something that originally belonged to them. Our forefathers used stones, thorns and everything that could be used as weapons to fight Imperial Britain, the Tibetans and the mighty Mongols (Bhutan Observer 2009b)

In this quote, the highlight is on the forefathers' fight to keep off enemies to secure the cultural sovereignty of the nation – although this is historical events pre-dating the official establishing of the modern nation Bhutan. The Bhutanese are narrated as 'culturally rich' and 'descendants' of great men. Therefore, 'we are one nation'. Again, deixis are important: '*one* nation' as in one united nation, and '*we* are' that united nation. The writer is obviously not considering all those ethnic minorities of Bhutan that had to succumb to Drukpa domination to create that *one* nation. Although he does acknowledge that Bhutan consists of many ethnies and cultures, but treats them almost as simple curiosities to be showcased through special 'cultural programmes':

The celebrations are certainly expressions of freedom, independence, identity, pride etc. We unfurl the national flag and sing the national anthem. Cultural programmes from different parts of the country showcase our diversity (Bhutan Observer 2009b)

The 'diversity' seems to be legitimizing of all the other things, the Bhutanese celebrate on National Day, such as 'freedom', 'independence', 'identity', 'pride'. Nevertheless, we get the feeling that these things were built on diversity, but are now sacrificed by the Drukpa elite to be able to 'unfurl the national flag' and 'sing the national anthem'. Prominent sources of opinions are repeatedly used to add validity to the statements. Besides the King, the prime minister is the most frequent guest in Bhutanese media, which he uses as occasions to cement Drukpa culture as part of Bhutanese national identity. Such as in The Bhutanese in October 2013:

Culture forms the essence of our identity. Our arts, ceremonies, music and festivals are not remnants of a bygone age; they continue to have a significant role in our everyday life. Our dzongs and ancient temples have scared Nangtens blessed by great Lams and Rinpoches. It is our responsibility to care of them and hand them down to the next generation (The Bhutanese 2013a)

The prime minister stresses that '*our* identity' is formed by 'our' culture, by which he of course means Drukpa culture. He mentions important cultural artefacts such as 'arts', 'ceremonies', 'music', 'festivals', 'dzonghs' and 'ancient temples'. He refers to old myths of

ancestry by mentioning the 'Nangtens', 'Lams', and 'Rinpoches'. All this he does to ultimately justify the 'responsibility' of all Bhutanese to care for the culture and pass it on to 'the next generation'.

The notions and phrasings mentioned so far in this section recur repeatedly in articles across all three newspapers underpinning the general tendencies of framing the cultural heritage as one uniform thing. Moreover, we see an insistent tendency to articulate the culture of Bhutan as 'rich' and 'unique' as we see in the following quotes from all three newspapers:

> As the nation embarked upon modernisation, He [the fourth King] saw in one panorama a modern Bhutan with and without its unique tradition and culture and what it meant for its future (Kuensel 2015f)

> Our country is endowed with a very rich cultural diversity handed down our forefathers (The Bhutanese 2012f)

> Bhutan's pristine environment and its rich traditions and cultures are its greatest strength and a source of global interest (Bhutan Observer 2009a)

> Know that real Bhutan lives in the countryside where humble herders and farmers live, where the pulsating heart of Bhutanese culture is (Bhutan Observer 2010)

Time and again, the culture of Bhutan is described as 'unique' and 'rich'; and in the last quote it is even underpinned that the 'real' Bhutanese culture is found in the countryside. This is generally a recurring theme in the articles: In the large cities, the old cultural ways are slowly eroding due to modernization, and all Bhutanese should humbly remember their ancestral roots. This seems somewhat contradictory as the people here promoting rural living are the same to have gained the most from urban living. When living in Bhutan, I often had questions about the way things were done or the way old things would look. The answer was always the same: "it's traditional". This mantra was constantly repeated, never questioned, and the main argument never changed: traditional equals good. Whenever my friends would endure hardship in their lives, they would remember the golden days of childhood spent in the humble and traditional homesteads of rural Bhutan – though, for what I could gather, most of them lived in poverty during childhood, they romanticized rural living and the traditional ways. The intense focused strategy to control discourse on cultural heritage obviously has not been in vain. My Bhutanese friends really did believe in the mantra.

Unique or exclusive?

The cultural legacy of the Bhutanese as determined by the Drukpa is repeatedly articulated as unique, accentuating how others not ascribing to the same culture are not. This way, the RGoB frames the Bhutanese culture as something only for the few, the special ones, the Drukpa descendants. However, despite the imminent praising of the unique and rich culture, several articles tell of a diminishing interest in practicing it. However, the interesting thing is that the other ethnies are never blamed for the eroding of Bhutanese (Drukpa) culture, they are not mentioned at all. Instead, modernization and globalization are framed as taking their tolls on the small nation, and why the cultural values are framed as important to preserve. An article from Bhutan Observer in 2008 about the new trends coming to the youths of Bhutan from 'outside', names the many merits of the traditional mask dance, which, unfortunately, is discarded by the youths, who according to the article find other stimulants to make them happy:

> Our young people have been swayed by a popular global culture. Cozy bar and trendy disco, snooker and bowling, television and computer, cell phone and play station, oversized pants and flimsy topless, hugging and kissing in public, and drug-abuse and gang-fights have not just come in to our society but replaced many age-old aspects of our culture and tradition (Bhutan Observer 2008b)

Despite GNH and the rich, unique culture of the Kingdom, the youths have been 'swayed' by pop culture, which makes the task of preserving old cultures difficult. Notice how the article equates serious issues such as 'drug-abuse' and 'gang-fights' with the relatively harmless 'bowling', 'oversized pants' and 'hugging and kissing in public'. This is not unusual in the newspaper articles. Almost all cultural trends coming from the outside are perceived as threats to lure youths into trouble. The main problem with these new cultural habits of the young, however, seems to be that they are replacing the 'age-old aspects of our culture and tradition', which of course is threatening the legitimacy of the desired national identity. Cultural performances and exhibitions of national culture are old traditions in Bhutan, and the traditional *tshechu* is the ultimate display of national culture and pride. The old myths and legends are told through mask dances, music, and colorful costumes. Every town and region have their own tshechus to commemorate old values and traditions (Barth and Wikan 2011; Pek-Dorji 2008). According to Kuensel in September 2015, legend has it that tshechu

originated in a series of mask dances done by the Guru Rinpoche to help save the dying King of Bumthang (a region in contemporary Bhutan), and as thanks the King helped spread Buddhism in Bhutan. Since that time, tsheschus have been used as "the most profound public teaching – how we live our lives, how we need to conduct ourselves as an individual member of society" (Kuensel 2015d). However, today the original purpose of the festivals seems to have given way to a perception of tshechus as an opportunity for partying. A young man is interviewed stating that: "Tshechu is fun. We get to see a lot of different things and time to hangout during nights […] There should be more modern dance and songs" (ibid.). A young woman is quoted for saying: "I don't understand why these dancers are going about wasting so much time […] I have heard that the dances have special meaning. I don't get it" (ibid.) Moreover, traders and hawkers exploit the situation to sell their merchandise on the streets surrounding the arena. Such low regards for old traditional culture is of course not befitting for a country that sells itself on exactly those old traditions. This is also problematized in Bhutan Observer in 2009: "We have seen a lot of changes taking place in our lives, some of which are in stark contrast to our traditional cultures and values" (Bhutan Observer 2009a), the writer states and lists areas in which old culture have given way to 'globalization'. Music, dress, dances, even hairstyles have changed and now 'contradict' traditions and customs of the Bhutanese. The writer does not like this change, and he fears it will result in a "dilution of our traditional values over time" (Bhutan Observer 2009a). Luckily, he muses, Bhutan has the 'wise leadership' of the Kings to help them withstand the impact of modernization, as well as the framework of GNH to help preserve the national culture.

In all three examples of eroding cultural observance, the youths are to blame – especially the urban youths. However, it is no fault of theirs, they have been tempted by modernization. Modernization is what spurred the cultural degradation and by focusing on preserving the culture, modernization can be surmounted. As I mentioned, the other ethnies of Bhutan are generally not blamed for the diminishing Drukpa culture, which I believe is a deliberate strategy of the RGoB. If the ruling elite were to blame the other ethnies for the diminishing culture, they would: a) have to admit that the ethnies exist, and to admit this would be to admit that they are unrightfully imposing their own desired national identity on all ethnies living inside the nation Bhutan; and b) acknowledge that other ethnies have the power to undermine the rich and unique Drukpa culture, and that would be contra-productive to the discourse on a culture prevailing for centuries due to the hard work of the ancestors.

Therefore, media find other scapegoats such as modernization and globalization; resulting in the other ethnies being systematically ignored, underrepresented, and marginalized by public media – except as earlier mentioned, in the few cases in which they are treated as simple curiosities for amusement, and those cases never feature Nepali Bhutanese, but other tolerated ethnies. Rizal, too, agrees with this notion, stating that the ethnic exclusion "stems from the insecure, feudal monarchial system ruling Bhutan" (Rizal 2004: 157), and furthermore that "the dominant Drukpa elite has perceived cultural and religious diversity as a threat to the regime's hegemony" (ibid.). This I will explore further in the latter part of chapter 5 and in the discussion in chapter 6 on democratic challenges.

4.2 Theme 2: Royal monarchy

No one could doubt the fact that the hereditary Kings of Bhutan are extremely popular amongst the population and that they are largely responsible for the happiness of Bhutanese – or at least we are left with that impression after reading the articles of the sample. Whether the royalty really is this popular, we have no means of telling through a reading of newspaper articles as they represent the choices of the text producer, who has the power to carefully select the people interviewed and quoted in the articles. Therefore, the focus in this thesis is on how they are *presented* rather than how they are *perceived* – as well as how the *public* is presented in relation to the monarchy. As an example, we see the many articles following the birth of the crown prince in February 2016, when The Bhutanese reported how Facebook and Twitter went "into a hyper drive with citizens clearly expressing their happiness in various ways" (The Bhutanese 2016a), and later how people were rushing to photo studies to buy framed photos of the newborn to hang in their homes (The Bhutanese 2016b c); the descriptions of the public and the choice of wording are on the journalists.

Traditionally, the King of Bhutan is never seen in any other dress than the Drukpa *gho*. This attire he wears to signal his Drukpa ancestry and to encourage all other Bhutanese to honor the traditional wear of their forefathers (Mathou 2000), or at least, the *King's* forefathers. Obviously, the monarchs and the people are not equal, but the monarchs are still presented as close to the people. *Almost* like ordinary people, and then not, framing themselves as servants of the people. According to Rizal, this self-sacrificing is a rationalized strategy on the Drukpa monarchs to legitimize their continued rule. Basically, the monarchs use their lineage and

superior rank to justify that they are "personally entitled to national dominance" (Rizal 2004: 166), and they project a false image of their privileges being based in both ascription and "mythologised history and cultivated discrimination" (ibid.). The deception runs deep, and according to Rizal, no hard evidence has ever been presented to verify the claims of the royalty truly being of pre-monarchy Drukpa heritage (ibid.). In the following, I will look at how this deception is operationalized, how the public is instructed in how to feel, and how questioning the Drukpa monarchy is out of the question.

Language

The words used to describe the monarchs and their achievements are generally colorful and grandiose, words like 'prosperity', 'selfless endeavor', 'profound', 'auspicious' and 'noble' are routinely used in relations to the Majesties and their deeds. These are not just subtle uses of deixis, but rather very explicit uses of topoi to constantly reaffirm the grandeur of the monarchy as part of the desired Bhutanese national identity. The Kings are described to be hardworking and never flailing in their service to their people, and at the same time, the public is described as ever loyal and happy with the Kings. Again, this serves to reaffirm the public that the monarchs have the public's interests close at heart, and that all 'true' Bhutanese cherish their Kings. In the following, I will compare three articles from each of the three newspapers concerning a royal event to illustrate the general framing of the monarchy across different media. Due to the differing time periods of accessible articles, it is not possible to find three articles covering the *same* event, which would have been ideal. Instead, I found three events that more of less equals in proportions: the announcement of an upcoming royal wedding in 2011 in Bhutan Observer (Bhutan Observer 2011c), the celebration of the royal couple's first wedding anniversary in 2012 in The Bhutanese (The Bhutanese 2012b), and the announcement of the Queen's pregnancy in 2015 in Kuensel (Kuensel 2015c). These are not the most pompous or grandiose articles about the monarchs, rather they are a tiny bit more subdued than the long eposes on the monarchs that usually fill the news slots in the papers. This is a conscious choice on my part, because I want to show the banal, routine flaggings of the desired national identity that occur even in the most "innocent" of articles in Bhutan.

In Bhutan Observer in May 2011 (Bhutan Observer 2011c), the news of an upcoming royal wedding later that year is published. The young King has decided to marry, and is asking the public to welcome his future wife and Queen. The article is not very long, nor very grand in its choice of language compared to many other articles. It features some quotes from the fifth King probably taken from his announcement speech, as well as small elements of reportage in the descriptions of what took place during the announcement. In the article, the King describes what qualities a queen should possess:

> What is most important for Queen, His Majesty said, is that at all times, as an individual, she must be a good human being, and as Queen, she must be unwavering in her commitment to serve the people and country (Bhutan Observer 2011c)

The King believes that he has found such a person and stresses how she will become a "great servant to the nation" and that she will "work with me, as I serve the People and Country" (ibid.). In all three quotes, the weight is put on the deixis, specifically on the little word 'the'. She will serve '*the'* people and '*the'* nation, *the* Bhutan. Moreover, the king uses the words "the blessings of our People" (ibid.), pinpointing that the nation and people stand together in this, that he is one of the people, *our* people. It is also described, how the prime minister expresses his happiness and takes the occasion to underpin the "pivotal role of the Throne in Bhutanese nationhood" (ibid.). With this, the prime minister firmly legitimizes the monarchy of today, as it played a vital role in the establishment of the nation Bhutan. More than announcing his bride-to-be, the King assures the people that the wedding will take place according to 'age-old traditions' all to 'seek the blessings of the guardian deities'. With this, the king ratifies the monarchy's roots in the old myths of ancestry in which these 'age-old traditions' were established, as well as he reminds us of the monarchy's prolonged relationship with the Buddhist gods. The latter part of the article describes the public's reaction to the news beginning with:

> Outside the parliament hall, a wave of excitement and joy swept across the country as the people of 20 dzongkhags watched His Majesty announce his wedding on live television. The feeling of joy at the news is palpable on every face (Bhutan Observer 2011c)

And continuing with descriptions of how people hurriedly shared the news on social media and text-messaged friends and family in other areas of the country. The people is described to experience a 'feeling of joy' and there was a 'wave of excitement and joy'. This we see

repeatedly in the sample, and it functions almost as a form of social control, reminding the reader that it is expected of him to feel joy at this news to fit into the supposed national identity. It is meant to exude the sense of solidarity that keeps the nation together.

In The Bhutanese in October 2012 (The Bhutanese 2012b), the preparations of the celebratory activities of the royal couple's first wedding anniversary is described. To honor the royal couple, the whole country has been preparing "cultural shows, art competitions, archery matches, school programs, offering prayers in Lhakhangs, song and dance, picnics etc." (ibid.). It appears to be vital to celebrate the anniversary with activities that focuses on Bhutanese culture and traditions, i.e. the 'cultural shows' and the 'song and dance', the latter very likely to be a performance of traditional dance accompanied by traditional music with dancers wearing traditional attire (I have been to quite a few). The national sport in Bhutan is archery, and so to organize archery matches to celebrate seems inevitable. As always during auspicious events, the Bhutanese offers prayers in Lhakhangs[5] as well as 'offering khaddar' and 'lightning butter lamps'; all religious activities that shows the religious ties of the community. All the activities are therefore showcasing Bhutanese culture, specifically the Drukpa part of it. The article mentions that the main part of the activities is organized by 'ordinary citizens' and that "the entire nation will once again be in a celebratory mood" (ibid.), which of course highlights the sense of solidarity, of 'we are in this together'-feeling, that all citizens are supposed to feel. As we have come to expect in these events, the celebrations will be full of 'merriment' and 'a strong sense of joy', the words once again functioning as further guidelines as to how the reader should be feeling. The labor minister is quoted saying: "The day is what we all, the Bhutanese people were looking forward to" (ibid.). Again, we see the emphasis on *'we'* and moreover 'we *all'* and '*the* Bhutanese' to remind everyone that this anniversary is something '*we'* all should partake in as it is vital to our supposed national identity. After elaborating on the prime minister's plan to golf in the honor of the royal couple, the article states that "ordinary people will also be celebrating in their own unique ways" (ibid.). The emphasis on 'ordinary people' very neatly separates the monarchs and the ministers of the RGoB from *the rest,* and almost paternalistically gives the '*ordinary* people' permission to celebrate however they see fit, in their own '*unique* ways'.

[5] Temples or monasteries

One line in the articles reads: "There will also be patriotic songs dedicated to the Royal Couple" (ibid.). This is not in itself surprising, as Bhutanese tend to produce song texts, poems, and essays *en masse* when celebrating large events. The surprising thing is that the article so openly names the songs *'patriotic'.* According to Billig, a people would never label their actions and feelings towards their homeland as 'nationalism'. Nationalism is a negative connotation reserved for 'the others', meaning that *other* people in *other* countries are nationalist, not *us*. Therefore, to have a term to describe the love of their *own* country, people turn to the term 'patriotism', and so the distinction between nationalism and patriotism serves as a distinction between 'them' and 'us' (Billig 1995). So, by writing about 'patriotic songs', The Bhutanese not only writes of songs 'dedicated to the Royal Couple', but of songs dedicated to the nation, the homeland, the desired national identity.
The second half of the article features quotes from citizens either wishing the happy couple a 'happy anniversary' or using the opportunity to pray for the couple's future happiness and 'good health and a long life'. All remarks from the public are endowing the royal couple, one stating that "Bhutan would be nowhere without the Royal Couple", another that "We have the worlds best looking Royal Couple who are very kind and caring", and one even going as far as "the King and Queen are like our Mother and Father" (The Bhutanese 2012b). Trusting this narrative, no one in Bhutan does not feel immense love for the royal couple. The gatekeeping role of both the journalist, the editor and, ultimately, the RGoB is evident here, ensuring that only the *right* comments from the public are published in this news story.

The last article was published in November 2015 in Kuensel (Kuensel 2015c). The article presents a range of quotes from both the public and prominent figures in society on the news of a future royal heir. It reads a little grander in the language use of the journalists than the two other articles. The quotes from the interviewed persons, however, reads very similar. The article conveys the news of a new heir to the golden throne, announced at the fourth King's 60th birthday celebrations. The opening quote sets the scene:

> The past, the present and the future, converged at Changlimethang, yesterday, as the nation was celebrating His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo's 60th birth anniversary when His Majesty The King fulfilled the wishes of the people (Kuensel 2015c)

In this quote, the journalists refer to both the time-old existence of the Bhutanese people as well as the golden era to come for the nation in its continued existence. It is by no way a coincidence that the speech is delivered at the Changlimithang Stadium, where the final battle that settled the fate of the nation Bhutan was fought (Mancall 2004). The wording 'fulfilled the wishes of the people' seems rather dramatic for an announcement of a pregnancy, but it underlines that the people have wished for an heir, and that the King and Queen have now met that expectation to the fullest. Afterwards, this is cemented with the statement 'the nation is overjoyed'. Clearly, this is news that brings together the nation, *the* nation.

The article goes on to describe the immediate reactions of the citizens present at the event, as they "reacted with loud applause" and some even had "tears streaking down their faces" (Kuensel 2015c). The message is clear: Being Bhutanese and reading how others reacted at the news of the Queen's pregnancy, you are reminded how to feel, and if you do not partake in the emotional reaction, you do not fit into the supposed national identity.

Obviously, the announcement has been meticulously timed to go public on exactly this day to tie together the three generations of monarchs in Bhutan. The future heir is mentioned as a 'tribute' to the fourth King as well as a 'most valuable gift' to the people. No doubt, the RGoB want the readers to feel lucky to receive this precious gift. The King speaks of praying for both his father and his son, once again confirming the close relationship to Buddhism, after which he states: "Since he will carry forward our future, the Prince will be a son to all Bhutanese as well" (ibid.). The new heir will 'carry forward *our* future', the Bhutanese future. Therefore, he belongs to *all* Bhutanese, he is a son to *all,* not just to the royal couple. By this, the King is affirming the continued rule of the Wangchuck dynasty and of the nation Bhutan. He emphasizes this further by saying:

> I consider my son extremely fortunate, because he will be born in our blessed country. We owe our good future, our peace, prosperity, and security to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo (Kuensel 2015c)

Once again, the King ties together the generations of monarchs, but he also attributes the nation's happiness to his father, the fourth King. This he often does in the sample articles, continuously reminding the people of Bhutan who to thank for the positive development the country has undertaken. More than that, he assures the people that Bhutan will stay on this good course by underpinning that *his* son will thrive in this country. This blessed country. *Our* blessed country.

The prime minister is, as always, voicing his opinion, and he thanks the King and Queen for the 'imminent arrival of our Prince'. Again, *our* prince. What is more interesting is his next sentence, in which he thanks the royal couple for 'their precious gift to the Pelden Drukpa'. The *Pelden Drukpa* translates to 'Drukpa lineage' or 'Drukpa people', and the prime minister here refers to the supposedly century long lines of superior Drukpa rulers and their devoted people, the Drukpa Bhutanese. Even though only around one third of the Bhutanese population call themselves Drukpa (Rizal 2004), the Drukpa hegemony is once again established. Moreover, the prime minister mentions that "the gods continue to shower their blessings on our beloved Drukyul" (Kuensel 2015c), once again using *Drukyul* as a way to establish supremacy and further connecting this to the deities, underlining that the Drukpa are the 'true' Buddhists of the country. The director of CBS, Karma Ura, expresses something similar in the article as he mentions an old saying, that the King apparently quoted in his speech: 'The Prince of the King/the lineage of the Druk'. Ura relates this to the heir being 'the son of Bhutan', and thus contributes to the justification of Drukpa domination. Another prominent figure just simply states: "And the dynasty lives on" (ibid.). Several other important public figures express similar opinions, all supporting Drukpa supremacy as the nation's supposed national identity, but I will leave at this, as I have stated my point.

Critiquing the monarchy

As we remember from section 1.4, critique of the royal monarchy in Bhutan is prohibited (Reporters Without Borders 2016), and sure enough, I never encountered a single article containing critique of the monarchs. But are they really this loved? A good friend of mine, with whom I worked closely during my time in Bhutan, regularly told me of his feelings towards the royalty. He did like the fourth and fifth Kings very much and felt that they were by large responsible for his fortune in life. He also liked one of the Queen Mothers[6] for whom he had worked as a photographer during his youth. However, his warm feelings did not extend beyond these three royals. He tolerated the current Queen as she obviously made the King happy, but all other royalties were a nuisance in his world. He felt they used their titles to unrightfully gain land and property, and he often pointed out places were forest had been cut down to accommodate the estate of some insignificant prince or princess, which disgusted

[6] The fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck has four wives all called Queen Mothers.

him to no ends. However blunt and honest he was when describing this to me, a 'chillup'[7], he would never express these thoughts publically or amongst colleagues. He obviously realized that this would be a bad idea, and only felt safe discussing this when in company of an outsider. According to the Freedom in the World Index 2016, in Bhutan "private discussion is generally free and open, though restrictive laws and other factors may deter uninhibited speech on sensitive topics, such as those related to ethnicity or the monarchy" (Freedom House 2016). Media are not alone in being restricted from criticizing the monarchy, citizens feel limited in this area as well.

As we have experienced in the quotes from 'ordinary' citizens, the Bhutanese never speak bad of their monarchs, but more than that they tend to use the same phrases and wordings in their descriptions of them: 'noble', 'auspicious', 'great', 'special' to describe the monarchs, and 'joyous', 'happy', 'proud' to describe their own feelings. Obviously, the journalists are subjected to government control, and so they must use the same grand phrases repeatedly. But why are the interviewed citizens doing the same? I see four possible answers to that question:

1. The citizens truly have these feelings and feels happy to be able to express them publicly
2. The journalists carefully select interviewees and polish their quotes to fit the purpose
3. The citizens feel scared to voice their opinion in any other way
4. The citizens have been subjected to the same phrases and wordings for decades and have adopted them as their own.

Without being able to fully ascertain which answer holds the truest, but based on the analysis of the three articles, I believe that a combination of answers 2, 3 and 4 come closest to the truth.

4.3 Theme 3: Happiness

As explained in the introduction of this chapter, the two first themes are repeatedly narrated as constituents of Bhutanese fortune and happiness. Through these themes, happiness and GNH is framed as something distinctive of the Bhutanese, a goal that can be attained through careful worshipping of the Kings and the cultural legacy. And even more importantly, as

[7] A chillup/chillip is a foreigner, typically a white person. The term is generally used to describe foreigners in a factual matter, not very often used in negative or condescending manner.

something uniquely rich and exclusive that encapsulates the essence of the 'true' Bhutanese, the Drukpa Bhutanese. As 'happiness' was the search word for the empirical data collection, naturally, the word is occurring in all articles – and very often related to news about GNH. The way happiness is framed, it appears that the general discourse is to consider happiness a distinct feature of the Bhutanese. The Bhutanese cultural heritage, the old traditions, the religious beliefs and practices of Buddhism – all symbols of the desired national identity lead to happiness. As one of the pillars of GNH is preservation of culture (Ura et al. 2012b), it makes sense for the media to connect these aspects in their coverage. In general, the coverage of GNH and happiness shares many similarities across the three newspapers, judging by the sample of articles. GNH is framed as invented by the fourth King, refined by years of hard work, and expressing the true nature and culture of Bhutanese people. The people is framed as being happy for the small things in life, valuing family life, living in harmony with nature, and striving towards collective happiness for all in the Kingdom. In the following, I will look closer at situations, in which the RGoB uses happiness to promote Bhutanese culture, legitimize GNH, and establish happiness as an integral part of the desired Bhutanese national identity – as well as the goal or purpose for the Bhutanese, who adhere to the 'true' national identity.

Language

In this section, I will focus on the language used to promote GNH looking at what linguistic choices the newspapers make to convince the readers that GNH is part of their supposed national identity, and how happiness is intrinsically linked to the other two themes. For this, I have chosen quotes from another type of articles than in the two other themes, namely the articles featuring long, heartfelt praises of GNH values by stakeholders and prominent figures. This type of articles contributes to the overall discourse on happiness and GNH in a highly obvious way. The small, insignificant and almost banal words to reaffirm the desired national identity are replaced by large, bombastic, grandiose words to very visibly support the desired national identity. I will start off with how happiness is framed by prominent stakeholders and hereafter move on to how this narrative is ethnically excluding.

In his own *Address on the State of the Nation 2009-2010* (Thinley 2010), the prime minister links happiness and GNH with the 'fine values' and culture of the Bhutanese. He underlines

that for the Bhutanese to find happiness, they must strive towards achieving GNH. He accentuates that this will happen through the survival of the Bhutanese culture; and the culture will 'flourish' as long the '*we*' work towards it.

> I am convinced that our culture and all its fine values will survive and flourish as long we as we continue to be guided by GNH. It is indeed in our culture and through it that we will find happiness (Thinley 2010)

The idea of being 'guided by' GNH is recurrent in many articles. GNH is in this way articulated as something positive that will help the people find happiness, rather than something to strictly follow and comply with. This moves the focus from the less ideological and spiritual aspect of GNH, namely that its operationalization happens trough policy-making. And we understand why the RGoB wants to move the focus from policies which can be difficult to understand, and instead focus on spiritual well-being. Also, it covers up the facts that a) there are thousands of extremely poor people in the country who are not covered by GNH polices; and b) not all Bhutanese are happy. This seems to be the general problem in the framing of GNH: that it lacks in operationalization and the RGoB is trying to disguise this by focusing on *what* are to be achieved instead of *how* to achieve it. But not only the current government in office are using these tactics, the opposition and new parties are all basing political manifestos on GNH, as for example The Druk Chirwang Tshogpa (DCT), whose manifesto states that:

> DCT will inculcate a strong sense of family and human values amongst the nation's children and youth to revive and promote Bhutanese tradition, culture and way of life (The Bhutanese 2013b)

According to the party, this focus on 'Bhutanese tradition, culture and way of life' and 'family and human values' will enable the Bhutanese to "pursue genuine happiness" as the party believes that "happiness is a fundamental human desire" (ibid.). Here we see the way happiness permeates all official communication in Bhutan, and how the people are constantly reminded of how to achieve it: by preserving, reviving, and promoting the Bhutanese cultural legacy. A cultural legacy that is formed, narrated, and dictated by the Drukpa rulers. The politicians and ministers are, however, not the biggest players in the game of happiness. It is without doubt the Kings, whom the Bhutanese owe their gratitude. The fourth King is presented as the inventor of the concept, the main contributor in forming the concept, and his son is the main power behind its operationalization. All this they can do by the virtue of their

great Drukpa legacy of ancestral wisdom as expressed by The Bhutanese in 2016 after the birth of the crown prince:

> As the nation welcomes the Sixth heir to the Golden Throne, it is an appropriate time to reflect on the pivotal role of our visionary Kings in forging the destiny of Drukyul. The Monarchs of Bhutan – each and every one of them – came with just the right attributes for the times (The Bhutanese 2016c)

And in Bhutan Observer in 2007:

> Putting the interest of the people above everything, His Majesty the King propounded the philosophy of Gross National Happiness, which emphasises the spiritual, cultural, emotional and psychological well-being of the people while pursuing economic development (Bhutan Observer 2007)

This royal vision is narrated as the main reason that Bhutanese are happy today – conveniently filtering out the people of the country, who are not happy. And to fulfill the vision of the Kings, the people needs to work to preserve the cultural heritage of the nation. In that way, the three themes are intrinsically linked: theme 1, the cultural heritage, is promoted by theme 2, the royal monarchy, to obtain the goal of theme 3, happiness. In order to convince the people to move forward with this quest to preserve the cultural legacy, the King repeatedly asks his people to help him. This way, he shows the citizens that he has faith in their abilities, and that he trusts their motives.

A very short notice brought in Kuensel in April 2015 (Kuensel 2015b) shows this very blatantly. The article tells of the new batch of Desuung[8] trainees, and features one quote only, but from the King himself:

> You are the guardians of peace, stability and happiness of our country, and the custodians of our National Identity […] Your character and attitude towards work and disposition towards service will shape our future (Kuensel 2015b)

Well, it is hard to imagine anyone being more obvious than this. The King literally commends the Desuung volunteers for protecting the 'national identity' of the Bhutanese – and judging from the quote their work in this area is vital, as they are '*the* custodians'. In addition, he

[8] Desuung or De-Suung translates to *Guardians of Peace and Harmony,* and is a voluntary program for civilians, who are trained to handle disaster operations, partake in charitable events and aid others in need (www.desuung.org.bt). It can be compared to the Danish Home Guard (Hjemmeværnet).

places the responsibility for the nation's 'peace, stability and happiness' in their hands. He then moves to praise them for their 'character', which we gather is good; their 'attitude towards work', which we must assume is exemplary; and their 'disposition towards service', which is a reminder that they are to serve us all, and thus serving the nation. As voluntary work holds high esteem in Bhutan, it must be a great honor to hear the King himself asking for your voluntary 'service'. And to hear him tell you that your work will 'shape our future'. *Our* future. In the article, we hear that the Desuung volunteers are granted audience for 'more than an hour', implying that this is an unusually long audience and therefore a great honor. At the audience, the King "inspired the volunteers to contribute to nation building" and through small acts "contribute to national pride and integrity, to larger visions of strengthening our economy and achieving prosperity for all the people" (Kuensel 2015b). In this, the King identifies 'nation building' as one important goal consisting of 'national pride and integrity', 'visions' of a strengthened society, and achievements of 'prosperity for *all* the people' of Bhutan. Which basically reads as GNH. And as nationalism.

Praising the cultural legacy of Bhutan and how it contributes to happiness is mainly built on a praising of Drukpa culture. But once and again, the many smaller ethnies of Bhutan is mentioned, their lifestyles mostly articulated as 'pure', 'true', and worth preserving. This appears to be a move to underline the great inclusiveness of the Drukpas as they embrace the diversity described in the GNH framework. This praise to the highlanders from Kuensel in 2016 is illustrative of this:

> Our highlanders are our last sentinels. That's why we celebrate our highland cultures and ways of life. That's why we celebrate our diversity. In a way, celebration of highland cultures and lives is taking development to places that have largely remained isolated in the folds of formidable mountains. It is reinforcing the fact that we do care about our people and communities that are far removed from the comforts of the city centres. More than anything, we celebrate highlander festivals to keep our unique traditions alive in the face of rapid societal evolution. It is preserving our cultures, which is one of the main pillars of Gross National Happiness.
>
> (Kuensel 2016b)

Once again, we see the link to GNH, as well as the same romanticizing of rural life we saw in 4.1. With this quote, Kuensel implies that the truly happy people of Bhutan are the people still practicing old ways of living. Moreover, the newspaper uses the quote to underline that GNH is still for *everyone*, even people and communities living far from the large cities. The

repetition of the word 'our' implies that highland culture is acknowledged by the Drukpas as 'legitimate' cultures of Bhutan. The Drukpas basically embraces the highland people and their vital culture. This notion is further supported by this quote from Kuensel:

> It is a gesture to emphasise the importance of Bhutan's diverse social and cultural festivals that are to be encouraged and preserved and it is a Royal message that there should not be any discrimination against any section of society on the basis of religion, community, or any other social and cultural factors […] Then we will truly be in a position to foster well being, security and happiness (Kuensel 2016a)

Encouraging diversity and underlining that discrimination is not acceptable, the King puts emphasis on the preservation of cultural artefacts and national symbols in the fostering of 'well being', 'security', and ' happiness'. However, based on the findings of ethnic exclusion in the first two themes, this sounds rather contradictory coming from the main driving force in the promotion and preservation of ethnic Drukpa hegemony on the expense of other ethnies, and especially the Nepali Bhutanese.

Happy development?

We just saw how happiness is narrated as the main product of preservation of cultural heritage and royal monarchy in Bhutan. As Bhutan's rapid socioeconomic development so far coincides with the existence of GNH as a concept in Bhutan, it allows the media to connect the two things, thus framing happiness and GNH as keystones in a healthy value-based development. But not all are falling for this systematic promotion of GNH as the solution to all perils, and one major problem that the RGoB faces is that although all Bhutanese have heard of the concept of GNH, rarely no one understands it. The concept is too complex and too elitist. As phrased in an editorial called *Demystifying GNH* in Bhutan Observer in July 2008: "What is GNH to the common Bhutanese caught in the throes of chaotic transformation? It is the conscious as well as mandated ideal of the government" (Bhutan Observer 2008a). This notion seems to mostly fill the slots of the private newspapers, mainly Bhutan Observer, who dares to go more critical than the other two. Three years later, the same question is asked in the same newspaper in *Can't GNH be kept simpler?:* (Bhutan Observer 2011a c)

> As a layman, who has little understanding of the deeper philosophy of GNH, I often wonder in what ways the intellectual products of GNH conferences and discussions will actually help address the problems of ordinary folks like me (ibid.)

It might be worth noting that although the writer thinks so himself, he cannot be perceived as 'ordinary folks'. The mere fact that he has access to a computer and internet, that he can read and write, and that he has the capacity to put together a piece of critical writing like the one showcased, puts him in the class of resourceful, educated, and higher middle class Bhutanese that we find in the Drukpa communities. He is by no means a 'layman'. However, he does have a point. In the efforts of making Bhutan synonymous with happiness, the RGoB has forgotten to educate the people on it. Or might it be a deliberate strategy to keep the public uninformed on the finer shades of GNH to keep them from questioning its legitimacy? Reading the comment section of Bhutan Observer, we do get the feeling that many Bhutanese support GNH just for the sake of supporting it, without really reflecting upon the change it *supposedly* makes in their lives.

One very interesting reportage, who later won a journalistic prize, is the *Ungar Diary* (Bhutan Observer 2009d) published in Bhutan Observer in February 2009. In it, the journalist travels to the poorest of the poor in the remote Ungar village in Lhuentse, where he stays with the locals to observe their life struggles. In the piece, the journalist uncovers the truth about the recent GNH survey, when several of the villagers confess to him that they lied during their survey interviews. They were afraid to tell the truth: that they are unhappy. Despite all the incessant focus on GNH in Bhutan, there are still pockets of poverty in which people struggle to get one meal a day (Hanasz 2012). The journalist notes that:

> Committees and meetings, plans and policies, aims and objectives, budgets and expenditures, ideas and ideals – all of these are not going to help them, at least not overnight […] They don't need volumes of GNH literature but only what it means to them (Bhutan Observer 2009d)

One can only speculate, as to why Bhutan Observer does not exist today. Did the RGoB tire of the criticism and its counteractive approach to GNH? In 2017, Bhutan dropped 13 places in the rankings of the World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs 2017). Of course, this was a major blow to Bhutan and the RGoB's efforts to promote Bhutan as the 'Happiness country'. The prime minister had to do serious damage control on a national level to assure the public that GNH still was the right path of development for them. Challenged by the opposition, he defended the RGoB in an article from May 2017 in Kuensel, in which he called the report biased and untrustworthy (Kuensel 2017b). The prime minister notes that "the

people should consider the findings of CBS[9] and NSB[10] as the true picture of the country's happiness level" (Kuensel 2017b) based on the fact that neither institution was contacted by the Gallup Poll that was behind the report, and that neither he nor any of his ministers had come across any Bhutanese who claimed to have been interviewed by Gallup. It is thought-provoking how quickly the prime minister discards the validity of the World Happiness Report, when we saw in the *Ungar Diary* that the validity of the GNH Surveys could be questioned as well.

4.4 Summary

This chapter illustrates how the three themes are interlinked so that the first is the main constituent of Bhutanese identity, the second justifies the first, and the quest for the third justifies the first two. Together, they form the desired national identity of the RGoB.

The choice of interviewees is designed to control the RGoB's representation of reality to reinforce the desired national identity. Using authoritative persons as sources is a way for the RGoB to legitimize the content of the articles. Both ministers and Kings will always have something to say about the cultural heritage of Bhutan, which strengthens the belief that they are systematically constructing the symbols of cultural legacy specifically to impose the desired national identity on all ethnies of the nation. Grandiose patriotic words are used to describe the homeland with not much difference across newspapers.

The desired national identity is very much rooted in a perception of a culture uniquely different from other nations. This way, the RGoB uses mass media to instill a sense of solidarity in the people of Bhutan. This unique culture makes us special, *together.* However, the culture promoted as the 'state culture' is mainly Drukpa, whereas the cultures of minor ethnies in the country are treated as either curiosities on display or as arguments for the legitimacy of GNH – or just ignored all together. Trusting media representation, the hereditary kings of Bhutan enjoy immense popularity amongst the public. Carefully selecting topics, interviewees and points of view, the journalists paint a picture of a nation, in which it is not unusual to buy framed photos of the crown prince to hang at home, or to cry at the public announcements of news regarding the royal lineage. The Drukpa domination in Bhutanese

[9] Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research

[10] National Statistical Bureau

society is very much present in newspaper coverage of royal events, and this is supported by both monarchs, the RGoB, and other people of prominence. Moreover, the monarchy's myths of ancestry are time and again related to Buddhism to establish the monarchs (and thereby the Drukpas) as representatives of the 'true' Bhutanese culture and religion. The routine reaffirmation of the continued existence of the monarchy, and hence the nation, is playing directly into the narrative of a prolonged national culture and legitimizes the further rule of the monarchy. The ban on criticism regarding the monarchy establishes a forced relationship between the King and his subjects, and functions as a form of social control both in public media and in private conversations. The continuous manipulation of the citizens in the framing of the monarchy leads to the citizens using the same phrases and expressions repeatedly – all to establish the continued hegemony of the ruling elite.

5 Part 2: Nationalist narratives

With the introduction of mass media in 1999, the RGoB received a new tool for conveying the patriotic messages of the fatherland and deliver them directly into the living room of the citizens: "In today's political universe, the homeland card can be dealt straight into the homeland's homes" (Billig 1995: 100). In chapter 4, we have seen the effect of this. In this chapter, however, I will explore the options of public participation in mass media as well as take a more overall look at the visions of Bhutanese media, the limitations and lack of freedom, and the relationship with the RGoB. Moreover, I analyze the challenges of the systematic exclusion of marginalized groups in public media.

To do this, I combine the theoretical and analytical framework with the empirical data of my sample of newspaper articles as well as academic research. Traditionally, journalists will be very conscious about keeping their own views and opinions separate from the objective events they write about; and the newspapers will be clearly divided into sections containing different types of articles. In the three Bhutanese newspapers, these boundaries feel somehow blurred. Often, I would have a hard time deciphering the category of a specific article. This may be due to the large number of transcripts of speeches and addresses by people in power (the kings, the prime ministers, religious leaders, etc.). They are often categorized as 'news', 'headline story' or 'feature', even though they are not what I would consider journalistic articles – or not categorized at all. Also, the search word 'happiness' seemed to generate many editorials and opinion pieces, which may tell us something about the importance and prestige of writing about this topic. Keeping journalistic independence in mind, this could be problematic for the reader who might have problems distinguishing factual reporting from opinions by people in power – and the reader might mistake the latter for being factual. Moreover, the general lack of bylines makes it hard to determine the authors of many of the articles, which is why I primarily focus on the newspapers as sender and not the individual writer or journalist. I will focus on this issue of journalistic independence in my analysis.

5.1 Pertaining the nation Bhutan

As explained in 3.5, Smith has developed a set of attributes to define a nation as well as an understanding of how it emerges (Smith 1998, 2001). This route to nationhood can help us understand the mechanisms of a society like the Bhutanese. Beginning with the three routes to nationhood, the *immigrant nation* is not relevant in the case of Bhutan as the country was not build by colonial immigrants. However, looking at the first two routes, *bureaucratic incorporation* and *vernacular mobilization*, Bhutan shows traits of taking both routes to become the modern nation of today. Starting with bureaucratic incorporation, it is evident that Bhutan is very much a state ruled by the ethnic elite of the Drukpas, which it has been from the time before it came into being as a national state (Hutt 1996; Rizal 2004); and today, state institutions are very much framed after Western bureaucracy (Frame 2005; Hayden 2015). For centuries, the ruling elite have practiced a strategy of framing their own cultural identity as the Bhutanese national identity, something that have increased since the 1980s. However, this was in no way a move to mobilize the Bhutanese for inter-national wars and displays of wealth to other nations, as the country has been almost hermetically closed from 1907 till the late 1950s (Priesner 2004). Instead, the country shows elements of vernacular mobilization in the returning to the ethnic Drukpa past as an authentic myth of ancestry to legitimize the desired national identity. A process that started around 1907, when the modern nation state of Bhutan was established. As this thesis will show, the Bhutanese people is mobilized through their own history and are encouraged to 'worship' a shared indigenous history, culture, and language, framed as the 'true' Bhutanese national identity. Therefore, the route to the contemporary state of Bhutan has been a combination of Smith's vernacular mobilization and bureaucratic incorporation. Returning to the six attributes that defines a nation (Smith 1998), we see that:

1. The collective name of the nation is Bhutan or *Druk Yul*. The latter a name that signals the Drukpa legacy of the ruling elite. The ethnies living inside the nation, all defines themselves as citizens of Bhutan, according to official sources (Upreti 2004; Wangchhuk 2010). However, it is highly likely that they at the same time define themselves as part of one specific ethnie.
2. In the newspaper sample, we get a clear idea of the myths of ancestry that defines the nation Bhutan. They coincide with the general discourses of Bhutanese ancestry, with tales of the Zhabdrung, the Guru Rinpoche, and especially the Kings (Wangchhuk

2010). Although not always verbally articulated as Drukpa myths of ancestry, the reader is never in doubt about the 'true' Bhutanese heritage.

3. Bhutan shares many historical memories of how the nation came into being, beginning with the Guru Rinpoche, who taught the Bhutanese about Buddhism in the 8th century (Tashi 2005). These historical memories are molded by the RGoB to fit into the desired national identity.
4. The Bhutanese shares a culture that they believe is truly shared. However, many of the cultural traditions mentioned in the newspapers are Drukpa traditions. This leads us to believe that although some ethnies may still observe their own cultural ways, most Bhutanese shares the culture of the Drukpas as their own customs have been absorbed by Drukpa customs over time. This national culture is extensively framed in media as the 'true' culture of Bhutan, as well as a 'rich' and 'unique' culture (see chapter 4).
5. Bhutan is a sovereign nation with defined territorial boundaries, which have been almost static since 1907. However, there has been border disputes with both China and India (Rizal 2004), as well as the Southern problem of the Nepali Bhutanese (see 2.1). Since 1907, Bhutan has been a defined nation or 'homeland'.
6. The last attribute poses an interesting question: do the Bhutanese share a sense of solidarity, or does the RGoB lead them to believe that they do? Either way, ethnic conflict and discrimination indicates that not all ethnies feel solidary with other ethnies inside the boundaries of the nation.

As Smith wrote, these attributes need to be renewed and reproduced constantly, but when they are, they are powerful reminders of a social memory. Bhutanese media and public life in general is crawling with references to symbols and cultural artefacts. For example, the country has policies regulating construction work to adhere to old building traditions; and the RGoB encourages the wear of traditional attire in public offices and buildings. Moreover, hillsides in both urban and rural areas are strewn with old Stupas, Chortens, monasteries, prayer wheels and prayer flags. Year round, weeklong festivals known as *tshechus* are held to commemorate old values featuring local lore, dances and attires. The obvious display of Bhutanese culture in the most visual way possible is routinely reminding the citizens of the myths of ancestry that they share – or at least are supposed to share. Although several ethnies inhabit the Kingdom, Drukpa identity is promoted as desired national identity (Hutt 1996; Mathou 2000). This means that ethnies not included in the desired national identity are

excluded from public media participation, which I will look into in 5.5 with the example of the Nepali Bhutanese.

5.2 Nationalist visions

As all public business in Bhutan, the media houses are subjected to adhere to the nation's strive to achieve GNH. Therefore, the media contribute to the promotion of the country's overall vision of happiness and well-being (Wangchuk et al. 2017). In the following, I will take a closer look at the three newspaper's visions, and how they play into the larger picture of nation-building. The vision of Kuensel expressed on the online *About Us*[11]-section sounds:

> Representing the variety of human nature as diverse as the 12 animals of the Bhutanese horoscope, the Kuensel team comes from every corner of the kingdom to serve the people. Together we produce the national newspaper, offer a range of quality media services, and run Bhutan's largest printing house.
> We are committed to nation-building.
> **The Mission:** That the people shall be informed
> **The Vision:** To be a leading media of choice
> (Kuensel 2017a)

In its vision, Kuensel puts weight on its Bhutanese allegiance by using 'the 12 animals of Bhutanese horoscope' as visual imagery; by stressing that the workers of the newspaper come from 'every corner of the kingdom'; and by using words such as 'national' and 'nation-building'. Using the 12 horoscope animals, Kuensel flags a reminder of the desired Bhutanese national identity, of which Buddhist beliefs and superstition is an integral part. The horoscope animals serve as a symbol of the ethnic and cultural myths of Bhutan reproduced by the RGoB to reinforce the desired national identity. We could theorize that the horoscope animals help give the readers a shared sense of continuity of the nation, in that they prove that the modern world of online media *can* co-exist with old religious values. Kuensel present itself as humble by writing 'to serve the people' and 'the people shall be informed', stressing that the people's right to information is close at heart. Conversely, it appears less humble to state that the newspaper wishes to be 'a leading media of choice' and 'representing the variety of human nature'; as well as that it offers 'quality media services' and 'Bhutan's largest printing house'.

[11] At www.kuenselonline.com/kuensel.

Humility is a vital part of Bhutanese Buddhism, and so the humble approach is not surprising. On the other hand, Kuensel is part of a new modern and socio-economic development in Bhutan, and basically wants to sell newspaper subscriptions. Therefore, the vision tries to balance humility with modern strategic communication approaches. This is shown in another catchphrase of Kuensel's, which reads:

> All Bhutanese people share one experience six days a week: Kuensel
> (Kuensel 2017a)

Rather catchy, the statement cements the simultaneous representation of the imagined community as Anderson described it (Anderson 2016 [1983]) by stressing that *all* Bhutanese read Kuensel at the *same time;* reassuring the individual that all other Bhutanese are part of the same community; and ultimately of the continuous existence of Bhutan as a nation. The stressing of '*one* experience' serves to remind the citizens that Kuensel is *the* national newspaper. There might be other newspapers, but only *one* serves *all* citizens in the interest of the nation. In addition, the visible routine in '*six* days a week' underlines that the citizens can count on Kuensel to deliver news almost all week all year round. The daily, repeated routine in receiving news from Kuensel, again reassures the citizens of the nation's continuous existence.

When still in business, Bhutan Observer also shared[12] its visions with the readers stating that the newspaper strived to be:

> 1. A truly Bhutanese newspaper committed to effecting positive social change
> 2. A socially beneficial newspaper by upholding the principles of Gross National Happiness
> 3. The voice for the voiceless
> 4. The most trusted newspaper in the country
> (Bhutan Observer 2017)

The use of the phrase '*truly* Bhutanese' stresses that this is a newspaper serving the *nation* – and that this *true* form is the most important vision of the newspaper is signaled by it being the very first objective. The words 'committed' and 'most trusted' illustrates how the newspaper wants to be perceived as a servant of the citizens, a servant to be trusted to do

[12] Though the newspaper is closed, all online content is still accessible at www.bhutanobserver.bt.

what is needed. The word 'upholding' signals that the newspaper sets high standards for itself, and although private, the newspaper obviously wishes to adhere to the narrative of a nation built on GNH. Moreover, the newspaper wants to be '*the* voice' and not just '*a* voice' for voiceless people, stressing that the newspaper sees itself as invaluable in the Bhutanese society. Despite the wish to give the marginalized a voice, judging from my samples, this only refers to *some* marginalized groups: the struggles of the poor and uneducated is often articulated by the newspaper, but the ethnic discrimination and social exclusion of e.g. the Nepali Bhutanese is never given a voice. This I will elaborate on in 5.4. Noting that the same webpage informs us of the fact that Bhutan Observer was commended by the European Union election observation mission for covering the first elections of Bhutan in a fair and critical manner, we find it believable when the newspaper elaborates its vision and claims that it aims to enrich people's lives with "unbiased news and information" (Bhutan Observer 2017). However, keeping in mind the heavy subsidiaries necessary to uphold the newspaper (Wangchuk et al. 2017), the unbiased approach could be questioned, although probably not with the goodwill of the journalists.

In contrast to the other two newspapers, The Bhutanese does not have an *About Us* page on its website. However, they have a Facebook page, on which the description of the newspaper reads:

> The Bhutanese - Get your news at the paper that makes the biggest impact in Bhutan
> (Facebook page: The Bhutanese)

Seeming less visionary and more like a catchphrase, it still reflects the visions of the newspaper to some extent: to be *the* paper that makes *the* biggest impact. Surely not just *any* paper, but *the* paper. The last words 'in Bhutan' stresses the importance of the impact being on a national level. This notion all three newspapers have in common, the Bhutan Observer states that "we measure our success by what is essentially Bhutanese" and that they will not adhere to "foreign templates" of journalism (Bhutan Observer 2017); as well as Kuensel claiming to be "a mirror for Bhutan to look at itself" and that "the Kuensel team comes from every corner of the kingdom to serve the people" (Kuensel 2017a). Being a *national* newspaper serving the *nation* seems imperative. But despite grand nationalist visions, the newsrooms are not as free and unbiased in real life, which I will explore in 5.3.

5.3 Gatekeeping

In Bhutan, journalists are regulated by the constitution, the media law, and the Media Act which is a set of codes of ethics in media production. Pek-Dorji points out that all this regulatory work is based on the underlying assumption that the media professionals of Bhutan have had such limited experience and exposure to media that they cannot be trusted to "fulfil the gatekeeper role in a changing and vulnerable society" (Pek-Dorji 2008: 90). Basically, the RGoB legitimizes the excessive control by framing media workers as incompetent and inexperienced. In 1.4, I mentioned the mechanism known as *gatekeeping*. In Bhutan, as we know, the RGoB is the main gatekeeper of news, allowing them to promote a certain desired national identity (ibid.). The former prime minister, Jigmi Y. Thinley, did publicly recognize Bhutanese media as the "fourth branch of governance" (Thinley 2010: 1) highlighting that the RGoB has a responsibility to "ensure the independent functioning of media" (ibid.). This, however, collides heavily with the reports from Reporters Without Borders and Freedom House as mentioned in 1.4. On the surface, the Bhutanese media seems complacent with the state of things, which especially applies to Kuensel, who obviously has no other choice than to follow suit with the RGoB's control. Not being the official, national newspaper, the Bhutan Observer had more opportunities for raising concerns on the issue, which it did on several occasions, i.e. in November 2009 with an editorial on the hypocrisy of the prime minister, stating amongst other things that:

> Lyonchen also tells the international audience that the media in Bhutan is officially recognised as the 'fourth and independent branch' of governance. While it may have been of some interest to the foreigners, back home, it is a long-forgotten grandma's story [...] The plain-clothed media is the weakest link in the democratic setup (Bhutan Observer 2009c)

As this article occurred some eight years ago, one could hope that the terms under which media operates in Bhutan have changed, however, the current rankings in the press freedom indices do not indicate so. An editorial from March 2015 in Kuensel (surprisingly enough) supports this inkling, describing how even though journalists have easy access to ministers, this is mainly true for foreign journalists portraying Bhutan as the happy Shangri-La. Local journalists feel 'frowned upon as nosy people' and lack access to information in general. Moreover, orders to 'gag the media' is regularly flowing from the RGoB (Kuensel 2015a). The

editorial highlights the fact that Bhutan dropped 12 places in the Reporters Without Borders country ranking that year, and doubts that the RGoB will take this seriously ending with the statement: "At this rate, we will not be surprised if we see our ranking drop by another 12 places next year" (Kuensel 2015a).

The main problem with the gatekeeping role of the RGoB is that it prevents a free public debate, which is vital for a functioning democratic system, as the public sphere keeps the other elements of the democracy in place. This public social sphere is distinctly different from the public authority of the state, but through free public debate, the state can evolve (Dorji and Pek 2005). However, if the RGoB opens for a free, democratic debate, it will lose its control with framing the desired national identity. In my sample, it is interesting to study the editorials as well as the opinion pieces done by people outside the newspaper staff. In the editorials of the two private newspapers, the critique of the system is evident. For example, an editorial from The Bhutanese in April 2012 criticizing GNH for being elitist and the RGoB for not handling the rupee crisis properly (The Bhutanese 2012d); or an opinion piece in Bhutan Observer from February 2008, in which the newspaper reminds the politicians to practice what they preach (Bhutan Observer 2008c). The editorials in the national newspaper Kuensel are, however, not as blunt in their expressions of critique. They are overall communicating the values and visions of the RGoB, but one do sense a critique of the system lurking under the surface. That the official national newspaper seems more reluctant to criticize the system than the privately-owned newspapers is not surprising, however, according to a study done by Mehta and Tshering in 2006, Kuensel has come a long way in gaining independence from the RGoB and possibly acting as a watchdog over public affairs and institutions (Mehta and Tshering 2006). This is especially evident by the development of the editorials, which has gone from being a mouthpiece of the RGoB on non-controversial topics only to subtle critique of authorities and a highlighting of public controversial issues. Keeping Bhutan's press freedom ranking in mind, this is a major leap forward.

However, these editorials and opinion pieces are obviously still written by the educated ethnic elite, which is both indicated by the titles of the contributors, and evident by the knowledge we have from chapter 4 of the general literacy rates and education level in the country. There are not many opinion pieces giving voices to the marginalized and

disempowered, which could be a result of the general illiteracy amongst this group or the general exclusion of it from public debate.

As the drafting for the Bhutanese constitution began in the early 2000s (EIU 2017), several scholars and media professionals advocated for a high level of freedom of media and freedom of speech along with the right to information. Pek and Dorji very optimistically wrote that media in Bhutan must "be the forum for debate and discussions as society beats a path of change based on rational discourse" (Dorji and Pek 2005: 78). 12 years later, the JAB reports that the media industry is 'deteriorating', with senior journalists quitting the profession and a "concomitant loss of quality, trust, and credibility in news reporting" (Wangchuk et al. 2017: 14). The Bhutanese media has not been able to create the free, public debate that it had hoped for. Partly because of RGoB's effective gatekeeping strategy and the restrictions on the freedom of the press (ibid.). The lack of public participation in the newspapers of my sample is evident, which I will look at in the next section.

5.4 Political participation in public media

Public debate is generally not encouraged in the sample, which I gather from the widespread tendency to frame opinions as facts not to be contested; the moralizing tendency to ascribe negative events and trends to people not observing their Buddhists beliefs; and the feeling of an almost patronizing tone, which the "experts" use to explain concepts like GNH – concomitantly insisting on it not being elitist. Keeping the educational background of the marginalized groups in mind, it is not very surprising that they do not feel comfortable participating in a public debate, in which they risk being ridiculed or shamed.

There are, however, a few examples in my sample of mobilization of the public to participate in a political debate spurred by one of the newspapers. In the fall of 2012, the American guest professor Dr. David Luechauer wrote the article *A critical view on GNH* for The Bhutanese, leaving a scathing criticism of GNH and of the Bhutanese people's perception of the concept (The Bhutanese 2012g). Although the opinion piece hit a soft spot in Bhutanese nationalism, the interesting aspect of the Luechauer case is not the harsh reactions it spurred by politicians and GNH researchers (and there were many), but rather the mobilization of the public in online debates of the critique. *A critical view on GNH* resulted in 43 comments in the

commentary alone, which is a lot for a newspaper rarely commented – and other articles connected to the Luechauer case generated even more comments. The comments fell into two groups: the one supporting Luechauer's view, and the one renouncing it. The latter typically left comments like that of "Truth":

> How dare the writer wrote this and how dare this newspaper publish this news? This is truly anti-national act and our nation should not tollerate such criticism. The newspaper is totally going against the vision of our fourth and fifth Druk Gyalpos. Is this the way to exercise the right of information and freedom of press? Perhaps the ex-lecturer wrote because he left Bhutan after coming into conflict of our nation. Which country does not have social problems? Our social problems are very minimal. We have no conflicts and violence of critical nature. I can only say that this newspaper will some day bring chaos in the society
>
> (The Bhutanese 2012g: comment section)

The person calling himself[13] "Truth" obviously finds himself deeply offended by the words of Luechauer. He expresses deep dissatisfaction with the critique of his actual national identity by using wordings such as 'anti-national', 'our nation should not tolerate', and 'going against the vision of our fourth and fifth Druk Gyalpos [the Kings]'. There is nothing as uniting for a community as the critique of said community by an outsider (Billig 1995), which this clearly shows. More than being upset with the obvious attack on his actual national identity, "Truth" also feels the need to defend his nation by cementing that: a) all countries have social problems; and b) ours are not any bigger than everyone else's. Lastly, he questions Luechauer's intentions by insinuating that Luechauer came 'into conflict of our nation', and that that is why he feels the need to criticize Bhutan and GNH. Interestingly, "Truth" seems to blame The Bhutanese as well for its misuse of freedom of the press, which he seems to worry will result in 'chaos in the society'. Many comments supported this view. However, just as many supported Luechauer's views like these from "Kg" and "Dema T":

> Bhutan has no right to tell the rest of the world how to live when our people are dirt poor and leaders are fully immersed in corruption. Stop this GNH crap
>
> (The Bhutanese 2012g: comment section)

> We, Bhutanese only like to hear good things. Come on, wake up to reality. Everything is not rosy like we want to believe (The Bhutanese 2012g: comment section)

[13] For convenience let us just assume 'he' is a 'he'.

Comments like the ones from “Kg” and “Dema T” seems very common in all articles connected to this case, and we get the feeling that a lot of Bhutanese have a lot of anger built up towards the framing of GNH as the solution to all their problems. “Kg” even accuses the country’s leaders of corruption, underlining that Bhutan needs to take care of her own ‘dirt poor’ people before lecturing the world on GNH. “Dema T” is after the people rather than the leaders in her comment using the little word ‘we’ actively to lash out at her people and at the same time put herself in the same group, making them all responsible for the deception: ‘*We,* Bhutanese’ and ‘*we* want to’. She seems ashamed that her people are not able to detect the reality of GNH such as she has been able to. Another interesting response to a comment about how a ‘true Bhutanese’ would speak his or her mind, is the one made by “bhutenses”:

> If some any one is a true Bhutanese then they should have released this article by their name a long time ago,,why didnt any one do ,,because they are afraid,,so when public are afraid of speaking the truth then how come that there is GNH ..so yes GNH is a crap story..where people cant even express their true feelings (The Bhutanese 2012g: comment section)

Here, he calls out the state for hindering freedom of speech, as he claims that ‘they [the public] are afraid’ of publishing similar critique of GNH in their own names, and he questions the legitimacy of GNH, when he asks the rhetorical question of how Bhutan can claim happiness, when her citizens are afraid of ‘speaking the truth’. This supports the reports from Freedom House of hindered freedom of speech in Bhutan (Freedom House 2016). During the next two months of fall 2012, several stakeholders gave their say in the matter including the director of Center for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research (CBS), Karma Ura, whose pieces where heavily commented as well. One comment from an article by Ura catches one’s eye. After a thorough – and heavily biased – response to the GNH criticism by Ura, “Kg” left this comment:

> Can people and Karma Ura stop talking about GNH. I am ashamed of people talking about it and it is propaganda to me. Even parrot can recite much better about this stupidity and the height of inanity about this useless propaganda (The Bhutanese 2012a: comment section)

“Kg” uses the word ‘propaganda’ about GNH. Several other comments on both this and other articles connected to the Luechauer case mentions ‘propaganda’, as well as several people writing that they perceive GNH to be reserved for the rich elite with good connections. Obviously, some Bhutanese feel disconnected from GNH, would that mean that they feel disconnected from their supposed national identity? According to Anderson, exclusion can

happen to members of a nation if they do not fit the idea of the national identity (Anderson 2016 [1983]). It seems that the effort on the RGoB to communicate the desired national identity through GNH is not solely working to their benefit. This reminds us of the *Ungar Diary* story from 4.1 that illustrated how GNH has not resulted any substantial difference in the lives of the poorest people of Bhutan – as well as not making any difference for the ethnically repressed and marginalized groups.

Returning to the issue of freedom of the press, it was something that spurred a parallel debate during the months of the Luechauer case. Several times over the course of the two months and as comments to several of the articles, the commenters lashed out at The Bhutanese for publishing Luechauer's critique. Comments like this from the person "good" on Luechauer's article *Response to Sonam Gyamtsho's article on GNH* (The Bhutanese 2012e) illustrates the point as well as resembles the earlier comment by "Truth":

> Not surprised at all that this anti Bhutanese paper, which is ironically named "the Bhutanese" has found a willing partner in Dr.Leuchaeur to paint a very poor picture of our country. Next time, we must not give this paper and the Dr any more of our valuable time by reading their nonsense (The Bhutanese 2012e)

The commenter "good" is not only angry with Luechauer, he is also blaming The Bhutanese for helping him paint a 'very poor picture of *our* country'. Yes, "good" is clear about that, this is not *their* country, or *my* country, no it is *our* country. Which seems to be a recurrent notion amongst many commenters: this is *our* country. The constant repetition of deixis is not reserved for the RGoB only, it appears. "Good" is lashing out at The Bhutanese for being 'anti Bhutanese' and publishing 'nonsense', he even calls the newspaper's name ironic, as he clearly does not feel that a newspaper named The *Bhutanese* should assist in this form of slandering. The Bhutanese people only recently received constitutional rights to freedom of information and media in 2008 (Pek-Dorji 2008), but it looks like the Bhutanese do not agree on whose responsibility it is to manage this newfound freedom.

Keeping the general lack of freedom of the press and freedom of expression in mind, one can ask why the debate even managed to go this far without being censored by the authorities. One plausible answer to that question could be that the RGoB let the debate carry on, as it turned out mostly in the favor of the RGoB's framing of the desired national identity. In addition, the debate never questioned the legitimacy of the Kings or the Drukpa cultural heritage, and so we can imagine that the RGoB did not feel very threatened by it. The example

of debate after the Luechauer critique is the only example of a free public debate from my sample of articles – and despite being free, the commenters still felt it necessary to disguise their identity by writing from anonymous profiles, which makes it impossible for us to assess which ethnic group they belong to. Today, the public comment on Facebook instead, which according to JAB is promoting "true democratisation of public opinions and possibly the safest public sphere" (Wangchuk et al. 2017: 15) as Facebook allows the user to "create as many fake accounts as one wants" (ibid.). However, browsing the Facebook pages of the newspapers, one do not get the impression that there is much debate going on at all. Either the public do not feel interested in debating, or else they feel limited and do not want to risk implications.

5.5 The Nepali problem

As we remember, Smith notes that some nations contain several ethnies with different cultural identities, some co-existing, others in constant battle for cultural hegemony (Smith 2001). This problem of fighting inside the boundaries of a nation, is not unknown to Bhutan, as we saw with the issue of the Nepali Bhutanese in chapter 2, and the issue still poses an eyesore for the RGoB. Reading the sample of articles, one cannot help but notice the lack of coverage of Nepali Bhutanese in the media. Sure, the country Nepal is mentioned from time to time, although countries such as India, Bangladesh and Thailand are clearly preferred, but the Bhutanese media very conveniently forgets the ethnic Nepali minority in Bhutan – or what is left of it, and so none of the articles in my sample speak of the Nepali Bhutanese or the refugees still living in camps. I admit, an explanation to this could be that they are simply not mentioned in stories containing the word 'happiness', however, a couple of quick searches on the newspaper's websites using search the words "Nepali" and "Nepal" shows that even outside of my sample, there are no stories to find covering this ethnic group. Having faced more than one sudden awkward silence or the elusive eye contact when asking about Nepali culture in Bhutan during my stay in the country, I know from experience that the Bhutanese prefer not to discuss the matter, which supports the Freedom in the World Index 2016-quote from 4.2, which states that "restrictive laws and other factors may deter uninhibited speech on sensitive topics, such as those related to ethnicity or the monarchy" (Freedom House 2016) at all. Smith points out the "tendency of ethnic nationalisms to single out and categorize

minorities within as 'alien'" (Smith in Hutt 1996: 417). One friend of mine in Bhutan had a Nepalese grandfather, who emigrated to Bhutan in the 1940s or 50s. Even though my friend grew up in the far East in a *Sharchhop*[14] family, even though being one of the most dedicated Buddhists I met in the country, and even though his father is amongst the educated elite and today works in Paro as a respected headmaster of a private school, he still experienced strangers asking inquisitorial questions about his origins. To me, he looked like any Bhutanese and he followed the same traditions and customs as any other Bhutanese I know, and still the 'true' Bhutanese could pick him out as "alien" in a crowd.

This form of nationalism is building on more than just a territory with a "common history and mass culture" (Smith in Hutt 1996: 398), in which all inhabitants can join regardless of ethnic origin, it is ethnic nationalism as explained in chapter 3; and it is exactly what the RGoB is practicing. As we saw in chapter 4, the newspaper coverage by the Bhutanese media in general paints a picture of *one* people originating from the same ancestors, the Drukpas. Occasionally, other tolerated ethnic groups in Bhutan are mentioned, mostly to serve as curiosities on display for the reader, it seems. It is evident that media in Bhutan is controlled by the Drukpa elite, as well as government functions are. The lack of coverage of the Nepali Bhutanese refugees in *national* media has caught the attention of Pellegrini and Tasciotti (2014), whose research showed a gap in academic literature on Bhutan by "bringing fore the issues [that] so far have been confined to specialized human rights literature, some isolated reports in the international press and Nepali mass media" (Pellegrini and Tasciotti 2014: 104). Additionally, Rizal points to the overall lack of coverage of the case in *international* media (Rizal 2004):

> But concerning what is probably the world's largest recent refugee exodus, from this small kingdom perched on the Himalayas between India and China, it is the flow of refugees rather than the flow of news about them that has poured out. Here 'ethnic cleansing' is alive and well (Rizal 2004: 151)

Obviously, the RGoB has been and still is committed to keeping the story of the Nepali Bhutanese away from international attention. And we understand why: it would not go well with the vision of GNH. Rizal (2004) suggests that more than being a battle of ethnic cultures,

[14] An ethnic minority generally tolerated by the Drukpas, mainly because they too are Buddhists.

the Nepali Bhutanese exodus was a question of religion. The other ethnic groups in Bhutan might be of different ancestry than the Drukpas, but they all shared a devotion to Buddhism, and are therefore tolerated and able to co-exist peacefully. The Nepali Bhutanese, on the other hand, not only brought with them a different culture and language, but also a different religion: Hinduism. As identity and religion is closely tied together and serve as the basis for a common understanding of authorities and individual responsibility, the Drukpas felt threatened by the Hindu Nepali Bhutanese. Therefore, their solution was to commit the nation to a special Bhutanese Buddhism in order to weaken the Nepali Bhutanese societal order (Rizal 2004; Zurick 2006). Today, we still see a massive commitment of the media to promote Bhutanese Buddhism as state religion.

A very good example of the neglect of media coverage is the article *Looking to Bhutan for activating Mid-East peace talks* in Bhutan Observer in October 2012, in which Mostafa Vaziri, an Iranian scholar working on nationalism and the imagined community of Iran, considers Bhutan as the 'perfect mediator' between conflicting nations in the Middle East. This assessment he makes on the basis of "Bhutan's track record over the last thirty years in their domestic politics, development, preservation of culture and most importantly, respect for human values" (Bhutan Observer 2012). How a scholar working on nationalism and nations in conflict can overlook one of the largest 'ethnic cleansings' of the 1990s (Rizal 2004) is mind-boggling, but serves to illustrate how deep the deception of the RGoB runs in its portrayal of the desired national identity. Bhutan Observer also delivers another example of the apparent ethnic hypocrisy of the RGoB and the Drukpa community in *The aboriginal dance of happiness* from December 2008 (Bhutan Observer 2008d). The article describes the recent Folk Life Festival in Thimphu, at which all the 'indigenous' people of Bhutan came to showcase their culture for the urban elite. The author of the article explains how '*we* saw *their* culture', and '*they* saw *ours*'. *Us and them*. Even though they are citizens of the same nation, they are obviously not citizens of the same ethnie. The author lashes out at the Bhutanese of the capital, rendering how they see the indigenous people as living a 'simple and happy life', not even considering the deep poverty the ethnic minorities of Bhutan face every day. If the privileged elite has the option of choosing to 'forget the reason why they live this way', they can rule and regulate to pursue the goal of GNH for the 'true Bhutanese'. The author closes with a wish for the future of the indigenous ethnies of Bhutan:

> Once the living standards of the poorer section of the society is improved, hopefully, there will be more people who eat better, live in better conditions and lead healthier lives. Hopefully, GNH will then have some meaning in their lives (Bhutan Observer 2008d)

5.6 Summary

In this second part of the analysis, I have illustrated how media in Bhutan are walking a tightrope between the wish to inform the public with unbiased news coverage and the need to adhere to official promotion strategies of a desired national identity, which complicates the media's role. Moreover, Bhutanese newspapers are relatively new to the market and along with fighting for journalistic freedom, they need to fight for economic stability as well. Gatekeeping by the RGoB is invisible to the public, but extensively used to further certain narratives and diminish others. The RGoB wants media to reflect the values of Bhutan, however, the media reflect only what the RGoB perceives as 'true' Bhutanese values. This makes one question the democratic value of the newspapers. Critique of the RGoB and the monarchy is not welcome, and public debate is not encouraged. By keeping the newspaper debates elitist, the RGoB effectively keeps poor, uneducated, and marginalized groups from entering public debate.

The analysis has shown that due to consisting of many ethnic groups, Bhutan is facing internal fights for cultural hegemony. The battle has been won by the Drukpa community, which is currently dominating all public access to legislation, culture, religion, and media. This has especially had severe consequences for the rather large group of ethnic Nepali Bhutanese, who still lives in the country and are excluded from public debate and political participation. Spurred by the ethnic unification that began with the wish to exclude Nepali Bhutanese from the nation, the RGoB leads a clear strategy to promote Drukpa language, culture, and religion. This 'ethnic cleansing' has been kept effectively away from all media, both national and international, and so the ethnic strife is widely unknown in the rest of the world, as well as never discussed in Bhutan.

6 Discussion: Democratic challenges

In this chapter, I discuss the limited access to political participation for the marginalized Nepali Bhutanese, the democratic challenges this pose, and what implications this might have for the ethnic group. This I do, drawing on the findings of my analysis as well as examples from other cases of exclusion of ethnic and marginalized groups. Throughout the world processes of exclusion happen as parts of nation building, which makes the Drukpa exclusion of Nepali Bhutanese not a unique case, and the experiences from other ethnic conflict can be valuable in the discussions of options for the Nepali Bhutanese.

As we experienced in chapter 4 and 5, the RGoB persistently promotes a desired national identity based on the cultural heritage of one specific ethnic group in the country, leading to underrepresentation of other ethnic groups residing within the nation. Since the ethnic cleansing of the early 1990s, the RGoB has in less visible ways systematically excluded Nepali Bhutanese from political influence to pertain the cultural hegemony, a strategy partly operationalized using mass media. As Nepali Bhutanese are generally ignored in society, the media's underrepresentation of this group effectively reflects the political structures of Bhutan. This is symptomatic of authoritarian regimes struggling with internal ethnic conflict, such as the constant under- and misrepresentation of Armenians in Turkish media, which reflects the general treatment of the ethnic minority (Koldaş 2013); but also happens in healthy democracies such as the Finnish promotion of idyllic ethnic diversity in tourism promotion, which plays into a larger structural tendency to treat Sámi people as ethnic curiosities in a contemporary form of colonialism (Niskala and Ridanpää 2016).

A larger study of Latvian newspapers and mechanisms of ethnic exclusion of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia, showed that the media believed that "the ethnic Latvians' interests must dominate in Latvia and in the name of it the human political rights of other ethnic groups may be restricted" (Golubeva and Gould 2010: 128), which sounds somewhat similar to the restricting of Nepali Bhutanese that is happening in Bhutan. However, the Latvian study interestingly showed that the Latvian media took the opposite approach than Bhutanese media, and instead of ignoring this 'unwanted' ethnic minority, the Latvian newspapers continuously upheld a discourse of negativity towards the minority framing it as

dangerous, hostile, and undesirable (ibid.). A similar study of Israeli Arab representation in Israeli Jewish TV showed that the same patterns of articulating the minority as the 'bad guys' and the enemy (First 2014). Why Bhutanese media has chosen the reverse tactic is hard to determine, however, based on my analysis, I risk a guess: If Bhutanese media were to verbalize the 'otherness' of the Nepali Bhutanese, they would attract attention to the ethnic group, which would complicate the general wish to keep the ethnic cleansing from gaining international attention; this would, in turn, undermine the nation's message of GNH, which preaches the Buddhist message of peace and diversity. Since GNH is Bhutan's main argument for sovereignty and superiority, an undermining of the concept would have serious implications for the nation's position in the international arena – as well as for the country's tourism industry that relies on a positive perception of GNH and happiness.

As related in chapter 2, the Nepali Bhutanese society co-existed relatively peacefully with the rest of the Bhutanese ethnies until the 1980s, where ethnic conflicts initiated. Today, we see the ethnies living separately with one ethnie heavily dominating the rest. A study of Singaporean media representations of ethnic minorities showed that co-existing in multicultural harmony was articulated as something unnatural, unlikely, and 'weak', which was linked to a narrative of a weak national identity – thus creating a discourse suggesting that multicultural societies have 'weak' national identities. All in an attempt to promote one 'strong' national identity: that of the ruling ethnie (Holman and Arunachalam 2015). In Bhutan, the ethnic cleansing was initiated and later justified with narratives of the Nepali Bhutanese as 'terrorists', which of course meant that co-existing was not an option anymore, as co-existing with terrorists was unnatural and weakening the national identity. Today, the perception of Nepali Bhutanese as terrorists still prevails, if not in media, then in the mind of the public. During my stay in Thimphu, I wanted to accompany some friends to the Southern part of Bhutan, the region of the Lotshampas, or the Nepali Bhutanese. However, my application for road permit was denied, as the trip would pose a danger to my person due to the risk of "terrorist attacks". The linking of Southern Bhutan with terrorism was deeply ingrained in the discourse amongst the civil servants (of mainly Drukpa descent) in Thimphu. As to why this discourse is not communicated in mass media, I think the answer is the same as before: as to not create attention to the issue in international media. Studies have shown that political ethnic exclusion *can* lead to domestic terrorism (Choi and Piazza 2016; Gleditsch and

Polo 2016), however, the domestic terrorism threat in Bhutan is minimal. This might be due to the non-existence of a real Nepali Bhutanese resistance movement inside Bhutan, a result of the deep poverty and unorganized nature of the Nepali Bhutanese still living in Bhutan. However, one can never rule out that the Nepali Bhutanese, if pressured enough, could turn to terrorism attacks in the future.

But for now, terrorism and ethnic violence are not the main effect of ethnic exclusion in Bhutan and probably not the most massive. Less visible consequences of systematic ethnic nationalism effect the lives of ethnically excluded on daily basis. Ethnic exclusion often creates clefts in society, as in the case of Singaporean *divergent integration* that differentiates between the ruling ethnie and the ethnic minority of Malay Muslims as a separate ethnic category, which results in differentiation of life opportunities and social expectations (Miller 2011). In the case of Nepali Bhutanese, they are systematically denied education, employment, business licenses, and from exercising their constitutional rights to vote and participate in political debate. Only people holding a Bhutanese citizenship can vote, but many Nepali Bhutanese do not qualify for citizenship due to impossible criteria, and they are thus being denied their constitutional right to vote; in turn establishing the constant underrepresentation by Nepali Bhutanese in politics (Bhutaneserefugees.com 2017; Giri 2004; Pattanaik 1998). This of course poses a serious challenge to the democratization of Bhutan. As we saw in the analysis, the Nepali Bhutanese are continuously ignored by the media as well, further distancing them from the rest of the society. Being uneducated and financially devoid, we can only imagine the barriers for the Nepali Bhutanese in raising awareness of their cause. The cause of the Nepali Bhutanese is therefore mainly advocated by Nepali Bhutanese in diaspora and in refugee camps in Nepal, making the fight for recognition of Nepali Bhutanese rights mainly a battle to be fought through online social media (Bhutaneserefugees.com 2017). This is symptomatic of the issues raised in this thesis: conflict is generally kept out of national mass media and referred to unofficial channels such as social media.

Central to a functioning democracy is the freedom of expression (hereunder freedom of speech and freedom of the press) and the right to assembly and association, and countries in which these rights are enjoyed, are generally more capable of "achieving peaceful and inclusive forms of minority accommodation" (Miller 2011). As these central and basic

democratic rights are systematically denied Nepali Bhutanese, the Drukpa domination effectively exclude two-thirds of the Bhutanese population from political participation (Rizal 2004). Bhutanese political participation is, as I explained in chapter 2, generally very low in all ethnies of Bhutan, which I believe to be partly due to democracy still being in its infancy, and partly due to the general level of illiteracy and education past primary school. But as literacy rates and the numbers of vocational or university educated continuously increase amongst the dominating and tolerated ethnies, I imagine the political participation by these groups will increase as well. However, this will create an even larger divide between the ruling Drukpa and the Nepali Bhutanese, who will still lack behind in education and political participation. And so, if not the RGoB starts practicing policies of inclusion regarding the Nepali Bhutanese, they risk creating a permanent underclass of non-represented citizens without access to basic democratic rights such as freedom of expression and belief. I believe, this inclusion should start with changing mass media discourses, implementing practices of ethnic representations, maybe looking to the positive findings of studies on how to change the perception of Chinese minorities in university media by educating the students using social media (Jackson and Nesterova 2017; Zhao and Postiglione 2010), or the Canadian study on how to create a more inclusive representation of ethnic minorities, so that they are perceived as integral to the nation (Mahtani 2001).

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I connect all threads of the thesis to conclude on my findings and how the applied theory has helped answer the research statement. The analysis overall evolved around the power relations between the state of Bhutan and the Bhutanese media, focusing on which words was used to impose a certain Drukpa-centered national identity on other ethnies of the nation, and what consequences this has for the representation of the ethnic minorities and the democratization process of the country. One important finding was that the discourse invented by the ruling elite and reproduced by the media is ethnically excluding of especially the Nepali Bhutanese, which constitutes a large minority of the country's inhabitants. I discovered that the Drukpa elite is acting as gatekeepers to control what national identity is presented in newspaper coverage, to ultimately manifest their own domination. Through a framing of Drukpa culture, language, and religion as the 'true' Bhutanese legacy, the state practices ethnic exclusion, and the desired national identity only applies to the Bhutanese that adheres to the same cultural identity. This creates divides between the 'true' Bhutanese and the other ethnies, particularly the Nepali Bhutanese.

In part 1 of the analysis, I found that the words used to describe the desired national identity are carefully selected to fit a Drukpa identity; and invented permanencies help frame this identity as 'rich', 'unique', and superior – as well as instrumental in achieving true happiness. Phrases such as 'precious legacy', 'jewel of the world', and 'His Majesty's selfless endeavor' are not uncommon and are constantly repeated to keep all citizens reminded of their supposed national identity. But more than that, the small, insignificant repetition of deixis, such as 'the', 'we', 'our', and 'their', are pieces of larger manifestations of a desired national identity. The persisting reappearance of the social memories of values such as *Driglam-Choesum*, feelings such as love for the Kings, or symbols of cultural legacy such as the mask dance at a tshechu are all manifesting a shared sense of continuity of the nation Bhutan. However, this only includes the Drukpa legacy, and thus, the RGoB is effectively practicing ethnic nationalism. Parallel with the focus on one desired national identity that I uncovered in part 1, part 2 showed how the RGoB very effectively keeps almost all other actors from both representation and participating in public debate, which combined with the generally low political participation and the exclusion of other ethnies than Drukpa, poses serious challenges to

democracy. Subjected to state control, the media of Bhutan cannot be said to be free and independent, which harms freedom of the press in the country. Concomitantly, the barriers for political participation in public media are immense for many Bhutanese, which hinders freedom of expression. Moreover, the Nepali Bhutanese are vastly underrepresented in media, as well as kept from political organization and debate, which distances them further from the rest of the nation's citizens.

The theory chosen for this thesis helped frame a set of analytical tools to describe the mechanisms of Bhutanese nationalism. Especially the very concrete concepts for newspaper analysis by Billig (1995) and the highly relevant framework on ethnic nationalism by Smith (1998, 2001) have helped conceptualize and concretize the many cultural symbols and artefacts discovered in the analysis. Although not used as concretely in the text analysis, Anderson (2016 [1983]) has contributed with an overall understanding and generalization of the tendencies in Bhutanese media as reflections of the structures in Bhutanese society.

Critiquing the system without having a voice is difficult, and so the empirical sample generally lacks critique of the system and reads as supportive of the desired national identity constructed by the RGoB. Despite the socio-economic development of the country and the peaceful transition into democracy, the ruling elite of Bhutan is compromising fundamental democratic rights of parts of the population to impose their hegemony. While this strategy still prevails, the finding of this thesis show that the ethnic minorities of Bhutan will have a hard time participating in the democratization process.

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Appendix

The appendices 1-3 list the articles of the empirical sample all sorted into themes with a short description, tags and genre. The color coding indicates whether the overall message in relation to happiness in the article reads positive (green), negative (red), or neutral (yellow).

The themes of the articles:
- Buddhism/religion
- Development with values[15]
- Values and civil society/community
- GNH & Happiness
- Government/politics
- National narrative and cultural heritage
- Royal monarchy
- Others

Appendix 1: Kuensel
Appendix 2: The Bhutanese
Appendix 3: Bhutan Observer

[15] Not present in the list for The Bhutanese, as no articles fell into this category.