

Networks of Transnational Tibetan Politics

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Abstract

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Andrew Daniel Davies

This thesis examines the pro-Tibet Movement as a contemporary political movement. It makes a number of interventions, both empirical and theoretical. Firstly, it adds to literature that attempts to think through the Tibetan struggle and its associated Movement in an explicitly political way. It does this through applying some of the contemporary theoretical issues around the nature of transnational political action to the Tibet Movement. It theoretically develops work by various geographers on the relational and hybrid nature of space in arguing that reassessing political action spatially can promote different, less essentialised, political futures. It adopts a networked understanding of space that seeks to embed the idea of political struggle within the wider social realm. This networked understanding of space allows for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which politics actually occurs in and through specific sites of political action. Instead of taking the Tibet Movement as a social movement, it instead attempts to look at how the political struggle for Tibet contains many overlapping and interweaving agents, organisations and discourses which at once constitute the Movement.

The thesis uncovers how the networked nature of political activity is organised and spread throughout the 'Tibet Movement'. This is done by exploring the following questions: How do these networks actually work? What are the everyday processes that hold these networks together? How are these networks spatially constituted? How can we study these networks? What impacts does this approach have upon our research methods? Empirically, it takes three elements of the whole of the Tibet Issue and examines them as discrete themes which help to define and shape the Issue in particular ways. These are, broadly: 1) the constitution and actualisation of imaginative geographies of Tibet; 2) the construction and maintenance of the Tibetan nation in the Tibetan diaspora and; 3) the role of activism and political contestation in promoting the pro-Tibetan struggle. However, while these are treated as distinct objects, it is important to realise that they all form part of the interweaving connections that make up the 'quilt' of the Tibet Movement. As a result, we gain a more detailed understanding of the overlapping processes of contemporary political action.

Preface/Acknowledgements

This PhD grew out of an initial project title of 'Political Networks against Imperialism', and while the imperialism element has dwindled somewhat in the intervening three years, the priorities and targets of the thesis remain broadly the same. In a time when global justice campaigns seem to be everywhere, from the 'Bolivarian revolution' of Hugo Chavez et al. in Latin America to the polemical bandwagons of 'Live8' there seem to be few days that pass without a reference to a project somewhere in the world which notionally claims to be making the world a 'better place'. In many cases, these claims are nothing particularly original, deploying arguments that use strict dichotomies and seek to gain ground in an almost Gramscian 'War of position' in order to seek to gain control of civil society and thus hegemony. And it is from this conflict between (counter) hegemonies and oppositional politics that this work emerges.

As mentioned, at the beginning of the research, this PhD was emphatically an anti-imperial venture. Having been lucky (?) enough to be given a topic without a specific case study assigned to it, I began to cast my eye around various contemporary struggles. The counter-globalisation movement seemed too obvious, Indian Marxist party struggles seemed to speak to a different time and, for a time, I considered thinking about the Far-Right movement in Europe as a counter-hegemonic struggle. None of these seemed quite satisfactory as cases of imperial activity *per se*, and it was with some luck that I eventually stumbled across the topic of Tibet and the international struggle for its liberation from Chinese rule. Here, it seemed, was a relatively simple case of a territory being taken over by a foreign power and used in a way that could readily be termed imperial or colonial. This perspective has changed somewhat in the interim (as will become clear later in the thesis) as these simplistic ideas have become necessarily complicated by an immersion in the topic. Despite this, the Tibetan cause remains an interesting one. Tibet has been occupied since 1950, and effectively a part of the Chinese state ever since¹, and thus ranks as one of the longer running struggles of today. Yet it remains very much on the periphery of academic literature and of everyday understanding, equated as it often is in the public domain with an exotic, new-age imaginary.

¹ This is despite the flight of the Dalai Lama not occurring until 1959. While China could probably not claim to have complete control over Tibet, the years 1950-59 were marked by a gradual increase in Chinese control over the region, and to all intents and purposes Tibet's status (or lack thereof) in international law in this period meant that it was effectively seen as internal to China.

This choice of topic has meant a journey into a research area that was at once familiar and unfamiliar. Moving into and around the Tibetan Movement would not have been possible without a number of people. In Liverpool, the supervision dream-team of Richard Phillips and Dave Featherstone has been invaluable. Throughout the PhD they were both always open to queries and forthcoming in their opinions, and have been more kind and generous than I could have hoped during the past 3 and a bit years. Their opinions on due process in tea-making, and of future careers in the confectionary trade, have been of particular use.

The various postgraduates and members of staff (both Human and Physical Geography-based) in the Department of Geography, and in the wider environs of the University, have also been of great support during the writing of this thesis. Particular thanks must go to Ivo Wengraf who has had the pleasant (?!) task of being alongside me during the entire process, starting with our Masters prior to the PhD, so has suffered through various chats and talks about life, the universe and everything throughout the past four years.

Outside Liverpool, the various communities of pro-Tibetan activists I have come into contact with have been nothing if not welcoming, supportive and interesting participants within the research process. The list of people who have been involved in this area is seemingly endless, and given the wishes of some to remain anonymous, I refrain from mentioning any particular names, suffice to say, my abiding memory of time doing research is the warmth and humour which permeates the political movement.

A circle of some good friends in London, most prominently Nick, Steve and Helen, has been a great help. Without their willingness to let me sleep on their floors and be dragged along to Tibetan events across the capital, this research would not have been possible. Ben's rigorous critiques of many of my ideas have always served to help me sharpen my argument.

Finally, my family have always been a support during my life, but this thesis would not have been possible without their love and care. My Father's patient yet bemused looks while I tried to work through the finer points of Michel Foucault's juridical thought with him, Nathan's respect for social science which only a Doctor of Chemistry can have, and my Mam's community spirit and passion for standing up for what is right have all inspired me at various times. Last, but definitely not least, I would not have even made it to Liverpool, let alone stayed on to do this PhD, without the financial benevolence and love of my

Grandparents, so it is my dear Grandma, Granddad, Nanna and Grampa, with love, to whom I dedicate this thesis.

A Note on Transliteration

In general, I have tried to use standard colloquial renderings of Tibetan words into Romanised script. These are phonetically closer to their Tibetan pronunciation than the more grammatically correct Wylie system derived from the letters of the Tibetan alphabet and thus more suited to a general audience. In this system, Tibet becomes *Pö* rather than *Bod*. Similarly, I have adopted the Pinyin system of transliterating Chinese, and so *Mao Tse-Tung* under the older Wade-Giles system becomes the more phonetically correct *Mao Zedong*.

Glossary

Amban – Chinese Diplomatic Mission in the imperial era. An Amban was present in Lhasa for much of the period prior to 1949

Bodhisattva – A enlightened being who has chosen to be reincarnated and remain in the circle of *samsara* to benefit humanity.

The *Buddha* – The original human being who became enlightened, and, whose teachings are the core of Buddhism. One of the ‘Three Jewels’ of Buddhism.

Chenresigs – Tibetan for *Avolekiteshvara*, the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion. The Dalai Lama is said to be his reincarnation.

Dharma – The Tradition of Buddhist Teachings. One of the ‘Three Jewels’ of Buddhism

Lama – A venerated, usually reincarnate, teacher of Tibetan Buddhism. Together with Lamaism, the term has a complex history of (mis)representation

Mandala – Originally Hindu, but used in Tibetan Buddhism as a representation of the Buddhist universe. Usually either painted on Thangkas, or in drawn with sand.

Nirvana – The goal of Buddhism. Not a place, but a perfect knowledge of how to avoid suffering and *samsara*, hence its translation into English as ‘Enlightenment’.

Samsara – The condition of perpetual rebirth and suffering that every human being is trapped within.

Sangha – The Buddhist Monastic Community. One of the ‘Three Jewels’ of Buddhism.

Shambala – Mythic Buddhist realm, hidden high in the peaks of the Himalayas. Often taken as the inspiration for Shangri-la.

Shangri-La – Imaginary valley used as the setting for James Hilton’s novel, *Lost Horizon*. Mythic roots in the legend of *Shambala*. Seen as responsible for many contemporary representations of Tibet.

Thangka – Tibetan painted scrolls, usually showing religious imagery of a *Bodhisattva* or *Mandala*.

List of Abbreviations

CTA – Central Tibetan Administration.

GiE – Government in Exile (informal term for CTA).

PCART – Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet.

TAR – Tibet Autonomous Region. Province level region of China, instituted in 1965 as a part of the 17-Point Agreement, in geographical area it roughly corresponds to the Tibetan region of Ü-Tsang, and therefore comprises only a third of Ethnographic Tibet.

Tibetan NGO – An NGO that is predominantly run by Tibetan staff/members.

TSG – Tibet Support Group.

A note on Sources

Original information presented in this thesis is derived from fieldwork, the majority of which was undertaken from May 2006 – September 2007. Where data is referred to directly, I have included in a footnote a specific reference in the form “Researchdocuments/Type of data/Location of Data Collection/specific referent”. Thus, an interview conducted in Dharamsala, India with participant ‘LT’ would take the following form “ResearchDocs/Interviews/In/LT”.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

On the 30th of March 1959, Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama and political and spiritual leader of Tibet, moved into exile by crossing the southern border of Tibet into the Indian province of Sikkim. In the following months, around one hundred thousand Tibetans also chose to move into exile. Every year, thousands of Tibetans continue to make the dangerous journey through the Himalaya to exile. This movement of people has created one of the most ‘resilient and successful refugee groups in the world’ (Bernstorff and von Welck 2003b, 1). This refugee move into status is inherently a challenge to Chinese rule in the wider-Tibetan region². Associated with this diasporic community is a wider political movement, which incorporates both Tibetans and non-Tibetans who work in solidarity towards a goal of self-determination for the Tibetan region. Despite the fact that nearly 50 years have passed since the initial move into exile, the Tibet Issue remains seemingly intractable. The most recent protests which occurred around the pomp and ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympics simply highlighted the gap between Tibetans’ claims for autonomy/independence and Chinese claims that Tibet is a matter of ‘internal’ politics, not to be discussed by those outside China.

This thesis makes a number of interventions, both empirical and theoretical. Firstly, it adds to the small but growing literature that attempts to think through the Tibetan struggle and its associated Movement in an explicitly political way. Consequently, it does this through applying some of the contemporary theoretical issues around the nature of transnational political action to the Tibet Movement. It theoretically develops work by various geographers on the relational and hybrid nature of space in arguing that reassessing political action spatially can promote different, less essentialised, political futures (Allen 2007; Hyndman 2004; Massey 2004, 2005). It does this by adopting a networked understanding of space that seeks to embed the idea of political struggle within the wider social realm. This networked and relational understanding of space allows for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which politics actually occurs in and through specific sites of political action. Building from thinking on the role of networks as constitutive of social relations, instead of taking the Tibet Movement as a social movement, it instead attempts to look at how the political struggle for Tibet contains many overlapping and interweaving agents, organisations and discourses which at once constitute the Movement.

² It should be noted that the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China is a smaller region than Tibetan notions of their land, which correspond instead to areas where ethnic Tibetans reside. This larger, ‘ethnographic’ Tibet is roughly the same size as Western Europe.

As a result, the thesis sets out with the following aim and objectives:

Thesis Aim	To uncover how the networked nature of political activity is organised and spread throughout the 'Tibet Movement'.
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This will be done by exploring the following questions in more depth;

Research Questions	How do these networks actually work? What are the everyday processes that hold these networks together?
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How are these networks spatially constituted?

How can we study these networks? What impacts does this approach have upon our research methods?

Consequently, it takes three elements of the whole of the Tibet Issue and examines them as discrete themes which help to define and shape the Issue in particular ways. These are, broadly: 1) the constitution and actualisation of the imaginative geographies of Tibet; 2) the construction and maintenance of the Tibetan nation in the Tibetan diaspora and; 3) the role of activism and political contestation in promoting the pro-Tibetan struggle. Each of these themes forms an empirical chapter of the thesis. However, while these are treated as distinct objects, it is important to realise that they all form part of the interweaving connections that make up the 'quilt' of the Tibet Movement. It should then become clear that each chapter of the thesis has close links to the others and it is this interlinked networked character that this thesis is based around.

Thus, while the three themed chapters will be the empirical heart of the thesis, it will be necessary to supplement these with the following structure. Firstly, and for the remainder of this chapter, I want to introduce Tibet, giving an account of its history which stresses not its isolation, but its historical connections to China, India and further afield. This introduction to the topic will be followed by an examination of the nature of networks and power in contemporary politics, with a particular focus on the geographies of these political relations. This section will be followed by a chapter based on how I attempted to uncover these networks during the research. While explaining the methodological conduct of the PhD, it will also attempt to work through some of the philosophical issues and problems raised by doing a 'networked' piece of research. These early chapters will lay the groundwork for the three empirical chapters mentioned above. Following these, I draw together what these four accounts mean to the wider Tibetan Movement and how they

shed light on the Tibet movement in more productive ways than are usually considered, before finally concluding the thesis.

Tibet: Axis of Asia or remote disconnected plateau? Some historical contexts

Tibet, as will become clear throughout this thesis, tends to be written about as something of an epitome of exotic distance. These are, of course, predominantly visions of a Tibetan 'other' created by both Western and Chinese sources, and seem to resonate with Edward Said's work as we shall see in later chapters. But despite these conflicting representations, it is necessary to put Tibet into a chronological history to provide some context and understand how Tibet came to be a part of China (see Fig. 1.1).

The name 'Tibet' does not derive directly from the Tibetan language, in which it is most easily rendered into as *bod*. The English *Tibet* derives from Arabic and Persian origins (Behr 1994, 559) and far from being isolated, Tibet was an important imperial power in Central Asia during the 7th Century CE reign of King Songtsen Gampo (French 2003, 90-91). Songtsen's military expansionism effectively established Tibet as a legitimate power, while at the same time he standardised a written script based on the *Ranjana* script of Northern India, together with being the first Tibetan leader to propagate Buddhism amongst his subjects. However, as French (2003) says, Songtsen was primarily a military leader, and after raiding both Nepal and China, he demanded princesses from each area to marry. His Nepali bride built the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, still considered the holiest temple in Tibet, and also helped to establish the Potala palace. His Chinese bride, Wencheng, whom he married in 641CE, remains a much more controversial figure. Wencheng directly helped to establish Lhasa, the preeminent Tibetan city, in what had previously been swampy land surrounding the Yarlung Tsangpo river (which in India and Bangladesh becomes the Brahmaputra). Barnett (2006) argues that, in the Chinese perspective, it is at this moment that the Tibet began to become a meaningful, civilised area. Thus, rather than with the ingress of Buddhism from the south, it is from the east that Tibet becomes advanced. Crucially, it is also at this early stage that the two histories of Tibet and China become intertwined, and the relationship between the two nations has never been adequately separated.



Figure 1.1 Political Subdivisions of China showing the Tibet Autonomous Region as 'Xizang (Tibet)' Altered from map at Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas at Austin, available at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_admin_91.jpg

Following Songtsen’s reign, the Tibetan empire exerted its influence from Bengal in the south to Mongolia in the north, and Burma in the east to Afghanistan in the west. This growth in power led to a series of conflicts with the Tang dynasty of China as the empire encroached upon them. Indeed, it is important here to recognise that military prowess is still an important facet to one’s prestige in Tibetan culture – the ability to fight and ride swiftly being demonstrated at horse festivals throughout Eastern Tibet to this day. During the 8th Century CE Trisong Detsen, great-great-grandson of Songtsen Gampo embarked on a new wave of spiritual and military adventure. Indian Buddhist teachers were invited, including *Padmasambhava*, later one of the most important figures of Tibetan Buddhism, who quelled mountain demons and spirits and promoted Buddhism at the

expense of the traditional, animistic Bon religious practices. Militarily, the Tibetan empire expanded to take over huge areas of present-day China, at one point occupying the Chinese Imperial city of Changan (Xian). This seemingly severed any notion of Chinese dominance over Tibet.

However, this expansionist period was followed by a long period of decline marred by internecine squabbling between various factions in Tibet. This, together with the rise of the Genghis Khan's Mongol dynasty meant that by 1207, Tibet had peacefully submitted to khanate rule (Goldstein 1997). Tibet paid tribute to the Mongol rulers, whilst they in turn did not interfere with Tibet's administration, nor did they invade Tibet. The death of Genghis Khan threw this relationship into uncertainty, and when tribute ceased being sent, the new supreme Khan, Ogedai, ordered a raid into Tibet. This raid brought back information about the political and religious makeup of Tibetan society, and resulted in the summoning of Sakya Pandita, a high ranking lama of the Sakya sect³ of Tibetan Buddhism, to the court of Ogedai. Here Pandita negotiated a relationship that came to be known as 'Priest-Patron' (Tib. *cho yon*), where China acted as a material guardian of Tibet in return for spiritual leadership from Tibet. From this point on, a confused relationship between Tibet and China existed, which does not conform to any Westphalian notions about sovereignty or territorial rule. As a result, Chinese and Tibetan provincial borders overlapped, and mean that the present Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) does not encompass all ethnically Tibetan areas (see Fig. 1.2)

The collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911 had led to the expulsion of any Chinese officials from Lhasa, and had given Tibet *de jure*, if not *de facto*, independence. However, this was not the most important of events that impacted upon Tibet at this time – the British colonial government of India began to encroach on Tibet from the south from late in the 18th century. Although there were a variety of diplomatic missions before the 20th century, the Younghusband Expedition of 1903-04 and Simla convention of 1914 were both attempts to enforce particular European concepts of sovereign territory onto the region. The Younghusband Expedition amounted to one of the last British imperial invasions and, while nominally undertaken in order to quell border disputes on the orders of the Lord Curzon, the hawkish Viceroy of India, the mission was also an attempt to 'open' Tibet

³ The four sects of Tibetan Buddhism are the *Kagyü*, *Nyingma*, *Sakya* and *Gelug*.



Figure 1.2 - Ethnolinguistically Tibetan regions of the People's Republic of China. *Amdo, Kham and Ü-Tsang* are the traditional Tibetan regions. Source: Shakya, 2002

to trade, limit perceived Russian influence on the borders of British India (French 1994) and to maintain Tibet as a buffer zone between China, British India and the Russian Empire in the so-called 'Great Game'. As a result of the Expedition, a British delegation and trading mission was established in the southern Tibetan town of Gyantse. The Simla Convention was a tripartite meeting between Tibetan, British Indian and Chinese officials in order to 1) determine a border between Tibet and India, and, 2) the nature of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Through various drafts, the Convention resulted in the 'McMahon line' being imposed as a border. However, disagreements between the various parties meant that the Convention, at various times, was unsigned by either Chinese or Tibetans as each side claimed sovereignty over Tibet. This ultimately unsuccessful attempt to conform to Westphalian norms was crucial in the later 1949/50 invasion of Tibet. The continuation of the confusion over the 'ownership' of the region meant that no power was willing to oppose China over what essentially remained a technical issue which could be seen as internal policing.

The period between 1911 and the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, was marked by his attempts to reform the political and military system within Tibet. Seeking support from sympathetic British political officers, he attempted to impose modern military tactics,

regimentation and equipment to the small Tibetan army, together with reforming Tibetan society in an attempt to establish a degree of centralised control from Lhasa upon the outlying regions. This included establishing radio contact with the outlying regions of Tibet for the first time and sending trade delegations abroad with passports issued in the name of an independent Tibet. However, many of the reforms attempted by the Dalai Lama were held up by conservative elements of the Tibetan Parliament. So, while reforms were undertaken, they were always limited and, after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, the regency undertaken before the accession of the 14th Dalai Lama was marked by internecine squabbling between various factions within the Lhasa aristocracy. Effectively, this meant that Tibet was no nearer being recognised internationally as an independent state, nor was it able to defend its borders.

It was under these circumstances that Tibet found itself confronted by a newly unified Communist China after 1949. With the defeat of Jiang Jieshi's Guomindang Nationalist government, the Chinese Communist Party regime quickly moved quickly to establish control over its perceived territory. As a result, on the 7th of October 1950, while worldwide attention was focussed on UN forces crossing the 38th Parallel in Korea, a 40,000 strong detachment of the People's Liberation Army crossed the Driichi River in Eastern Tibet. Quickly defeating the small and poorly-led Tibetan troops stationed in the area, the situation led to Ngabo, the defeated military commander of Eastern Tibet, signing 'The Seventeen Point Agreement' which agreed that Tibet was and always had been a part of China and authorised the integration of Tibet into the new People's Republic of China. Ngabo's actions have been the subject of bitter argument amongst Tibetans ever since, as he was technically unauthorised to sign any documents on the behalf of the Lhasa Government. However, given the military situation, the Lhasa Government was relatively powerless to change anything once the agreement had been signed. Thus, for the next 9 years, the Lhasa Government, led by the newly invested teenage 14th Dalai Lama, wrangled with the Communist Party in order to preserve Tibetan autonomy within the region.

Growing violence amongst eastern Tibetans against Chinese encroachment into the region, together with increasing intolerance on the part of the Chinese meant that by 1959 there were growing suspicions that the Chinese were attempting to remove the Dalai Lama from power and replace him with the more pro-Chinese Panchen Lama⁴. The emergence of a

⁴ The Panchen Lama is traditionally seen as the second 'highest' Lama in Tibetan Buddhism. The relationship is considerably less hierarchical than this suggests however, and the two posts are

perceived Chinese plot to kidnap the Dalai Lama in early March 1959 led to a popular revolt by Tibetans in Lhasa on the 10th of March, in the hope that they could protect the Dalai Lama and drive out the Chinese from their capital. The Dalai Lama was smuggled out, believing that the situation was now beyond negotiation, and having received assurances from Jawaharlal Nehru in India that he would be granted asylum, it was decided to make the move into exile.

It was here that the lack of any serious international recognition began to affect the Tibetan Government. While there were limited protests in the UN, no members of the Security Council signed any resolutions or statements, and a general unwillingness to confront Communist China over what was perceived as a marginal region meant that Tibet was abandoned by transnational political institutions. However, at the same time, small-scale Tibet Support Groups began to emerge in Europe and America.

Tibet itself became fully incorporated into the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965. Despite its autonomous status, Tibet was as affected by the policies of the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution as the rest of China, with widespread famine, the destruction of traditional monasteries and restructuring of Tibetan society to suit Maoist goals. These processes still remain controversial (Shakya 2002a; Wang 2002) and debates circulate about to what extent Tibetans were responsible for the destruction of their own cultural history. However, the period was also marked by a general disappearance of Tibet from International Relations and political studies more generally.

The 1980s were a period of great change for the Tibet Issue. Hu Yaobang's stewardship of the region's political assemblies was marked by a liberalisation of Chinese policies in the region (Shakya 2008). These allowed for a limited amount of freedom of expression. When this combined with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama, and a number of fact-finding missions to the region sent by the Exile Government in Dharamsala, India, a series of protests erupted in and around Lhasa. These protests garnered large scale media attention for the first time since the flight of the Dalai Lama, and a new wave of Tibet Support Groups emerged across the world. The upwelling of support for Tibet culminated for many in the Tibetan Freedom Concerts organised by a number of celebrities. However, the uprising and increasing popular support were met with a hardening of Chinese policies.

generally seen as either political rivals in the power struggles between different Tibetan Buddhist sects or as spiritual mentors, with the elder of the two acting as teacher of the younger.

The region and its politics were still treated as internal affairs of the PRC, and protests were seen as being instigated from outside, particularly blaming the 'Dalai Clique' who were attempting to 'split' the Chinese Nation apart.

This situation, where global levels of grassroots support came up against an immovable series of Chinese policies became the norm for much of the 1990s and the early 2000s, but more recently, the Beijing Olympics have provided a catalyst for a reinvigoration of the Tibet Movement. Widespread protests took place across ethnographically Tibetan areas in March-May 2008. These, according to Tibet Supporters, were against both the movement of the Olympic torch through the region, explicitly tying Tibet to China, and also against the continued lack of religious and cultural freedom under PRC rule. These protests, and the resultant Chinese response, were responsible for the biggest wave of pro-Tibetan solidarity demonstrations since the late 1980s. Protests against parades of the Olympic Torch were disrupted in London, Paris and San Francisco, and eventually led to a limited amount of condemnation for the civil and military crackdown in Tibet. Chinese responses have been varied, but official sources have claimed that these protests were in fact little more than race riots, and again fall back to represent them as the manifestations of the Dalai Clique's attempts to foment discord in China. While there has been a civil and military crackdown in the region, it remains to be seen what the long term effects of the Beijing Olympics on Tibet will be.

Networks of pro-Tibetan Politics

From the above passage through the history of Tibet we can begin to understand some general aspects of the region. This history obviously connects to the rest of the thesis, but it is important to recognise that Tibet's history is not uncontested, with differing accounts from Chinese, Tibetan and Western (predominantly, but not exclusively, British) sources. These different accounts of history remind us that Tibet, far from being isolated and exclusive, is in fact an important region in Asian politics. Its multiple connections and fluid relationships have helped to define it as a region. Today, as a vast, mineral-rich region whose rivers supply Northern India, Southeast Asia, and China itself, the region finds itself at the centre of an array of political ecology problems. And of course, despite the vagaries of media coverage which mean that Tibet flits in and out of popular consciousness, for around 200,000 diasporic exiles who now live in Asia, Europe and the Americas, Tibet remains home, and something that many are willing to fight, and indeed die, for.



Fig 1.3 Protests within Tibet - April-May 2008. From Shakya, 2008

This thesis makes interventions into exile Tibetan politics, and political geography more generally, by unravelling some of the networks of political opportunity and solidarity that connect the movement together. While Tibet forms the key empirical element of the thesis, the foray through the region's history above has already highlighted the intertwined and contested nature of Tibetan politics. This informs the theoretical avenues that run through the thesis. Political geography in general has turned towards more relational and contingent approaches in recent years. Postcolonial and feminist critiques that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s have meant that there has been a turn towards understanding geopolitical problems in ways which are sympathetic to the various actors who take part in them. The increasing recognition that identities are defined through relationships (Miller 1993) rather than held static has meant that political geography has increasingly turned towards the theoretical insights of poststructural French theory by thinkers like Foucault and Deleuze, but also from actor-network theory. This thesis argues that adopting a networked and relational approach to the playing out of these political actions produces theoretical and empirical insights into the workings of contemporary, 'globalised' political action. Rather than thinking about Tibet as a geopolitical problem or placing an emphasis on key actors like the Dalai Lama and thus emphasising the statecraft of the Tibet Issue, the thesis explores instead the mundane, everyday political occurrences that do the work of

holding the pro-Tibet Movement together. This politics of everyday occurrences plays out across space and influences how the Tibet Movement is productive of particular understandings of self and other, of the nation, and of forms of solidarity across these boundaries.

With this in mind, the thesis begins by exploring the theoretical background to these ideas. The next chapter argues that networked accounts of the social also require a rethinking of how both power and scale are theorised in human geography. It thus explores the three areas of power, scale and networks as mutually constitutive of a wider relational political geography. This relational geography has important impacts upon how research is undertaken, and so Chapter Three deals with the research methodology of the thesis. While explaining how the research took place, this chapter also deals with some more philosophical questions about the nature of doing research in contemporary, globalised, politics. These two chapters form the theoretical basis of the thesis, and are concluded by a short intermezzo which leads into three empirical chapters by explaining how they are separated into distinct areas.

The empirical heart of the thesis begins in Chapter Four, which looks at the production of an underlying 'Imagined Tibet' which influences both our understandings of Tibet, but also colours activist understandings of Tibet. This Imagined Tibet is influenced most readily by both colonial imagery of Tibetans as backward and also by the production of Tibetans as holders of ancient spiritual knowledge. These two elements combine to produce an image of Tibet and Tibetans as passive victims of unchecked Chinese aggression, and ultimately serves to limit the agency of Tibetans as political actors. This underlying 'Imagined Tibet' colours the other empirical evidence. The next Chapter examines the production of the Tibetan nation in exile. Moving away from classical work on the nation by Anderson (1983 [2006]) it argues that the nation is a heterogeneous assemblage of actors that operates across a variety of spaces and times. Consequently, certain spaces are productive of fixed Tibetan identities, but at the same time are run through with more hybrid national constructions. This produces a more fluid and mutable Tibetan identity in exile than is generally credited. The final empirical chapter looks specifically at pro-Tibetan activism. It examines the ways that politics in exile is held together by a series of mundane and everyday organisational structures that are routinised throughout a series of networks. These occur both through the regulated spaces of Tibet Support Group offices and through the more fluid and expansive spaces of protests. Thus the connections and relations built

up through specifically activist communities define how effective the Tibet movement is as a political movement.

These empirical chapters not only elaborate the theoretical arguments of the thesis, but also define the Tibet Issue as an area of political importance that shapes identities across the globe. The various elements that emerge through these chapters both uncover how the politics of pro-Tibet movements are actually developed and articulated by those involved in them, but also advance theoretical ideas about the nature of contemporary political action. This networked approach to research, as the rest of the thesis argues, is key to developing a more pragmatic account of politics that is theoretically informed, but crucially remains empirically insightful.

Chapter 2 – Power, Networks and the Geographies of Political Action

“It is not enough to be compassionate, you must act. There are two aspects to action. One is to overcome the distortions and afflictions of your own mind, that is, in terms of calming and eventually dispelling anger. This is action out of compassion. The other is more social, more public. When something needs to be done in the world to rectify the wrongs, if one is really concerned with benefitting others, one needs to be engaged, involved.”

The 14th Dalai Lama (The 14th Dalai Lama, in Gyatso and Goleman 1992, 96, emphasis added)

Introduction

The ability to act politically is one of the key themes of this thesis. Much of it is concerned with the ability of people and things to influence their surroundings – acting out processes through which they hope to influence the political ordering of the planet. The lack of a territory indivisibly marked as ‘Tibet’ and the resultant struggle to create such a territory remains the basis of the Tibetan people’s struggle, as led by the Dalai Lama. However, rather than being understood as a ‘traditional’ geopolitical/international relations situation that revolves around actions undertaken between state-based actors⁵, the Tibet Issue is complicated by the lack of any international recognition for the Tibetan Government in Exile and its claim of sovereignty. Thus the Tibet Issue has become something rather more subtle than a classical international relations, ‘state versus state’, situation. While the competing claims are activated on one hand by the apparatuses of the Chinese Government in Beijing, Lhasa and elsewhere, the Tibetan Government in Exile is supported by numerous other organisations, from the growing number of Tibetan NGOs, many of whom are explicitly political organisations, together with a global chain of what are commonly known as Tibet Support Groups (TSGs). These three types of political organisation, Government in Exile, Tibetan NGO and TSG form the bulk of the Tibet Movement. It is this interconnected nature of the Tibet Issue that is important here. While each component could be analysed in its particular setting, for example a social movement theory-led account of the TSG element of the movement, this would leave out an

⁵ It should, of course, be noted that the great struggles for decolonization can also be seen as traditional in many ways. Here, I simply mean to emphasise that contemporary work in International Relations and related fields still tends to assume geopolitics is still based largely around state based actors as dominant. As will become clear later on in the thesis, there exists a large amount of work in geography, social movement theory, and other political disciplines that shows the heterogeneity of political actors within these circuits of power.

understanding of the political movement as its various elements interact and how this affects the processes of political action on a daily basis. It is this understanding of power, interconnectedness and political action that forms the core of the thesis.

This chapter argues that the heterogeneous material geographies of political action generally, and pro-Tibetan politics more specifically, require a relational, poststructural understanding of space. To do this, it develops three main areas of engagement within contemporary literature on political geography. These are, firstly, power and the related processes of domination/resistance – more specifically following work in geography it thinks about the entangled and spatially contingent nature of power. As a result, the chapter begins by examining power and resistance through the ideas of Foucault, Deleuze and Latour, but also examines the work of geographers and the anthropologists on the topic. These contribute towards an understanding of power and resistance that stresses the interconnected nature of domination and resistance within the wider circuits of power.

This formulation of power necessitates an understanding of scale within these processes, and the next section examines theories of scale and its affect on political activities. This section argues that understandings of scale have tended to privilege hierarchy and have not given enough credence to flattened ontological constructions of space. Here, I assess the theories of connection and movement put forward by actor-network theory and argue that while they open our understandings of space, they also foreclose some of our understandings of it, particularly those offered by subaltern and postcolonial studies. Through all of these sections, developing these theories of entangled power/resistance and flattened ontologies of scale necessitates an understanding of the interconnected and networked theory of society. Therefore, the third section on networks argues that the interventions of the first two sections necessitate an understanding of society, and the political, as networked and interconnected arenas of events and assemblages.

As a result, this chapter sets out the theoretical framework of the thesis as a whole – that of power, politics and a networked understanding of the processes involved in these areas. It begins by looking at the idea of politics and social action, examining some of the ways that struggles have been theorised and asking what these accounts have offered and what they lack. It develops ideas about the conceptual development of political geography as a discipline and what this development has curtailed. The chapter considers how these networked accounts can help us to understand political action in ways that can potentially be more productive than the ‘traditional’ readings of politics. Of course, coterminous with

both of these sections will be an understanding of power and how it is played out through political action.

Geography and the politics of power, domination and resistance

The Tibetan struggle for independence/autonomy remains a counter-hegemonic struggle between pro-Tibetan groups and a hegemonic China, and as a result, it is often conflated with a simple dualism – China is seen to dominate Tibet and thus it comes to a big state controlling a small nation. This is obviously an oversimplification, and in order to understand the more nuanced nature of the relations between the two ‘sides’ later in the empirical chapters, here we need to unpick some of the theories of power, domination and resistance that have emerged in geography. Since the late 1990s, there has been an increased recognition of political resistance and contestation within geography. This has been most obvious in the publication of two edited collections (Pile and Keith 1997; Sharp et al. 2000a) which explicitly attempt to interrogate the spatiality of a variety of contentious political scenarios. This has been concomitant with attempts to unpick the nuanced nature of power and its analysis by geographers. Foremost amongst these has been Allen’s (2003a) attempt to show that power is more than simply something that is wielded by one party over another, instead involving a range of styles and types. It is this kind of work that has begun to explore the nature and range of power and resistance that this section of the chapter will engage with. Firstly, I begin by addressing power, looking at the ways in which it has been theorised and in particular looking at the ways which geographers have recently begun to use it in political circumstances. I then move on to thinking about how power intersects with resistance, and how the dichotomous relations imagined between the two need to be unpicked, in particular focussing on the spatiality of these relations.

While geography has been interested in the role of unequal relations for many years, current trends in political geography have been allowing more ground to open up in our understandings of how these actions are played out spatially. In this, we must begin to think about power in more subtle ways. Of course, power has been one of the more important theoretical issues the social sciences have attempted to understand. While there has been plenty of theorising that has constructed what Allen critiques as a ‘centred’ conception of power (Allen 2003a, 113-116) more recently, inspired by the work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, there has been a turn towards decentring power and showing how power is strategically played out through and across society.

Rather than highlighting Foucault's particular attempts to reconstruct history, here I want to focus on how his examinations of power and knowledge have been used. By examining the ways in which control is exercised, most famously in his examinations of institutions such as the asylum (Foucault 1967) and the prison (Foucault 1977), together with his examinations of sexuality (Foucault 1978), Foucault worked (at least partially) towards understanding the ways in which governments are able to control populations. This version of power as 'governmentality' is exercised not only by overt intervention in the life of the subject, but also by rolling out discourses throughout a given area that encourage self-disciplining and conformity to 'normal' standards. For example, the hierarchical family structure of Western societies disciplines and encourages people to conform without any direct governmental system of interference. Thus, 'deviant' behaviour is exported as 'other' and undesirable, needing to be contained and limited, creating a pervasive system of societal control at a distance. This system of discursive control decentres power from the state outwards towards the specific apparatus of the state and so we see why Foucault chose places like the prison and the asylum as his topics of study. Power thus becomes immanent and contingent, emerging throughout and across society as and when it is deployed and practised, not in some top-down exercise of explicitly named domination.

Foucault's emphasis on the regimes and structures of power that operate across society shows the insidious abilities of states and governments to 'outsource' power to other institutions and discourses to control populations. Thus, while states can never employ complete control over an individual, there are other dispersed social practices which in turn force a degree of conformity upon an individual. Yet, while Foucault spoke often of the need for resistance to these structures, most famously quoting 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1978, 95-96) he never spoke in as much detail about the operations of resistance within these governed spaces.

In particular, Foucault has been criticised by postcolonial critics in the past for his explicitly Euro-American worldview (Legg 2007a; Stoler 1995). Stoler's work is valuable here as it thinks about colonialism in ways that are imbued with discourses about sexuality and race. Thus, rather than critiquing the gaps left by Foucault's Eurocentric selection of topics, she develops his ideas and forces us to re-evaluate our understandings of how power, race and sexuality played out across colonial spaces. So, Foucault's ideas remain influential, with Said's *Orientalism* in particular showing a markedly Foucaultian understanding of the creation of a dominating discourse. I deal with Said in more detail in later chapters, but the

nature of this discursive, dispersed form of power remains important in our understandings of colonial languages. Stephen Legg's (Legg 2007b) work on Raj-era colonial Delhi shows how the purified spaces of the easily state-governed spaces of imperial New Delhi were run through with connections to the messy, aberrant, ungovernable spaces of Old Delhi. Thus, a specific form of imperial power attempted to exert its control over a spatial area, yet movement between differing forms and types of domination and resistance occurred through these very spaces of control. Importantly, Legg begins to explore in more detail than Foucault the messy ways in which these two processes accompany each other.

These reworkings of Foucault show that, despite his importance to the field of power, since his death, there have been numerous developments of his thinking in an attempt to understand the actual workings of the circuits of power/resistance. One account which explicitly thinks about power's deployment *across* space comes from Bruno Latour, of whom I want to speak of only briefly here, returning in more depth to his ideas later. Latour's work on 'centres of calculation' (Latour 1987, Ch. 6) helps us understand how imperial centres were able to extract information for the benefit of the imperial 'core'. Here, as voyages of 'discovery' from Western Europe encountered 'native' cultures, they were able to discover more and more information about a place and store it with other information about other areas. This process is iterative, with successive voyages finding out more and more information, and with this collection of information and data, the imperial power is able to gain power 'over' the periphery with its weaker knowledge of the world.

While this system is problematic, privileging as it does a peculiarly Western notion of knowledge at the expense of other forms of knowledge (for example, indigenous knowledge), it, together with Latour's attempts to come to terms with a system of power that rather than diffusing outwards from a point is translated from point to point within a network (Latour 1988), help to unpick how he thinks power is actually played out over space – as well as domination and the will to coerce people to do what is required, compliance is important. Some actants will willingly take part in the operation of a political system. Latour refers to the analogy of the rugby ball being passed along by people – some people will pass the ball directly, others will take it on before passing it on – there are a number of possibilities about how the ball is passed and used individually. But, by taking this further than a simple, immutable rugby ball, by being part in this system, these individuals alter what is being done – they translate power and alter the effects of the system. Thus, individual actants within this web then have the power to change the system

in minute ways – as power circulates through the system, the initial goals and aims become obscured and change. As Latour says (in presumably a challenge to Foucault’s clinic) ‘the chain is made of actors – not of patients – and since the token is in everyone’s hands in turn, everyone shapes it according to their different projects’ (Latour 1988, 268). In Latour’s view then, contra to some of Foucault’s arguments, we have a much less controlling and structured account of power. It thus becomes clear that power is much more complex than a centred account of power would allow for, and indeed, more mutable than the decentred controls of Foucault’s argument. This develops a sense where power is something more than a Foucaultian sense of engagement would account for. But, for now, I wish to concentrate on this specific instance of Latour’s work, and will return to him later in discussing his influence upon what has become known as actor network theory (ANT).

A similar decentred and immanent account of power is offered by Gilles Deleuze. Together with Felix Guattari, their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) is particularly useful, with what they term ‘micropolitics’ being important to our understandings of how power is actually played out across space. To them, political power is played out through the three segments of society: the binary dualisms of categorization (race/class/gender etc), the circulation of our affairs (or the community’s/city’s/country’s affairs) and the linear segments of procedure (we move through processes, and once one is finished, another begins). These segments operate simultaneously and overlap with each other. This segmentarity is at work across society, so things like the state are segmented. However, rather than thinking of power as centralised by the state, they argue that it is how this segmentarity is applied that becomes important. They overcode each of these segments as either ‘primitive’, which is fluid and supple, and ‘modern’, which is rigid. Each influences how the segmentarity is played out, so for example, in a primitive type of circular segmentarity,

“centers [*sic*] already act as so many *knots*, *eyes*, or *black holes*; but they do not all resonate together, they do not fall on the same point, they do not converge in the same black hole” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 232, emphasis in original)

In contrast, rigid circularities attempt to impose order, drawing lines between these holes and knots so that they become attached to a centre. However, crucially, each is still infused with the other – the most rigid, ‘modern’ system (Foucault’s prison, for example) is still subject to supple ‘primitive’ interactions, just as the most supple, ‘primitive’ society still possesses some form of rigid overcoding. And here, it becomes important to think about

how these things are played out across space, Deleuze and Guattari for example look at state bureaucracy, presumably one of the more rigid 'modern' mechanisms

“It is not sufficient to define bureaucracy by a rigid segmentarity with compartmentalization of contiguous offices, an office manager in each segment, and the corresponding centralization at the end of the hall or on top of the tower. For at the same time there is a whole bureaucratic segmentation, a suppleness of and communication between offices, a bureaucratic perversion, a permanent inventiveness or creativity practiced even against administrative regulations.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 235)

This becomes similar to Latour's arguments for the agency of individuals, but allows for a more nuanced understanding of how people negotiate how they are placed within a system. This is what they term micropolitics. While the macropolitical situation involves the imposition of the bureaucratic regime upon a population, micropolitical processes effect the spread and extent of the system and, as a result, power centres are defined by what they cannot control rather than what they can. Thus, while things can be overcoded by a dominant regime, there are always escaping segments, elements that are mutant, that do not conform (or that are incompetently managed, see Graeber 2006). The immanence of power present in Foucault becomes bound with a relational contingency – as power relations emerge, they are bound by the specific circumstances of the spaces and places of their emergence and the happenings going on there.

What should be clear here is that power is not something that is easily reducible to one thing, whether this is the ability to dominate or coerce. Power instead is both spatially contingent, but also productive. If we examine some of these decentred accounts, then power is an outcome of a set of relations (between both humans and non-humans), which are altered through the power relations within them. As Allen (2003a) reminds us, power is not about simple resource or capability mobilization. Indeed, Allen's project to reintroduce a sense of geography to power is particularly important (see Allen 2003a, 2003b; Allen 2004; Allen 2007). Whilst reading the accounts of Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari, it can be easy to fall into the poststructural trap of deconstructing space so completely that it becomes difficult to see one space or relations as significantly different to another – the world becomes a melange of interlocking segments with no discernible reason for why these spaces/relations are different to any other. Yet to Allen, power is a specific type of social relation,

“Subjects are constituted by the spacing and timing of their own practices as much as they are by those who seek to shape their conduct. As an immanent force which constitutes its own organisation, not one imposed from above or outside, power is seen as coextensive with its field of operation. *Power is practised before it is possessed and it is this that gives rise to the roundaboutness of power, not some facile notion that it is a shadowy force lurking in the murky recesses. The spaces of the everyday are the sites through which subjectivity is immanently produced.*” (Allen 2003a, 9, emphasis added)

Thus, the seemingly mundane and banal practices of the everyday are important in mapping out how power plays out across space. Rather than thinking through power as pure domination, Allen argues for a nuanced understanding of power and space. Thus, while recognising that power is not ‘centred’, we should temper Foucaultian and Deleuzian accounts where ‘everything begins to shade into power’ (Allen 2003a, 99) with a recognition of the specific relations through which power works, whether this is instrumental power (i.e. power as wielded *over* others) or associational power (i.e. power that is developed through connections and solidarities *with* others). Power is therefore defined more by the way it is deployed in space, rather than by the resources it uses. But, if power is inherently spatial in its character and deployment, what does this say of one of its subcategories -resistance?

Power is often broken down into themes of domination and resistance, which in turn often come bundled together as a simple dichotomy – power is equated to domination, which in turn begets resistance as a kind of sub-power. In particular, resistance tends to be romanticised as the grand actions taken in full view of a dominating power. However, given that we must consider power as more nuanced and subtle, what does this accounting mean for our understandings of resistance? For example, Steve Pile (Pile 1997) unpicks the varied places and roles of resistance to oppression in society. To him, resistance takes more forms than those we can easily ‘see’ as outright rejections of a ruling order. In fact, he argues that resistance occurs across a variety of spectrums of society – it is not just about resisting control in those spaces that can be easily seen and mapped, and thus resistance has its own spatialities. He also, more controversially, calls for accounts of resistance that decouple it from a pre-ordered space of power. By this, he means to argue for a more mutable, freer form of resistance – it does not only occur in those zones of domination that the dominator

can control, instead occurring where people rationalise and actualise their own relations of power, and act against them as they see necessary. Thus, while the power to dominate is undoubtedly important to our accounts of politics, he calls for a more nuanced account of resistance that not only relates to our understandings of how we deal with 'power', but also how things like anger, desire and capacity (p. 3) all feed into our abilities to resist. This, together with a recognition that resistance can occur in many different spaces, not just those of oppression, opens up our understandings of how and what people (and things) are doing as a form of resistance. Indeed, to Pile, this can be taken on into psycho-analytical terms, where, by using Fanon's attempt to unpick the colonial psyche (Fanon 1963, 1967), he argues that resistance is not only about external spaces, but it is the internal will to resist and attempt to change the situation that remains important here.

There have been various attempts at this from a variety of positions. Abu-Lughod (1990) sees resistance as a 'diagnostic' of power – resistance is shaped by the imposition of power and domination (in this case as the institutions of the modern state into Bedouin society). By following how resistance is shaped by new forms of power we can see how power relations are enacted and performed in historically contingent ways – the playing out of power is inherent to producing its own resistance. Indeed, Abu-Lughod is positively Foucaultian in her modification of his statement 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1978, 95-96). In a somewhat different approach, David Graeber, in his attempts to theorise an 'anarchist anthropology' (Graeber 2004), usefully targets a number of these themes. To him, like Pile, revolutionary actions are present in everyday occurrences (Graeber 2004, 33) but he also allies this to the role of imagination in producing what he terms counterpower.

"Counterpower is first and foremost rooted in the imagination; it emerges from the fact that all social systems are a tangle of contradictions, always to some degree at war with themselves. Or, more precisely, it is rooted in the relation between the practical imagination required to maintain a society based on consensus...the constant work of imaginative identification with others that makes understanding possible-and the spectral violence which appears to be its constant, perhaps inevitable corollary." (Graeber 2004, 35)

Graeber's concept of counterpower is a distinctly egalitarian project. Not a simple opposition of power, it is a reworking of societal values based upon consensus and institutions of direct democracy. His anthropological studies of Madagascar lead him to

conclude that traditional cultural performances in the French colonial period acted as invisible spaces of resistance that were able to emerge and resist the newly independent state in the colonial era's aftermath. These accounts are obviously infused with the libertarian ethos of Graeber, but they do highlight how his version of resistance emerges from the areas that the dominating power (in this case the state) cannot see. Those areas which are seemingly beyond overt displays of domination, such as imagination, work together with more visible resistant mechanisms to subvert and eventually remove the oppressive regime.

However, if we read this account in the light of Allen's accounts of nuanced power, Graeber takes us no closer to accounting for resistance as a distinct playing out of power – counterpower is still power, just a collaborative, associational type rather than the instrumental, dominatory type. To return briefly to Pile, in his account, resistance can exist as something separate to domination, and thus its nuances need to be better understood by studying it as a specific object. This, it could be argued, is a manifestation of the postmodern or cultural turns in geography, whereby political geography has become imbued with a sense of the dialectical and psychological. However, the importance of unpicking our understandings of resistance remains clear. Indeed, this has been built upon by Sharp et al.'s (2000b) introduction to their edited collection. Rejecting, rightly, the overly simplistic accounts of power as domination and developing social-movement theory-led accounts with a Foucaultian inflection, they argue that, unlike Pile's (1997) suggestion, it is impossible to separate domination and resistance. While there are varieties of resistance at work, these are all at work *against* something. To me, it follows that while power and resistance is not a matter of polar opposites competing against each other, we must look across the spectrum of powers and resistances, and see where and how the two are distinct and where they are coterminous – how do resistant forms emerge and compete with domination? Not all 'resistances' are as egalitarian as Graeber would like, so how do they sometimes beget new, albeit modified, dominations? We need to unpick how people and groups are entangled into these political systems, how resistance and power may be relatively unseen, yet are being played out through space. Resistances are born within the structures and spaces of society – as Deleuze would have us believe in the 'mutant' ways in which strategies are played out across spaces – as well as on the peripheries, in the 'imaginative' spaces of Graeber's cultural accounting. As Sharp et al remind us,

“The relationship between such practices [of claiming, using and defending spaces] and the sites wherein they are articulated are mutually constitutive, albeit in different ways. Hence, while the strategic mobilisations of domination/resistance may constitute particular places as sites of action, the material, symbolic and imaginary characteristics of these places will also influence the exact effects of such practices.” (Sharp et al. 2000b, 28)

Thus the specificity of the site imbues resistance with its own characteristics. Thus, as well as resistance being a diagnostic of power, after Abu-Lughod, it is also symbiotically attached to space. Space helps to define resistance, but resistance also defines space. This, of course, should not be surprising given ideas about the social and relational construction of space (Massey 1994), but it does make clear that resistance is inherently spatial. In addition, looking at the examples given above, there are a number of issues here about the scale of action and resistance. These cases focus on local actions against state or larger imperial powers, and, given the literature on social action and the politics of scale within geography, it is to this which this chapter now turns.

Summary

This section has examined some key themes in thinking about power and resistance. Firstly it gave an account of how thinking about power has evolved towards a decentred approach, where power can emerge anywhere and through many processes. These understandings fed into arguments about the nature of resistance. From initial thoughts that tried to separate domination from resistance, it has then argued that although these are two different aspects of power, and that resistance and domination, after Sharp et al., are entangled with each other. In addition, both are also entangled in space – space determines the form of resistance, and resistance, in turn determines the form of space.

Scale

Scale is something seemingly inherent to much thinking about political geography – as Howitt has remarked

“Scale is a term that easily slips into our discussion because the scaled processes of “globalization,” “national sovereignty” and “local action” that are the taken-for-granted focuses of so much political geography are so obvious” (Howitt 2003, 150-151)

Given its background in geopolitics and the study of how the world is divided and bordered, political geography has clear links to understanding actors at different scales and their interaction, and so it is hardly odd that we must think about how different actors have different spatial reaches (see Claval 2006 for an understanding of this evolution). In this section of the chapter, following from the ideas of the previous section, we must reflect on how thinking geographically about scale is important to our understandings of the production and maintenance of power relations. Staeheli (1994) has argued, 'Through struggle, the power relations of society are inscribed in the landscape' (ibid, 389). Thus, social struggle must become dynamic - 'Political agents and groups must be able either to operate at multiple scales or must be able to change the opportunity structure at other scales in order to pursue their claims' (ibid. 388-9). Indeed, the (in)ability of actors and groups to transfer their ideas from one scale to another has occupied many geographers, see David Harvey (1996) on Raymond Williams's concept of militant particularisms, for one well-known example. Scale then remains important in our understandings. If we take it, basically, as 'a level of representation' (Smith 2000, 724) then it follows that scale is also something that is socially produced and arranged, and this has been a major topic within human geography since the early 1990s. This recognition of scale as a social product has called into question the usefulness and validity of scale – if it is socially constructed, what purpose does it serve, and what social structures does it involve? This section of the argument develops these themes, looking at some of the work done by geographers, particularly those focussing on how scale operates within political geographies. It then moves on to discuss some recent critiques of scale, in particular focussing on how Sallie Marston, John Paul Jones II and Keith Woodward (Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005) have recently taken issue with scale's hierarchical nature and argued for a different ontological understanding of space. This in turn leads on to the final section of this chapter which is concerned with the flattened spaces of a networked understanding of space and power.

Firstly however, we must begin by attempting to define and capture what scale is, which is in itself problematic - 'once scale is constructed, where in the world is it? Scale is not easily objectified as a two dimensional space, such as state borders. We cannot touch it or take a picture of it' (Delaney and Leitner 1997, 97). This difficulty in defining what exactly scale is and represents has provoked some debate upon the validity of 'scale' as we treat it as an ontological entity. Following from the definition given by Smith, above, there are of course a number of facets to our understanding of scale – Howitt (1998) argues that scale is

usually seen as possessing three aspects, size, level and relation. The first two are oversimplistic renderings of 'scale' when taken individually, and so he argues, a relational understanding creates scale as a 'factor in the construction and dynamics of geographical totalities – rather than simply a product of geographical relations' (Howitt 1998, 56). Scale is thus not simply about the 'size' of a political actor, nor its 'level' within a hierarchy, it is instead a part of the interweaving geographies of space and place that make up our individual understandings of the world. This relational approach is more commonly called the 'socially constructivist approach' to scale. Marston's (2000) review of the field suggests that there are three main tenets to our understanding of the production of scale. Firstly, and following from some earlier points, scale is not ontologically given. It is not an object waiting to be discovered 'out there'. Instead it is social interaction that creates it. The second is that these framings have material consequences – scale making is not only rhetorical, it has effects upon everyday and macro-level life. Finally, these constructions and framings of scale are temporary, contradictory and are politically produced according to the prevailing conditions at the time. Politically, then, the world can be seen to be made up of a number of structural components, such as supra-national organisations, the state, and non-state actors, each of which can interact with the others. Thus, to examine scale, we need to examine the interaction between these various organisations/actors and determine how the structure of political scale affects them and their ability to act.

The form that this structuring takes becomes important for political geography as it is this which determines the agency and power relations of the various actors in a particular space. Here I will briefly mention a few of the more empirical studies of this that have taken place. For example, Cox (1998) has attempted to understand where local politics are situated within these politics of scale. He argues that localities are both what he calls 'spaces of dependence' and 'spaces of engagement' at the same time. Spaces of dependence are marked by social relations that mark the place-specific conditions through which actors can realize their essential interests. However, these spaces are run through with wider sets of connections to regional and global arenas. These are the spaces of engagement, and it is through this engagement (and how effective the engagement is) that the spaces of dependence are allowed to come into being and continue to exist. While this idea has been criticised on a variety of issues (Jones 1998; Judd 1998; Smith 1998), as Marston (2000) points out, Cox's ideas are important as they ground scale not in abstract theory, but in the processes that link the 'local' to other areas and scales.

Another route through scale-thinking is proposed by Brenner (1997, 1998, 2001) who initially began thinking about scale by interrogating the processes employed by the state as it exists within a global capitalist system. Using Henri Lefebvre's theories of the state, he argues that changes in the planning system in the Federal Republic of Germany reflect not a progressive development of phases (like world-system analysis) but are indicative of a social construction of scale. The shifting of the state outward towards regional and local organisational structures represents an example of the unfolding of capitalism through the structures of society. This is what orders the relations of hierarchy between different units at different scales. This is similar to Swyngedouw's concept of 'Glocalization' (Swyngedouw 1997, 2000, 2004) where global capitalist processes are re-territorializing the current system of states and cities. This is done by shifting traditionally state-led infrastructures both 'upwards' towards global level organisations, and 'downwards' by devolving power to more local or regional configurations.

What we have then is an increasingly complicated structuring of scale. Rather than thinking about things purely in terms of different scales (the body, the community etc.), theorists have begun to complicate our understandings of scale and see it as socially produced, and this social production crucially occurs across spatial scales, and therefore political action occurs across them too. Thus, to Staeheli (1994), it is the ability to move across scales and overcome the different problems encountered at each scale that marks out the most effective oppositional political groups, and following from this there are numerous studies of how actors operate across scales, whether looking at the importance of technology to facilitating cross-scale activity (Adams 1996), how individuals attempt to influence policymakers (Cidell 2006), or how social movements strategise according to the ways they interact with scale (Miller 1994).

However, this more nuanced and complicated understanding of scale has not been without its critics. Most recently, Marston, Woodward and Jones (2005) have critiqued these ideas and argued for a complete abandonment of the use of scale, instead replacing it with a 'flat' networked ontology of space. This is part of their wider project based on the pre-eminence of the site (Marston, Woodward and Jones 2007; Woodward, Jones and Marston 2007). Their argument centres on the four criticisms of the above ways of thinking about scale. Firstly, operationally, there is a degree of confusion between scale as *size* (i.e. the horizontal measure of scope) and scale as *level* (as a nested hierarchy of objects) - thus, both the horizontal (i.e. the networked, relational 'flatness') and the vertical (the hierarchy

of power) become blurred and unclear as objects within the same term. Marston et al. argue that to privilege scale precludes the fact that

“one encounters these ‘structures’ not at some level once removed, ‘up there’ in a vertical imaginary, but on the ground, in practice, the result of marking territories horizontally through boundaries and enclosures, documents and rules, enforcing agents and their authoritative resources” (Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005, 420)

Therefore, it becomes more important to privilege the ‘horizontal’, relational aspects of this argument over the verticality given in the term scale. Secondly, scalar hierarchies are necessarily entangled in a macro-micro distinction (e.g. global-local) which is problematic as it encourages a distinction between what happens at local levels as productive of what is happening ‘up there’ at the global level – there is no space for blurring between these boundaries thanks to the ‘everydayness’ of the relations that are occurring in both these spaces. Thirdly, scalar hierarchy is a performative structure, if the ‘levels’ of hierarchy like body, district, region are inserted in a work, then the research tends, *a priori*, to obey the assumptions of scale as a given – form determines content in the research. Finally, applying scalar hierarchy also applies a top-down, ‘God’s Eye’ (p.422) view to research - the researcher becomes transcendent, which corrupts attempts, following Haraway (1991), to address the reflexivity and positionality of the researcher.

Marston et al.’s critique of some of the hierarchical aspects of scale is valid and highlights the limits of much scalar thinking. In the place of scale, they try to create a ‘flattened’ spatiality which is predicated upon the ‘site’ as a key spatial arena. Drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari, DeLanda, and Schatzki, they argue that

“[The] broad inclusion of orders within sites allows us to account for the presence and affective capacity of relatively stable objects and practices that continuously draw each other into relation and resurface in social life. Such a strategy avoids misrepresenting the world as utterly chaotic and retains the capacity to explain those orders that produce effects upon localized practices” (Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005, 425)

By developing the site as the ontological space of interaction between objects and assemblages that cohere together, they begin to take apart the idea of scale. It is important to point out at this point that Marston et al.’s deconstruction is only limited. The article

itself is meant as the beginnings of thinking about scale in this way, but more crucially can be critiqued on a number of other levels. Of these critiques, many come from a series of comments upon the article from a later issue of *Transactions*. For instance, Leitner and Miller (2007) and Hoefle (2006) have taken issue with the removal of scale as one of the key units of geographical analysis. Collinge (2006) has argued for the adoption of a Latourian, actor-network theory inspired blend to this space (but more on ANT and Latour later).

However, the adoption of a 'flat' ontology contains another set of problems, as, while they argue against a fetishisation of a language of 'flows' and ease of movement, Marston et al.'s conception of the linked sites and spaces emphasises the unfolding and evolving nature of these sites. Whilst this is no doubt important, it is also important to consider how the relational nature of these sites form a series of networks which can both enable and hinder the 'connectivity' of these spaces. The site, while an open arena of political interaction, is at the same time closed by a variety of structures and relations that can prevent certain actions from occurring. So, while it is true that, connections in a site can be over a vast geographical distance, especially in the contemporary world, there remains a tension within the work of Jones, Marston and Woodward whereby actors can act seemingly without limits, whereas they are in fact hindered by a variety of relations, some of which are beyond the limits of the site itself. To take an extreme example, a nomadic farmer in rural Tibet, while aware of constraints placed upon him/her through the landscape and through interactions with local communities and communist party officials, is constrained by other, wider influences, such as market conditions for his/her goods, Chinese Communist Party policy on how best to manage the land and the impact of domestic and foreign aid agencies in the area. Thus, while the farmer has a degree of agency within the system, and the site is intimately connected to wider arenas, the connections between the two are not necessarily clear, clean or smooth. The 'flatness' of these ontologies thus becomes crumpled and uneven, suggesting a more rigid and hierarchical structure, which may not extend 'upwards', but instead flows around and through the various sites of political action.

This is a more subtle problem than I suggest here and indeed, I find Marston et al.'s site ontology a useful critique of most scalar thinking, but the limits to site-based ontological studies of politics privileging the site means creating an understanding of the connectivity of the assemblages contained with and around them. If (as we have seen above, through

Cox) spaces are run through with the influences of connections with other areas, or dare I say scales, many of these connections may be unseen to the research. This is of course, preferable to assuming a 'God's Eye' view, but as a result, an analysis of a site becomes difficult to establish as anything other than a brief, momentary alignment of objects/peoples/things within a place, and the ability to produce a mapping of systems that extend beyond the site and become more spatially extensive becomes more difficult. This difficulty will become more clear through the rest of the thesis, particularly in considering the methodological component of the research, but it is with this site-based ontology in mind that I turn towards thinking through space, and in particular, a networked understanding of the spatial, that I now examine in the final section of this chapter.

Summary

This section has explored some of the key trends in thinking about scale in geography. By examining some of these, it has argued that while scale has been important in many ways to our understanding of political actions, that it has also been critiqued by Marston, Jones and Woodward as being too hierarchical. This critique has argued for a reassessment of the spatial towards an emphasis on the site, and, while problematic in some of its assumptions, it offers an insight into the a more vibrant and opportune space, where assemblages of objects can come together to affect political change.

Networks

The conceptual importance of networks has become increasingly important in recent thinking, especially in our understandings of the political. This is based to a large degree upon two strands of work, one that has decentred power relations and another that has attempted to 'flatten' space and show how scales are based upon interactions and not stratified hierarchies. Thus, this section builds upon the previous two and develops some of the ideas inherent in them in order to show how a networked understanding of the socio-spatial can be useful to our understandings of political resistance. It begins by thinking through the work of what is generally known as 'actor-network theory' (ANT), one of the most important schools in the emergence within geography of these networked understandings of space. Emerging from a Science and Technology Studies (STS) background, ANT has become known primarily through the work of Bruno Latour, but in order to fully address the topic, it is also necessary to take into account the likes of John Law, Anne-Marie Mol and Michel Callon, amongst others. ANT is primarily known through

its raising of the agency of non-human actors to a level equal to human actors, however, there are also a number of other issues which need to be critiqued within it, concerned primarily within its construction of the political and its structures of domination. Thus, while recognising that ANT has done the social sciences a service by opening up grounds of human and non-human engagement, I also wish to go into more detail on the work of Deleuze and Guattari and think through some of their ideas on wider politics and the nature of domination and resistance. Here their development of the idea of the assemblage, particularly as subsequently developed by Manuel DeLanda (DeLanda 2006), have both similarities with ANT, but have crucially allowed for a greater degree of political activity within them. This examination of how these two threads of network-led theory will tie together the previous sections and bring out the broad trends of the thesis as a whole.

Although it is often noted that it does not conform to any recognizable standard of a coherent 'theory', and is difficult to represent as any one thing (see Law 1999, 1), it is clear that there are a number of elements that can be marked out as specific to ANT. By developing the linkages between social and technological aspects of (primarily) scientific procedures and activities, it developed in the 1980s as a form of mapping out of material and semiotic relations. Two of the most well known early examples of ANT are Law (1986; see also Law 2000) and Latour (1987). These two works neatly show how the world according to ANT works. Law takes apart the imperial voyages of Portugal in the Indian Ocean, and shows how it was crucially a combination of human activity *together with* technological advancements in shipbuilding and navigation that allowed Portugal to extend its maritime control and develop its imperial network and dominate trade in the area. This account develops the networks of relations between people and things within and around the ships as they moved through the sea between various trading posts. These networks are mutable over time, as the increasing connections brought about by technological advancement create new scenarios and sets of relations that are in themselves open to new interventions as new technologies/connections/interventions occur. Latour's account is more concerned with the role of science within society in general, but in particular he focuses on the role of collection of scientific data collection on European voyages of discovery in the 15th and 16th centuries. Less concerned with the connections that occur within these technologies than Law, Latour develops the idea of circulation, where successive voyages of discovery collect more and more information about a particular place, these are then taken back to a 'centre' where the data is collated and stored. Further voyages find out more information and develop the existing accounts in the centre and

thus more and more knowledge is gained about a particular area, through which it is eventually possible to gain more substantial information than the indigenous people, who can then be controlled from the centre, in a seemingly straightforward power/knowledge relationship. These two works develop some of the key themes of ANT – that of agency being dispersed through humans and non-humans on an equal basis, that of connection between these various actants (more on these later) and finally that these connections are temporary and liable to change.

From these two articles, we can get a general idea of what ANT asks us to believe about the nature of the world, and few would argue with claims that we are all connected to various things in various ways. However, ANT emerges from a particular construction of ‘the social’ that asks us to do away with what we may call a ‘traditional’ conception of society. Latour developed some of these ideas in his critique of the idea of modernity (Latour 1993). The work of scientific modernity, since Hobbes and Boyle according to Latour, has been to distil from the mess of connections in the world a series of dichotomies, most particularly, nature/society. This act of separation creates a human-centric viewpoint, where nature, even though we have imagined and created it, simply exists outside our control, while society is something that is controllable, yet we have not imagined or created this. Crucial to this distinction is that nature and society remain separate and never meet, yet this is clearly not the case in reality. To Latour, writing in the early 1990s, processes such as the destruction of the ozone layer and the threat of global warming combine the two in a hybrid of nature and society. These proliferating hybrids which contain nature and society defy the modern act of separation and, as a result, we must rethink our understandings of science, society and nature to encompass hybrids of nature/society.

A similar viewpoint is taken and developed by Law (2004) who, when considering how methods influence our work, argues that most research inscribes certain aspects of what we find, but also excises a great deal of what is actually going on – this he refers to as the ‘mess’ which inhabits the world that is left by our construction of it as a series of neat methodological boxes. Given that we are so clearly involved in the writing of our research, and the playing out of our methods, then this becomes a political action – what we do and how we construct it becomes a clearly political act of constructing a ‘correct’ version of social reality. By recognising this and performing research (and by this I mean all aspects, from planning through to writing) that recognises that the nature of research can be fluid, mutable and sometimes vague and ephemeral, Law constructs a different research agenda.

I want to return to this point later on in my discussions of the thesis's methodology, but here it is important to recognise that, like Latour, Law is involved in his own deconstruction of the social world, one which asks us to abandon the idea that the social can be neatly parcelled up and think instead in terms of fluidity, translation, and connection between places.

But, given this reshaping of the social landscape, what does this mean for politics and the power struggles contained within it? By opening up the categories of what we can include as actors within society to encompass non-human as well as human actors, ANT forces a reassessment of agency. Callon and Law (1995) argue that agency emerges because and through the establishment of *collectifs* – 'emergent effect[s] created by the interaction of the heterogenous parts that make it up' (Callon and Law 1995, 485). The relations between a series of actors perform, and thus perform agency. Unpicking these *collectifs* decentres the subject, and establishes the 'human' as a series of connections and relations, exactly the same as the 'non-human'. But crucially, because of these connections and relations, and through their collection in a centre of power or management, something they compare to the panopticon (Callon and Law 1995, 493), a strategy can emerge as the various parts of the *collectif* function together. Thus, while decentring the subject and placing it as multiple within the *collectif*, there still exist forms of hierarchical relationship (see Law 1994, 121-123, for more on this). Crucially, all of these are materially constituted within the world, and are materially heterogenous, that is, they are made up of lots of different things – architectures, texts, conversations and so on. Thus the world becomes more and more complicated as we can introduce new elements to these networks as they extend with and across space, and so ANT has in turn forced a reassessment of the nature of spatiality.

By questioning the pre-eminence of the social and building a more detailed, narrative understanding of organisations, ANT has performed a dual function – not only decentring the individual as mentioned above, but also decentring the world and its organisation, thus 'flattening' the world into a series of connections and relations which need to be followed to understand them. This is done, not by understanding space as a flat, Euclidean plane populated by objects which can be easily represented and mapped. Instead, ANT typically takes on an understanding of space derived from the mathematical concept of topology. Mol and Law describe topological space thus:

“...topology doesn't localize objects in terms of a given set of coordinates. Instead, it articulates *different rules for localizing in a variety of coordinate*

systems. Thus it doesn't limit itself to the three standard axes, X, Y and Z, but invents alternative systems of axes. In each of these, another set of mathematical operations is permitted which generates its own 'points' and 'lines'. These do not necessarily map on to those generated in an alternative axial system. Even the activity of 'mapping' itself differs between one space and another. Topology, in short, extends the possibilities of mathematics far beyond its original *Euclidean* restrictions by articulating other spaces." (Mol and Law 1994, 643, emphasis in original)

This topological understanding multiplies our understandings of space in which operations and interactions can take place. To Mol and Law, these are threefold. Firstly, *regions*, in which objects are clustered, and which boundaries can be constructed around. Secondly, *networks* are defined by the *distance* and *difference* between the various components. The functioning of the relations defines how 'connected' and therefore how distant they are from each other. Difference between objects is marked out by the variety of relations between objects. Thus, the first two spaces create a seemingly typical spatial map – areas can be marked by boundaries as we discover them, but are also run through with a variety of connections that work through and across these bounded spaces. However, it is the third type of space – *fluids* – that Mol and Law argue is important. These fluid spaces are marked by neither boundaries nor networks. Boundaries can appear or disappear, and things may leak between them. Sometimes, relations may transform, but not in a way that implies a fracture or boundary or even a difference between the two. Thus, relations and *collectifs* can be mutable systems - changes occur within and between objects that allow for an effect similar to translation.

All of this means,

"...instead of thinking in terms of surfaces – two dimension – or spheres – three dimension – one is asked to think in terms of nodes that have as many dimensions as they have connections. As a first approximation, the ANT [sic] claims that modern societies cannot be described without recognizing them as having a fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, ropy, capillary character that is never captured by the notions of levels, layers, territories, spheres, categories, structure, systems." (Latour 1997, 2)

To Latour then, ANT is a form of material resistance. Instead of taking universal laws of science and 'the social' as the starting point for a 'reinjection' of things we must instead learn to place these networked understandings of space/place/thing at the forefront of our production of the world.

What does this mean for our production of the politics of contestation? While Latour has set out his arguments for a more networked political ecology (Latour 2004), he has a somewhat ambivalent relationship to 'radical' politics. This can be further extended when taking into account much of the rest of the ANT literature, which, unsurprisingly given its background in STS, does not deal with resistant politics. Exceptions are clearly seen within the recent work of sociologist Andrew Barry (Barry 2001) and more recently Paul Routledge within geography (Routledge 2008; Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel 2007). However Routledge's accounts of ANT are clearly heavily influenced by the work of Latour at the expense of some of the other theorists of ANT.

Despite these works on a networked politics, there is a tension within ANT in its production of the social realm and how it deals with large social processes, most obviously with its ability to speak about and for unequal political relations. This is most clearly seen in the work of Law and Latour cited earlier in this chapter whilst thinking about power in the construction of colonial regimes and centres of power. By developing ideas about the production of the colonial space, the two ANT theorists produce a system in which the colonised remain curiously absent. This is an unfortunate omission, and has been taken further by Elam (1999) and Haraway (1992) who, dealing specifically with Latour's work, recognize that he does not adequately develop the non-human sections of ANT, usually relying upon the interactions of men and machines and ignoring the possibility of non-machinic non-humans existing. More crucially Latour's ANT ignores the sets of connections between the various non-human actors in the network, and this creates a network that is still human-centred despite Latour's claims to the contrary. Latour's production of 'the modern' and its associated critique of it remain limited as a result. His modernity is one that is 'purified' by the decisions he makes as to what is included and what is excluded. Latour's account of space then is only a partial reassessment of society, excluding some key non-human actors, and importantly, it is the researcher here who is in control of this limited writing of reality.

While these critiques are predominantly concerned with the work of Latour, they do have a degree of prescience to ANT as a whole, as many of the other key figures within it can be faulted for only dealing with a human/machine system of interaction. These concerns have led to a degree of reassessment, with claims to now be 'after' ANT occurring (Law and Hassard 1999). However, none of these claims have really begun to start thinking about the politics of doing a networked understanding of the political. Thinking back to Latour's account of power, we can see a flattened account of power being passed through actants in a network (the rugby ball analogy) but little is said about a wider understanding of contestation and opposition. To stretch the rugby analogy, what happens when there is a scrum, or ruck?⁶

In order to understand what a politics of networks could entail, I here revert to thinking about the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, whose work has been influential to some ANT ideas. ANT is explicitly about actors as things that have the potential power to influence their surroundings. As such, Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the rhizome and assemblage represent significant influences upon ANT's networked understanding of the social realm. The vitality of the social (and by extension, political) worlds of Deleuze are created by the filling up of what would seemingly be dead space by emphasizing not oneness but multiplicity. Rather than thinking in terms of wholes, taking the idea of the rhizome from the natural sciences, they argue we should be thinking in terms of assemblages. Space is made up of rhizomatic filaments that can be accreted into tubers in places, but crucially these accretions form only a part of the assemblage. Similar to the networked imaginary of Latour,

"A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles...a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines. All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities,

⁶ We must also acknowledge that rugby carries with it a certain number of masculine overtones, and so this particular rendering of politics as sport conjures up certain 'alpha-male' images of competition.

even though the dimensions of this “plane” increase with the number of connections that are made on it.” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 8-9)

In the rhizome, everything is an interconnected assemblage of parts, even if connections are unseen, for example, humans can be connected to animals through bacterium and viral infections. The multiplicity of parts becomes an assemblage through *connection* with different elements. This is crucial in Deleuze’s immanent conception of the world, where fluid and temporary relations abound in the multiplicity of assemblages.

Politically, this vitality is important as it allows for an unfolding of possibilities. Indeed, the rhizome, with its ethos of non-hierarchical organisation has become important to some anarchist groups as an organising principle (Marshall 2007, 696). The ability to connect with things gives a greater degree of potential for a more radical politics to develop. This makes Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy a profoundly optimistic thread of political action, where, rather than thinking through things in terms of obstacles and blockages, we can think of options and connections. This has meant that politics becomes more contingent – the playing out of political possibilities depends upon the unfolding connections, blockages, extensions and receptions of these filaments throughout specific spaces and places.

However, Deleuze and Guattari’s plane of immanence is not uncontested. Massey (2005), building on critiques by Miller (1993), Kaplan (1996) and Katz (1996), argues that the binary molar-molecular system created in *A Thousand Plateaus*, rather than encouraging multiplicity, in fact denies agency to other places and areas. The very existence of these spaces as binary continues to propagate other binaries. Rather than creating multiple identities, instead we revert to dualisms of developed and undeveloped – minority subjectivities are defined by their oppositional state to dominant regimes. Thus, the rhizomatic and micropolitical ideas of Deleuze and Guattari fail to recognise the position of relative power they inhabit. The bipolar, smoothed/striated spaces of their work in fact work more to obliterate the many different forms of understanding that run through space.

As Massey continues, a further set of problems emerge when we consider the openness of space (Massey 2005, 174-175). This problem emerges most clearly in the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their widely read *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004). Here, while proposing a new, rhizomatic form of resistance in the form of the Multitude, they slip into speak of the multitude as a pure arena of smooth space, missing the necessary heterogeneity of political action within its ranks. This eliminates any form of spatial

specificity within the Multitude (or in Empire either). Indeed, one of the most disappointing aspects of *Multitude* is its lack of any engagement with any real understandings of how political movements like the WTO protests in Seattle actually worked. Instead, they are held as examples of an unproblematic solidarity where there is little or no negotiation between different actors/movements. Space, then, becomes completely smooth and open to flows and we find ourselves drawn to a similar argument to that which closed the last section – neither a space of completely flat, smooth flows of information, nor one of closed and structured order between political actors exists, despite the theoretical advantages that both propose.

Rather than dismiss the rhizome and similar thinking though, as mentioned above, the potential for reworking and reordering political action remains somewhere within it, especially when countered against its more ordered, scalar counterparts. So, rather than becoming transfixed by the sometimes relentless polarity of Deleuze and Guattari, what we need to do is begin to think more clearly about how we can negotiate this problematic boundary between open/closed space, and smooth and striated.

Summary

This section has discussed how so-called 'networked' understandings of space have created specific understandings of the socio-political. Taking as its starting point the work of actor-network theory (ANT), it has shown the various useful ways that it has attempted its own reassessment of the social. However, it has argued that ANT has not adequately developed an understanding of inequality and resistant politics to complement its reworking of scientific practices. Instead, it has argued that adopting a more Deleuzo-Guattarian understanding of the unfolding possibilities of space allows for a more radically contingent account of the political.

Conclusions

Power, scale and networks have all become clear theoretical parts of the political geography tradition. This chapter has given an overview of selected threads of these understandings, focussing in particular on post-structural accounts of the spatial that foster a more nuanced sense of the agency of political actors. By taking account of the way that power, and more particularly the power processes of domination and resistance, I have argued for a decentred understanding of power, where domination and resistance are entangled amongst each other. This decentred account of power has necessitated an

understanding of scale within politics, where it was argued that entangling power relations within space necessitates a move towards an ontologically driven understanding of space that emphasizes the site as a key location of political action. In order to develop an idea of how this flattened socio-political world can actually be played out in some sort of practical way, the chapter turned towards thinking about networks as a key theoretical tool to understand what is actually going on in the world.

This chapter established much of the overarching theoretical ground that this thesis will travel through. It argued for a poststructural appreciation of space, driven by networked understanding of the social. However, it must be recognised that these networked political formulations create some problematic issues for our understandings of space. Most clearly accounted for when thinking about work on scale and networks themselves, what becomes clear is the tension between how we can begin to understand the ways that space and place are intimately connected to 'other' areas. This tension is something that the thesis attempts to work a pathway through. The next chapter on methodology sets up the ways in which the research attempted to understand and account for the differences between 'local' and 'global' in ethnography, and the themes also emerge through many of the empirical aspects of the research.

To return at the end of this largely theoretical chapter to some more empirical matters, Tibet is often conflated with a number of themes. From Shangri-La, to part of the 'new age' movement, Tibet, like any nation/imagined community, means many things to many people. Even by concentrating on the political aspects of Tibet, it becomes clear that there is a great deal of interconnection between various elements and filaments of the semiotic object that is 'Tibet' and its supporters. Unlike the flattened and unproblematic solidarities of Hardt and Negri's *Multitude*, the pro-Tibet Movement is run-through with relations between different groups and actors. From the problematic solidarities between Tibetan and non-Tibetan activists, competing strategic ideas about the best path for future political engagement with the Chinese, the changing and fluid nature of Tibetan identity, and the mundanities of everyday office politics, this thesis travels through aspects of all of them. The empirical chapters of this thesis each deal with a set of networks connected to one particular theme. Within each, it should be possible to see the various ways in which these interconnect with the other chapters and more aspects of Tibet besides. Given what this chapter has said, it cannot claim to offer a complete understanding of the Tibet Movement; however, it offers a nuanced account of the workings of politics in and through these

various situations and sites. Indeed, it is my contention throughout this thesis that politics, and particularly the politics of Tibet, needs to be understood in these more relational and networked ways in order to produce critical commentaries that are able to *begin* to move sympathetically through the landscapes that we as researchers travel through. Rather than cutting through these political movements and assuming that we can eventually gain a perfect knowledge of them, instead, we must recognise that there are other epistemological systems and at work which may be beyond the comprehension of the research. This raises issues of how we can effectively study a world of unfolding possibilities, and so next I turn to the methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 3 – Networked and Fluid Ethnography

Introduction

This chapter develops the theoretical ideas of the last chapter by exploring their impacts upon the methods necessary to understand a ‘networked’ political action. Actor-network theorists have traditionally engaged with doing ‘fieldwork’ of some sort, from Mol’s clinical studies (Mol 2002) to Law’s (1994) and Latour’s (1986) studies of social processes at work in laboratories. However, while works like Law’s ‘After Method’ (2004) purport to be about methodology, they are more concerned with the theory of ‘being’ and understanding the underlying processes of being an ANT researcher, and consequently do not consider in much depth how one actually goes about doing a networked piece of research that attempts to understand what is going on ‘in the world’.

I argue that, methodologically, networked accounts of politics need to become more engaged with ideas circulating through anthropology and ethnographic fieldwork. In particular, there is a need here to engage with the role of spatially extensive networks (i.e. those that extend beyond the confines of a particular, spatially limited, site) and address how political activities can stretch across and through the spaces we are involved in as researchers. Anthropology and other areas involved in ethnographic methods have long been concerned with understandings of spaces that fit into spatially larger ‘systems’ (Nash 1981). Given the increasing speed and frequency of communications across the world, it is unsurprising that those writing about ethnographic methods have begun to consider the ability of ethnography to help understand these flows and movements. In particular, I focus on the ideas that have emerged around so-called multi-site ethnography, including the related ‘global ethnography’ that have attempted to understand how an ethnographic research method can be situated within and effectively interrogate a social arena that is spatially extensive.

Concerned with transnational political networks, this thesis is centrally placed to comment upon these ideas. The Tibet Movement, although numerically small, is reliant upon its global network of supporters, both Tibetans in exile and non-Tibetans. By attempting to ‘see’ these networks in my capacity as a researcher, it was necessary to evolve a research plan that allowed an understanding of the Tibet Movement and its various connections to emerge through the networks. This involves a process of research planning that allows one to be in the sites of the Tibet Movement, examining and attempting to understand the

production, maintenance, and sometimes, the collapse of these networks within and around the spaces. Rather than simply using ethnographic methods to supplement ANT's methodological lack, it is therefore a necessity to readdress the ways in which both ANT and ethnographic methods are conducted. The fluid nature of the spaces of ANT and the spatial extensity of ethnography require a method that is adaptable to both. By examining the anthropological and ethnographic work done on understanding the world today, I begin to build an idea of how we can begin to understand how we can study political action within and across space.

The chapter begins by exploring how ANT theorists have developed their methodological field, particularly examining how their attempts to do empirical research have (or haven't) produced a research method to accompany their theoretical influence. Following this, I then think about what writings on ethnographic methods could offer to a networked piece of research. These are then used to describe the empirical research process undertaken here. These sections, as well as laying out how the research was planned and empirically took place, will also contain a necessary examination of my own position within the networks and assemblages of the Tibet Movement.

Actor-network theory's impacts on method

While there are a great deal of people who have worked on ANT, the number who have written extensively about the methods of 'doing' ANT remains limited. In *Organizing Modernity* John Law begins to think about how, in his construction of modernity, one can actually go about doing an ethnography of materially heterogeneous relations.

"I could talk of ethnographic research methods as if they were clear-cut, fixed and impersonal. I could pretend that there was no interaction between what I observed and myself as an observer. But, as I've indicated, I believe that this would be wrong because ethnography is also a story of research – and in some measure a tale about the ethnographer as well. And, though perhaps in a smaller way, it is in addition about the way in which the ethnographer acts upon her subject matter" (Law 1994, 4)

This insight into Law's understanding of ethnographic methods provides a number of avenues into what he, and wider ANT theorists, think about the role of methods in empirical research. Firstly, there is no real definition of what he means by ethnography, does this mean ethnographic participant observation (most definitely) or can this include

ethnographic interviewing of participants or any of the other specific techniques that can be grouped under the umbrella of 'ethnography' (possibly, but we cannot be sure). Secondly, Law suggests that ethnography consists not only of observing a place, but is also implicitly about ways of being within a particular place. Most ethnographic methods, as we shall see later in this chapter are intimately concerned with how the field and researcher fit together, in particular the ways in which the researcher must negotiate and discipline their relations to the research participants. Thirdly, and almost unspoken by Law, there is also an acceptance of ethnography as the preeminent research method for ANT – no other techniques are mentioned (at an extreme level, however, it is difficult to imagine a purely quantitative networked piece of research). What I aim to do in this section is to move over some of the ideas that Law has considered. Most importantly, how does a networked method actually emerge in the work I have cited in the previous chapter? Crucially, I want to think not only about why ethnography would seem to be the most useful set of methods available to us as researchers, but also think about the ways that an ANT-led research practice lead to very particular understandings of the ethnography.

ANT, throughout its history, has been devoted to observing and untangling the threads and connections that run through ontological reality. From Latour spending time in with the engineers of ARAMIS (Latour 1996), Law spending time in a laboratory (Law 1994), Mol in hospitals (Mol 2002) and clinics and Barry at political events (Barry 2001), ANT clearly necessitates an empirical understanding of the world. However, even in these places, ANT does not really speak of what methods are used, instead making claims about the nature of reality, often with little reference to how the researcher fits into this system. For example, Latour's ARAMIS discusses how he conducted his ethnography, and presumes to speak for the machine itself as an actor, yet he pays little attention to how he as an author/researcher fits into this system. These claims to seeming objectivity by ANT sit awkwardly with feminist critiques from Haraway (Haraway 1991, 1992). While ANT writers claim only partial perspectives and understandings of these networks, they often presume to speak for the various non-human actors within these networks as if they can be knowable and understood from a human perspective. The networks become decentred and mapped, but the researcher often manoeuvres through the networks seemingly smoothly. This process of the researcher becoming an immutable object of interpretation and, by extension, an arbiter of what the research is and who is allowed to speak in it remains a problematic aspect of ANT's methodological philosophy.

John Law's work represents something of an exception here, as the quote that began this section highlights. Of all the theorists of ANT, he has most often engaged with these questions of method. In his most extensive engagement with these ideas, *After Method* (Law 2004) he places method itself as more than just a set of techniques;

“...method is not just what is learned in textbooks and the lecture hall, or practised in ethnography, survey research, geological field trips, or at laboratory benches. Even in these formal settings it also ramifies out into and resonates with materially and discursively heterogenous relations which are, for the most part, invisible to the methodologist. And method, in any case, is also found outside such settings. So method is always much more than its formal accounts suggest.” (Law 2004, 144)

Instead, he argues that method is integral to the way social worlds are produced. So, the very ways in which research is performed serve to reinforce or weaken different hegemonic social strategies. So, the dominant, 'Western' discourses of scientific modernity serve to silence the possible 'other worlds' that are present in places like indigenous knowledges. To Law, the inability of traditional method to understand the messy areas which cannot be purified under the principles of enlightenment-era science means that we cannot treat it as an objective statement of discovering the truth of reality 'out there' in the field. Instead, method is performative of particular renderings of the social, and it is through repeated performances that hegemonic understandings of 'social science' are solidified. This is not to say that these are immutable though, and variations in the performance of these methods mean that they change over time, and have at least the potential to be reworked. To Law, this reworking must take the form of a more decentred account of method that examines the different ways of constructing 'the social' – the other worlds of indigenous understandings of space and time should be incorporated and not excised from the 'pure' spaces of enlightened modernity.

While these points are valid, it seems to me that Law, in attempting to shift our understanding of methods, does something of a disservice to ethnography as a technique by ignoring the many ways in which people have sought to answer some of the very questions he poses in *After Method*. These questions can include how does writing our 'field' influence our conclusions and findings? And, how do we cope with the 'mess' that is the nature of our everyday research worlds? With this in mind, I turn to the next section

which examines the ways in which ethnography, and to a lesser extent anthropology, has engaged with political studies of spatially extensive systems.

Networked Ethnography – Spaces and Sites of Action

The Tibet movement consists of various organisations, individuals and objects scattered across the world. Engaging ethnographically with the various constituent parts of this movement necessitates a form of study that can react and move with these different components. Following on from Marston et al.'s (Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005) ideas about the site in the last chapter, we can think here about ethnography as a fluid and vibrant source of engagement around a particular place. Here, I follow Steve Herbert (2000) in thinking about ethnography as a research method which relies upon the process of participant observation, with themes emerging from this participation, combined with periods of reflection. Through ethnography we attempt to uncover differential relations, the bindings that hold these relations together and the way they are also fragile and can fall apart. Indeed understandings that place ethnographic explorations of the local as being at the heart of extensive spatial systems are not new. Vincent (1990) and Clifford (1997) have shown that anthropologists traditionally placed the people they study within such systems, but the disciplining of 'academic' Anthropology in the post-WW2 period led to a closing off of these themes, instead replacing them with in-depth studies of localities. This is not to say that ethnography, and its close relation anthropology, has not engaged with the idea of 'the global' more recently. Anthropology has long been concerned with ethnographic methods and their relevance to 'the site' and how wider global systems can be interpreted through ethnographic methods (Appadurai 2000). There is obviously more to anthropological field work than 'classical' studies involving years spent in a particular community (Dresch and James 2000, 22), and there is a tension inherent within anthropology in general and ethnography in particular as to what the 'field' is and what its limits are (Amit 2000; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). These have unpicked how 'being in the field' is not simply a matter of being outside one's usual space, but involves a disciplining of the researcher as they exist both within and around the field, and also how they reflect upon 'the field' when outside it (see also Powell 2002, for an explicitly geographical account).

In line with this, although there is a long history of political study in anthropology (see Vincent 2002), ethnographic studies of the political have become increasingly visible (Blom Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 2005; Joseph, Mahler and Auyero 2007; Vincent 2002). These

include studies of politics within specific localities, but have also attempted to address spatially extensive nature of politics. There are many attempts to capture a wider 'global' system within an ethnographic study, but I focus here on one of the most famous of series of attempts, that of multi-site ethnography, made famous by Marcus (1998), which has attempted to address some of the problems of doing a postmodern/postcolonial ethnography in the present funding climate where it has become difficult to undertake long-term anthropological studies.

Multi-site ethnography is an attempt to approach our subject as it appears in various places, studying it in the multiple sites that it emerges in. In this way, the subject is more readily visible to the researcher, and its tale of how it fits into the larger system around it can be told.

“Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (Marcus 1998, 90)

It follows that the ethnographer's job is then to 'follow' these chains and threads, whether these be of people, things, metaphors or allegories through the various sites that they emerge in. In many ways, this remains a very traditional way of performing ethnography – the essential practice the researcher is performing is of translation of idioms/languages from one site into another. There are problems here – on one level, as Marcus points out, most of these ethnographic translations are done for the benefit of Anglo-American voices (Marcus 1998, 85). This hinders any form of multi-lingual multi-sitedness that allows the voices and worlds of others to emerge through the research. On a more methodological level, the limited time spent engaging with a topic in its multiple environments can be critiqued as anathema to the 'traditional' type of anthropological study that involves prolonged engagement with a subject. While multi-sited ethnography can speak to a spatially plural research topic, it cannot cope with the simultaneity of events in the contemporary 'globalised' world particularly well. Being in lots of different sites gets one a degree of understanding of how individual areas work, but when 'global' events are occurring, we are still only observing one particular place, despite how interconnected it is to a wider spatial area. Finally, similar to the problems of ANT's accountability to speaking for its subject, the very imagining of these topics as readily accessible and describable in

multi-sited ethnography is problematic, as Cook *et al.*, one of geography's advocates of following 'things' through global supply chains, has argued

"A good following story has a clear focus. Like a chicken. That never goes out of sight. But anything and everything that's in and around it (throughout its conception, birth, life, death and travels) could become part of that story. But where exactly are the beginnings and ends of such a story?" (Cook *et al.* 2006, 657)

These points are especially valid as they raise considerable issues - if we engage with objects and people in multiple places/spaces, how do we adequately treat each scenario? As what we follow becomes in/visible, how do we account for this and describe it adequately? This is more than advocating an ethnographic method that simply jumps from site to site, instead it remains a problem of how we can relate our understandings of seemingly small scales to larger fields; how can the mess of everyday existence be adequately understood given our fleeting glimpses of it? As Hannerz notes

"...sites are connected with one another in such ways that the relationships between them are as important for this formulation as the relationships within them; the fields are not some mere collection of local units. One must establish the translocal linkages, and the interconnections between those and whatever local bundles of relationships which are also part of the study."
(Hannerz 2003, 206)

There are examples of multi-site ethnographies that attempt to stitch together global processes from a series of encounters (Freidberg 2001; Scheper-Hughes 2004), but there still remains a tension between empirically grounded, 'local' examples of a wider 'global' system that remains more abstract and unknown.

One of the more explicit attempts to develop these ideas comes from Burawoy *et al.*'s (2000) *Global Ethnography* - a subtle type of multi-sitedness that allows us to visualise the effects of the global system in a variety of places by comparing lots of different ethnographies and attempting to draw out their linkages to an overarching system of capital circulation. This approach produces a series of localities, pulling them together as subjects of a wider global system, and thus leaves us in a similar global/local dichotomy. Burawoy (2001) has more recently recognised a need for a more spatially nuanced

ethnographic account of globalisation, but there still remains a fundamental tension between local and global here.

In another attempt to situate ethnography globally, Joy Hendry calls for a 'globography' (2003) which argues for an interpretation of how society and culture are influenced by icons and objects from elsewhere. Thus her study of Japanese theme parks looks at the translations that happen between cultures. This allows a greater degree of understanding of the connections between places – how cultures are constructed and represented by others and how these flows of ideas and knowledges actually play out. Ultimately these attempts to integrate the local of ethnography within a larger system still rely on a dichotomous construction of local relations structured within global system.

How, then, can we extract something worthwhile from this seeming intractable opposition? Calls for the increased use of ethnographic methods as a geographical research tool (Herbert 2000; Megoran 2006) are echoed by Gillian Hart's (2004) attempt to think about the role of a 'critical ethnography' that is able to move beyond the global/local dichotomy. To Hart, ethnography should be able to draw upon work by the likes of Massey (1994) to think about role of place as a nodal point in a larger, socially produced, space. Following from here, engaging spatially with ethnography is particularly useful, especially concerning accounts of the relational and networked nature of political action.

Geographers have made important contributions to thinking about the networked nature of political action that disrupts this global/local binary. Accounts by Lester (2001), Ogborn (2002), Lambert (2005), and Featherstone (2005, 2007) have attempted to show how materially heterogenous relations were of crucial importance in producing hegemonic or counter-hegemonic alliances in history. Yet, geographical studies that have thought about the empirical study of these types of relational networks in contemporary politics remain sparse. Most recently Paul Routledge (occasionally in collaboration) has begun applying ANT to contemporary political networks (Routledge 2008; Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel 2007). While this is on the whole, useful and productive, his understanding of ANT is somewhat limited to a Latourian reading of the social landscape and he thus misses out on some of the different accounts of the socio-spatial that can claim to be ANT, particularly Law's work mentioned above. This lack is something that I have attempted to address (Davies 2009), where I relate some of these ideas explicitly to specific Tibetan protest events (for another example of this type of work, see Featherstone 2008).

Thus, while work has begun to emerge which takes on some of these ideas about multi-sitedness, and while work in geography has begun to look at politics in networked ways, there remains a lack of work which addresses the methodological shortcomings of both. ANT, despite its claims to the contrary still tends to consider the researcher as an objective observer who can unpick the truth of networked, heterogeneous systems. Multi-site ethnography takes on spatially extensive systems and attempts to see how they work through ontological reality. However, too often these ideas have ended up reproducing a dichotomy between global/local that is problematic. By attempting to apply ANT and ethnographic methods together, this research argues for a style of ethnography that is not only reflexive and able to recognise the situated nature of ethnographic participant observation, but which also works between the dichotomies of global/local and produces a more ontological understanding of 'the site' as an arena of political action that involves processes from a variety of spatial levels.

Methodologies of 'Networks'

While the above sections discussed the more theoretical aspects of the methodology of this research, before I begin to examine the particular methods and strategies used to do the research, it is necessary to examine the wider context of Tibet, socio-political research and the concept of networks. This section will begin to apply some of the ideas above to this research project. It does this by examining work done previously on similar topics, but also by beginning to think about how this research process was begun and the underlying strategies that form an inherent part of the thesis.

The network analogy has come increasingly to the fore in the examination of social movements in recent years. In Social Movement Theory, this has emerged particularly in terms of thinking about the 'relational' study of social movements. In this way, the social constitution of networks becomes important. Rather than thinking of how networks work simply as structures in which social movements are contained, the role of the individual activists or groups and their ability to forge relations and act as nodes in the network explain in useful ways how the political networks actually function. So, we move away from the idea of a social movement as a 'collective' towards a more fluid conception of these groups (McDonald 2002). As Diani (2003) argues, by looking at the social, informal elements of the network, we move 'from metaphor to substance' – rather than thinking abstractly about the network, we can identify the pathways and flows of information and knowledge through the network. This happens in many different ways, both through

networks of individuals, networks of organizations and, more loosely, networks of collectivities and events such as protests. These different typologies of groupings help to hold the network together.

However, separating these 'groups' of networks and breaking down the topic theoretically into discrete sections is particularly lacking in an understanding of the interconnected nature of the social put forward by theorists like Deleuze, Latour and Law. The Tibet Support Group network is a broad coalition of movements, all with roughly the same goal, but each with a slightly different process through which they attempt to 'Support Tibet'. For instance, one Tibet group in the UK tries to base its support on providing information and educating people in the UK about Tibetan issues, whilst another is a nationwide cell of an international coalition based much more on principles of demonstrations of support through non-violent, direct action protests. All of these different support groups necessarily occupy different geographical spaces, with some being very small local groups or individuals, while others act as umbrella groups for a country- or region-wide organisation. In addition, the Tibet Movement is necessarily transnational in its character – the groups are attempting to represent and create a particular version of Tibet that does not exist today and much of the struggle is based on widening knowledge about the situation of Tibet and Tibetans, both inside Tibet and in areas where Tibetan exile communities have settled. Together with these areas are the multitude of places where non-Tibetan activists are based in their campaigns to strengthen pro-Tibetan arguments.

This brief snapshot of what I shall term the pro-Tibet Movement reveals how the network as a whole is a rich and variegated system of minor networks comprised of individuals, organisations, and protests, all of which act with their own particular agendas. As with any organisations, these agendas are not rigid and can be changed through the routine of negotiation between members of the groups. As a result, the research project as a whole has to reflect the flexibility of the pro-Tibet Movement. At the outset it is obvious that such a complex system is impossible to categorise completely, no matter how extensively we research it – the results of the research are always likely to be partial depending on the elements we as researchers have been exposed to. However, any attempt to try to interrogate the processes that shape these flexible and fluid networks must also be flexible and fluid. As a result, from an early stage, it was clear that a qualitative methodology should be employed. Robson (2002) refers to a qualitative methodology as being a flexible research design, and while this damps down the flexibility of quantitative methods, it does

emphasize the ability of qualitative methods to be much more reflexive and able to cope with (often sudden) changes in the research environment. This is not to say that quantitative methods cannot be adaptive, but that qualitative are much better able to cope with change – a large questionnaire-based survey is more difficult to modify when underway than a series of ethnographic enquiries.

While qualitative methodologies encompass many different methods and traditions, this research will engage primarily with ethnography, but will also make some forays (admittedly partial and fragmentary ones) into other areas, such as grounded theory and case studies. Ethnography is, at its most loosely defined, the study of any forms of social behaviour through a variety of methods. This research undertakes a decidedly anthropological ethnography, in that it examines groups through means of participant observation and analysis primarily. In this case, ethnographic methods provide the most comprehensive way of engaging with the pro-Tibet Movement as a heterogenous network of groups and investigating the processes involved in the constitution of this network. Trotter II (1999) argues that ethnographic network research is particularly useful in unpicking how individuals adapt according to the way that their organisations are grouped

“Differences in the ways in which organisations are structured, as well as in the positions people occupy within them, affect the flow of information, constraining not only the amount but the specific content of information that people receive. Studies of social networks allow social scientists to explore cultural differences in the ways that humans organize themselves into groups, communicate about critical life circumstances, and work out the problems they encounter in everyday life.” (Trotter II 1999, 2)

Although speaking specifically in terms of social networks, it is clear that these ideas are important in the more socio-political networking of the type that the pro-Tibet Movement can be classified as. The actual specifics of the ethnographic research methods used will be engaged with in the later section dedicated to them, but it is clear that they provide a useful engagement with the idea of socio-political network research.

However, to return to reflexivity and the issues of sensitivity in political research, the importance of adopting this methodological approach becomes clear. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) discuss the importance of reflexive thinking, and the importance of

political engagement while doing ethnographic research. To them, reflexive ethnographic research goes beyond positivistic or naturalistic methodologies by not relying on empiricism to justify our accounts and allowing us to engage with our roles as a researcher during our research. Again, more of this is discussed in the later section of this chapter dedicated to discussion on reflexivity and positionality, but here it is important to take these ideas into account in terms of research design.

Ideas of reflexive learning stress our limited abilities as researchers and the ideas that our knowledges are produced and negotiated as we move through our research process. As this research attempts to uncover the networked nature of these movements, it was decided at an early stage that it was necessary to focus on exactly 'how' these networks fitted together. As Rubinoff (2005) argues, the computer-linked, transnational networks that form much of our everyday lives have important consequences for our role as researchers. Rather than thinking of researchers as unproblematic entities who can slip in and out of networks to observe them as we please (what Haraway (1991) would call our 'God-Trick'), we must recognise that by interacting with people and places in this network, we necessarily become implicated as part of these networks ourselves. This is of course a commonplace consideration in feminist and postcolonial influenced work in the social sciences, but what Rubinoff usefully does is place herself, and her work, as an integral part of her research networks. Her involvement and, in turn, her writing about the network, adds new pathways and nodes for the flow of information which sustains or breaks the network itself. Thus, her writing about a Latin American life-history writing project opens up a new node for 'outsiders' to engage with the network. In this case, it was important to recognise that any knowledge that I had of the pro-Tibet Movement at the start of the research process was necessarily limited and thus it became important to become a part of the networks and to attempt to travel along the pathways of them as much as is possible. It is through these partial travels through the sites of the Tibet Movement that we can build an awareness of some of the constituent actors that help the network to function (or fail to function, as the case may be).

As a result, the research technique for the research overlapped somewhat between a grounded theory/network analysis viewpoint, similar to what Lofland (1996) promotes in his work on social movements. By this, I mean that by attempting to engage with the networks of political groups/individuals that campaign for Tibet, the research was attempting to uncover and identify ongoing themes and issues that emerged through the

process of being *inside* the network. As a result, while my knowledge was at all times partial and related to what I observed, during the early stages of the research, my knowledge of the Tibet Movement was particularly limited. Thus, although a 'pure' grounded theory approach was impossible, I attempted to approach the networks as an outsider and through mapping the nodes and pathways of the network I would develop theoretical ideas as they emerged from the research. Therefore, there was a continual process of mapping the different networks and examining the different flows and fractures of information that move from node to node, place to place, inside them. As a result, the research occurred in a processional fashion, as initial meetings and encounters with informants created new themes to explore and uncover.

It can rightly be argued that in many ways this generates a partial account of the network, as the researcher can only explore the avenues that become available to them. However, this is not, in my opinion, a weakness in the research. Rather, it is an effective way of mapping the pathways that exist within the networks at any one time. By attempting to move within the network, we are better able to see how it functions and changes over time. Embedding the research within the network for a substantial period of time, it becomes possible to uncover the ways in which political networks are transitory objects, which adapt over time to best suit the prevalent circumstances. Thus, while a pathway into the research may initially prove of limited use, it can later become part of a different network within the Tibet Support Group network as a whole. Thus a long term engagement with the various networks and pathways such as this has the potential to uncover the variegated and temporal nature of these networked linkages

Positionality/Ethical Engagements

Following from the networked consideration of this research above, it should be clear that this reflexive approach requires a consideration of the roles of the researcher in the research. As hinted at above in the discussion of Rubinoff (2005), the role of the researcher as part of a network is clearly complex. As a result this section examines the role of the researcher and their positionality. This will firstly cover the methodology of ANT, focussing in particular on the limitations of traditional ANT-led approaches both methodologically and reflexively. It will then turn to considerations of the 'role' of the researcher and the debates surrounding how our relationships with our research subjects are formed and played out through our research. Finally, it will briefly consider how this affected my research and how I initially engaged with these issues and came to a starting position in

how I placed myself with my research. However, due to the reflexive nature of the research, this then will be developed and explored further through the empirical accounts of the research process that form the substantive part of the rest of this chapter. Thus, a relatively processional account of my changing positionality and reflexive decision making should emerge through the rest of the chapter.

Given ANT's limited attempts to reconcile the position of the researcher within the research detailed above, I turn instead to feminist and postcolonial ideas about how we engage with our roles as researchers. Much has been made of the role of the researcher and the research participant and their status in the 'research relationship' (Katz 1994; McDowell 1992; Pile 1991; Rose 1997). These debates have situated geography and research not as static, rather they are filled with fluid power relationships – as we move around and into 'the field' we are confronted with different relationships, during which we will have varying degrees of power. Thus, as responsible researchers we have to engage in these relations in ways that do not harm our research subjects, who in many cases should be considered partners in the research themselves. As a result, there is a blurring of the space that exists between us and our research. We are no longer able to unproblematically say, as Geertz (1979) argued, that when we are in the field we are studying 'natives', instead, we are engaging with them in spaces that are often close to our own everyday lives, and which cannot be easily fenced off as 'the field'. We are therefore obliged to consider our positionality as part of the research process – we must consider our personal histories and address how our own backgrounds and preferences necessarily shape our research experiences and relationships.

In terms of researching political activist groups, the debates on these issues have focussed on how the researcher can be an activist and still produce valid research. These have recently focussed on participatory methods (Chatterton 2006; Kindon, Pain and Kesby 2007). These issues are useful, but occupy a tangled section of this research – while it is accepted that the research will become a part of the networks, the research is not following an 'action research' path *per se*, rather, while attending demonstrations and performing tasks within the networks was a feasible research avenue, at no stage would I, as the principle investigator, consider myself to be a 'Tibetan Activist'. Instead, let me turn towards how my own positionality influenced the research process.

The most obvious issues around positionality emerged through my perceived status as a researcher who was middle-class, white and citizen of the UK. This brought benefits, as it

allowed me access to many groups both in the UK, India and with a key informant in San Francisco. Being seen as 'Western' and a professional researcher, rather than an interested bystander or journalist meant a series of negotiations took place. My perceived position of privilege as someone who was both interested in Tibet, and as someone who would be able to disseminate my research findings, and therefore, presumably be of benefit to the pro-Tibetan cause, meant that certain doors and gatekeepers were particularly helpful and certain participants were easy to access. However, this perception was something I was keen to temper. As someone who had never been involved in Tibetan Activism, but had spent some time travelling in India and had been to Dharamsala during that time, I was aware of, and generally sympathetic towards the Tibetan cause. However, to say that I was anything else was a misrepresentation of my position, and as a result, from the outset I always attempt(ed) to make clear what my positionality was in order not to deceive any research informants/participants. So, for ethical reasons, I made a decision to inform participants who were directly involved in the research that I was not a Tibet supporter, and while sympathetic to Tibetan refugees' causes, I was attempting a critical piece of work that would not privilege one side of the Tibet Issue over the other. Despite informing participants of this verbally and through an information sheet I had prepared, many participants still treated me as something of an honoured guest who was to be thanked for doing work on Tibet. So, on one occasion at a Tibetan diasporic community event, I was told I would have to take part in a ceremony honouring the Dalai Lama together with other dignitaries. Once it was explained that I was simply a postgraduate student, I was swiftly demoted to my more usual bystander status, but throughout my research, it was often assumed that I was somehow a powerful and influential actor who could 'help' the Tibet Movement through my research. At the same time, I was also forced to perform a series of negotiations with TSGs and their members in order to prove that I was a reliable researcher who would not betray confidences through dissemination of my findings.

I was also hampered throughout the research by my lack of Tibetan language skills. While I undertook limited learning of the language in Dharamsala and through self learning, I was never able to engage in more than exchanging pleasantries with my research subjects. As a result, the research reinforces the overwhelmingly Anglo-American bias of multi-sited ethnography mentioned above. Thus, my role as ethnographer was already limited to those areas which I could understand and begin to 'translate' into an academic language. Early on in the research process, I also decided that this research project would be based on the pro-Tibet movement in and around the Tibetan Diaspora. So, despite the research being

notionally about Tibet, no research would take place there. This was to avoid the complications of doing a research project in such a sensitive region as China, especially one that would involve asking people sensitive questions which could have harmful consequences for those who took part in the research.

These questions of positionality and reflexivity all emerged through the research process as unevenly and problematically as can be imagined. Thus, rather than go into them in more detail here, I integrate them into the following sections where I go into more detail about the processes by which the research took place. What follows for the rest of this section is a chronological account of the various processes by which I gradually became more and more involved with the networks of the Tibet Movement, beginning at very small, place-based networks within the UK, and evolving out through the networks as they became visible and allowed me to engage with them. Thus, thinking multi-sitedly, the research followed not a single 'thing' or group as it/they move through the spaces of pro-Tibetan activism. Instead, it becomes following what is visible at any particular time, whether this is a particular, definable object, or the circulation of particular discourses and ideas.

Initial Stages

Stage One

The initial basis for this research, as stated in the beginnings of this chapter, emerges from the attempt to study a large transnational movement in a networked form. In order to explore and uncover the complexities of such a large movement, it was necessary to attempt to engage with groups and members for as long a period as possible. However, there is of course a limit to the amount of engagement that is possible in such a large movement within a limited time period. However, as stated in the previous section, the research attempts to engage with the network in a way that was cognizant of the fact that as a researcher, I too am part of the network and would be travelling along its pathways and nodes, but also establishing new nodes and pathways for information to travel along.

To undertake this 'networked' research it was recognised at an early stage that it was necessary to establish some key contacts in the Tibet Support Group (TSG) network in the UK. The UK was chosen initially as the main starting point for the research due to the constraints of where I was based, but also as a repertoire of contacts in 'Western' campaigning groups can prove useful in gaining access to Tibetan campaigning groups in other areas, such as the US, but can be especially useful in gaining contacts amongst

Tibetan exile groups (see Houston and Wright, 2004, for more on this particular aspect). So, beginning in June 2006, initial forays into the UK's TSG network began. In the UK, there are three major campaign groups for Tibetan issues, all of which are based in London. However, two of these centralised groups explicitly have 'local groups' – small groups based around the country who perform local activities like fundraisers and lectures, but who can then come together for large scale meetings. These 'local groups' could therefore be seen as the basis of much of the 'grassroots' organisational structure of the Tibet Support Group network in the UK. Initially then, it was decided that as a way to begin to interact with TSGs in the UK, the research would attempt to interact with these small local groups. This was decided both for the above reasons, but also because the smaller scale 'local' work would seemingly be easier for the research to interact with – the 'gatekeepers' present at these local levels would probably be more interested in why the research was taking place and would be more approachable than the large scale, centralised campaigning organisations of which they were nominally part.

As a result, initial forays into the network revolved around contacting local groups in and around the North West of Britain in order to uncover what the networks functioned like. These initial attempts were guided by local group lists produced and maintained by the central organisations, together with wider searches through literature and internet websites in order to attempt to find groups. Through these searches, I was able to make contact with two 'groups' who worked in Manchester. This initial contact was through a series of informal meetings with the official contacts listed on the various groups' e-mail/telephone lists. However, once contacted, it emerged that both of these groups had effectively ceased to exist as specific TSGs due to faltering support, and as there was little evidence for any other groups who were active in the immediate area, the research's initial attempts to gain entry to the network were widened geographically into a second stage which covered the whole of the UK.

Second Stage

In this second stage, the sampling strategy changed, from one based around small informal meetings with identifiable, local groups, towards one based on 'activity'. Stage one of the research had basically involved hunting for groups within a given geographical region which was chosen for its proximity and ease of access. However, this investigative methodology was relatively ineffective as discussed above. As a result, after a reassessment of strategy, it was decided that the research would now attempt to target activities instead. In these

terms, I attempted to attend any publicised events, from local fundraising events to protests. These were targeted through a 'sampling' process that was determined primarily through the ability of the network to advertise them – as I was still an outsider to the network at this point, my knowledge was essentially limited to groups who had up-to-date contact listings or had internet websites where information could be found on upcoming events.

In order to impose some limits to this rather flexible and fluid sampling regime, I restricted myself to activities that were specifically related to the political situation of Tibet. Many TSGs have fundraising events or visits which involve a heavily cultural aspect - as mentioned in previous sections, culture and politics remain intertwined in Tibet to a heavy degree, and as a result, it is impossible much of the time to separate the two. However, some TSG's have events based around Tibetan Buddhist rituals and advice, such as a lecture from a visiting Lama, or a dance show by a visiting troupe of Tibetans. While these shows obviously have an underlying political intent, being representations and expressions of a distinct culture that is restricted in Tibet by the Chinese authorities, in this preliminary stage, it was decided that a focus on the most overtly political statements and displays would provide the best entry points into the specifically political arena which the research was addressing. This is not to say that cultural events are not important as expressions of Tibetan difference to Han Chinese culture, or that the research would ignore these representations, but simply to recognise that it was necessary to bring some focus to the initial targeting of the entry points to the networks of UK TSGs.

In this second stage, I attended numerous events, from a protest outside the Chinese embassy in Central London, to a sponsored walk in Scotland. In cases where there was a key contact for the protest/group, I made contact with them to ask if it was okay for me to attend as part of an initial research process. During the course of attending, I chatted to other participants about their views on Tibet and why they were involved, and always made it clear to those I spoke to that I was doing a research project on Tibet and these events. At various times I was able to explain my ethical background and positionality as an academic and not an activist during these events, but this was not possible in some cases due to the brevity of the conversation. Recording of events was done through written notes taken during the course of the events, and in some cases photographs of the protests were taken. In the case of photographs, no photographs were taken of individuals who wished to remain anonymous to protect their identity. During this period I made contact

with members of the three large, specifically-UK based organisations in London. During the course of these events, it became clear that the 'hub' of the network is based around the larger organisations in London, with local groups, while being relatively active in their local area, remaining relatively autonomous from the central organisations unless there were specific large events in their region when they mobilised to support the events as a collective. During this period then, the focus of the research began to shift once again. Local groups, while important at times of protest and in terms of maintaining support, became more clearly demarcated as peripheral bodies for most of the active campaigning, which focussed on London and its attendant support organisations. Having spent around 3-4 months travelling and attending these events, it became clear that a focus on becoming involved in the 'deep' ethnography (Hendry, 2003) of these 'core' organisations was more valuable than travelling through the peripheries of the network. It is here then, that the research moved out of its initial, exploratory moves in the networks towards a more focussed examination of the UK campaigning groups, which will be explored more in the next section.

Networked Ethnography and Interviews

As should be clear by now, the networked based approach pursued here involved a degree of reflexive consideration when deciding sampling strategies and the like. While the idea of following 'the network' or 'the theme' was a flexible research strategy, it necessarily involves a great deal of consideration into which groups would be investigated and pathways would be followed. In many cases, this was done in order to explore the particular themes that were being studied, for example the maintenance of a uniform Tibetan identity in diaspora. However, for the ongoing in-depth ethnographic research, the choice of pathways was more limited by circumstances.

Building from the earlier stages of the research, I now had identified and established contact with the three main specifically UK-based Tibetan Support organisations. The decision was made to initially limit myself to UK-based groups. This was done mainly because of my location, as, despite the transnational nature of the research, I would primarily still be based in the UK, with any contact with foreign groups remaining fleeting and transitory. Therefore, in order to establish the necessary long-term and in-depth associations with the groups I would be studying, it would be better for the research to take place in the country where I would be based for the longest period of time. Of the organisations that were based in the UK, I had reliable contact with one TSG, and limited

but ongoing contact with another two. As a result of this, I first approached the TSG whom I had the most contact using the social connections I had built at their events in order to gain access to them.

During this time, as still a relative outsider to the Tibet Movement in the UK, I was engaged in a number of processes. Firstly, I needed to prove my legitimacy to the groups. By legitimacy, it is meant both that I was a *bona fide* researcher who was engaged in actual research and was genuinely interested in their organisation, but also, ethically, as a part of this that I would 'protect' members of the organisation by anonymising both individuals and organisations. In addition, in order to facilitate my entry into these support group networks, it was decided that I would offer my services as a volunteer for the groups while doing my ethnographic research. During my initial meetings, numerous references were made to the lack of a dedicated workforce in most TSGs, with many of them relying upon voluntary staff. These volunteers performed a valuable support role for many of the organisations, but were often only available for short periods of time and could not be relied upon as a guaranteed labour source. Thus, by offering my services as a researcher/volunteer for a 3-4 month period, I was able to gain entry into the groups as I was assisting them and also participating in the everyday working practices of the organisation and thus able to study the more 'micro', 'local' networks of humans and non-humans inside the office space and the connections that linked the particular spaces of the office to the 'outside' world.

As a result, the ethnographic work started with spending one day a week in the office of a TSG, performing basic administrative tasks, such as packing envelopes or data-entry. These tasks both gave me an insight into how the office worked, but also allowed me to think through my research and take notes at the same time. However, as I was performing tasks for most of the time, most of the note-taking was done during travel from London back to Liverpool, and thus was done away from the specific field site itself.

Of course, this brought up a set of ethical issues such as negotiating my role as both a researcher and a volunteer for the organisation I was performing the research on. In relation to this, I was constantly involved in negotiating and clarifying my positionality in order to work effectively with the groups. As stated above, I endeavoured wherever possible to make it clear that while I was a volunteer, I was primarily a researcher who, while sympathetic, was not involved in the movement through activism on a day to day basis. Initially, I explained this through my contacts with the gatekeepers who allowed me

into the organisation. However, once the research had actually commenced, it became clear that most people assumed I was purely a volunteer. As a result, over the course of the next few weeks, I went through a process of explaining to the staff of the TSG the research work I was involved in. This took some time, and as people were involved in their everyday work patterns and did not want an account of academic research, it became more practical to explain things in terms of 'Hi, I'm volunteering here at the moment, and I'm doing research on Tibet here too'. Having briefly explained what I was doing, I then moved on.

While this process satisfied some of the ethical elements of my positionality by making sure everyone was clear that I was doing research, most people still assumed that I was 'in' the movement in general – through general conversation it became clear that most people assumed that because I was interested in what, in most people's view, is a fairly marginal resistance movement, I must therefore be *deeply* involved or interested these issues. These concerns were difficult to resolve throughout the research – while I explain to most people my specific positionality, it is impossible practically to engage with everyone who I have spoken to in this. As a result, I was continually involved in a process of engagement with all participants in the research, but where some are more privy to my research aims and goals than others. Thus, the disciplining of myself and my position in the research remained limited by this throughout the entire research period and this remains a problematic aspect of ethnographic research.

However, despite these reflexive difficulties, ethnographic participant observation continued to be the main thread of the research for the next year, from September 2006 to September 2007. Following from an initial voluntary period with one TSG, I began attending Tibetan Community in the UK events, protests and marches in support of Tibet, and ended with another voluntary period with another of the London based TSGs. March 2007 was spent in Dharamsala, India, the seat of the Tibetan Government in Exile (GiE) and home to a large exile community and a number of TSGs. March was specifically selected as a time to conduct the research for a number of reasons. March 10th is the anniversary of the Tibetan (or Lhasa) Uprising in 1959 which led to the move into exile of the Dalai Lama and a large number of his supporters. This is always commemorated with a number of events amongst the Tibetan community. In addition, March was recommended by contacts I had made, as the Dalai Lama's Spring Teachings take place at this time, and these attract a large number of Tibet supporters to Dharamsala. Thus, an idea of the social makeup of the pro-Tibet Movement can be built up around this time. However, as I was to discover, there were a

number of problems with this period. Exile Tibetan society tends to stop when the Dalai Lama is teaching, so it became difficult to get responses from people or to arrange meetings. Especially difficult was the fact that the GiE was returning from recess, so many political actors within it were busy with this and unable to be contacted.

It was also clear that, as my time in Dharamsala would be limited, prolonged periods of time working with groups would not be possible. Thus, while I was able to attend protests and have informal conversations with people quite regularly, performing a relatively straightforward participant-observer role, I was reliant to an extent on contacts given to me by my participants in London, together with establishing my own sets of contacts beforehand and while in Dharamsala. The relatively short timeframe also meant a rolling-out of a supplementary research method, that of semi-structured interviewing (discussed below), which allowed me to 'hit' a greater number of targets in this time. This strategy of establishing contacts in a particular place was also followed in April 2007, when in San Francisco I was able to contact a key actor within the pro-Tibetan Movement in the Bay Area while I was in the area for a conference.

Participant observation-led ethnography was therefore a key method for both entering the network and allowing me to travel within and around the Tibet Movement. Whilst this immersion into a particular set of relations was not without its problems, it was successful in establishing a series of connections and understandings of the state of the 'field' that would have not been uncovered otherwise. However, it was necessary to supplement this with a number of key informant interviews, so here it is necessary to discuss this additional technique.

Interviews

In addition to the overtly 'anthropological' research of 'how' the offices, TSGs and people in the Tibet Movement 'worked', the practices and rituals that helped to 'form' the organisation and how the office was connected to other networks of Tibetan activists, there was also a process of identifying participants for interview who could not be contacted through participant observation. These were people who either were not present in the sites I was observing, or who were connected in different ways to the movement. Also, given my time in Dharamsala and San Francisco, periods of participant observation were not as readily feasible due to the short periods of time spent within the specific communities. Therefore, in order to interrogate these additional spaces and places

of the Tibet Movement in more depth, key interviewees and informants were identified during the course of the fieldwork. Due to the specific nature of these selections, there was no sampling frame *per se*, rather, as issues arose, those who seemed to be the most important actors in the campaign/issue were noted and approached.

These groups and individuals were selected in a variety of ways, but through the embedded nature of the participant observation strand of research, in many cases the network ‘allowed’ the research to identify them and whether they were accessible. Those that were

Fieldwork Sites/Locations	
Ethnographic Sites	Interviews
Manchester – TSG/General	London – Independent Activist 1
North East Scotland TSG	London – Independent Activist 2
London TSG 1 Office	Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – Lhasang Tsering, Independent Activist
London TSG 2 Office	Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – Tibetan NGO Officer
London – Fundraisers	Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – Thubten Samphel, Central Tibetan Administration
London – Protests	Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – TSG Officer
London – Social Events	Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy
London – Tibetan Community Events	Delhi – Indian/Tibetan NGO Officer
London – Royal Albert Hall – Dalai lama event	San Francisco, USA – TSG Officer
Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – General	
Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj – Protests	
Liverpool – General	

Table 3.1 Thesis Fieldwork Locations

approachable were then asked for interview. So, in some cases, people would be recommended to me by third parties – ‘Oh, you’re doing research on x; you should go and speak to y at the *so and so* office’. In this way, as I became aware of groups who were involved in the ‘threads’ of the network that I was interested in (either through recommendation from other groups or in the course of doing reading/research), these additional groups then became ‘targets’ for possible interview. These were then approached in a way similar to the initial stages described above, but were explicitly asked for an interview/meeting at the outset. Thus through a loose system of my own time spent building contacts, researching groups away from the field, or through social contacts within

the network, I was able to identify a number of key targets for interview, eventually conducting 9 semi-structured interviews. These were with: 2 activists in London who were unaffiliated with any particular TSGs; 1 key informant interview in San Francisco; and, 6 interviews with activists and GiE officials in Dharamsala. Practically, this resulted in fieldwork being undertaken in the locations in Table 3.1. More specific detail on the process and questioning pattern within these interviews can be found in the Methodological Appendix at the end of the thesis.

Conclusions

This chapter has set out the methodological background to the thesis. Rather than setting out only to explain and justify a sampling strategy, it has instead examined the nature of 'doing' a networked piece of research and has developed some of the methodological ideas of those who espouse networks as the pre-eminent form of organisation. It has argued that while ANT has promoted an idea of what we should be doing in research, it has, in fact, told us very little about how we should go about doing this. The notable exception here is John Law, but even then, his work remains limited and does not explain the practical side of what we should be doing in understanding these networks and our position in them.

Instead, I have argued for a more ethnographically informed account of networked political action. Building from ideas present within social anthropology, I promote some of the ideas of a 'global' ethnographers like Burawoy et al. (2000) and Hendry (2003), together with the work of geographers, in order to develop an ethnography that is more aware of the global processes and flows around particular sites and spaces. In particular, I have argued that we need to think through the ways in which the site is not a container for a specific event/organisation. Instead, it is a more fluid space, open to influence from 'outside' but also constricted in a variety of ways. This builds from the theoretical arguments of the last chapter but also means that we must adopt a more nuanced research strategy.

This theoretical background to the methodology informs the research strategy that involved being 'multi-sited' throughout the research, but also attempted to understand the connections and processes between these different places and spaces. Theoretically, this approach offers a more nuanced account of the field, but crucially it involves a reflexive methodology that emphasises the networks and my own place within them. Thus, by attempting to become entangled within the networks one begins to get a particular idea of how some (not all) of the Tibet Movement works. This understanding is contingent and

partial, but as a study of networks of immanent power relations, then this is somewhat inevitable. While problematic in justifying our work as the arbiter of a particular understanding of a topic, for me, this contingency is important in uncovering how domination and resistance actually work through the spaces of the everyday. These emergent and snatched glimpses of power at play through the spaces and places of politics are important in our understandings of how actors actually try to effect political change. By constructing a methodology that transfers research agency back towards the networks of power that circulate through society, the research process becomes less imbued with the academic researcher's voice as the arbiter of truth, instead producing an account of the social that becomes more truthful to those voices that emerged when the research was taking place. Thus, rather than treating the contingency and partiality of networked research methods as methodological weaknesses, I see them as a particular strength in developing our understandings of the fragmented and illusory ways in which politics (and ontological reality more generally) are actually played out.

Intermezzo – Striating and Overcoding Tibetan Politics

March 2008 marked a new set of challenges to the Chinese regime in Tibet. Sparked by a combination of tensions surrounding the upcoming Beijing Olympics and the 49th Anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising on March 10th, a series of protests occurred in Lhasa, the wider Tibet Autonomous Region and in ethnically Tibetan areas of neighbouring provinces. These knitted into an intricate and multifaceted global network of action. Pro-Tibetan activists had already been gearing up actions in preparation for campaigns against the Beijing 2008 Olympics. Both Tibetan and Chinese sources quickly developed their own propaganda arguments: Chinese sources quickly inscribed events in Lhasa as a 'riot' organised by the 'splittist Dalai clique', with images of destruction of property being widely circulated (Xinhua 2008); Tibetan sources developed the opposite rhetoric of 'peaceful' protests against the regime, with violence only emerging after Chinese civil, military and paramilitary intervention (TCHRD 2008).

It was in these circumstances that I found myself in London marching in solidarity with those Tibetans who had been interned by the Chinese authorities. Officially having finished my fieldwork around 6 months earlier, the field interjected into my reality and it became a necessity to examine those events that I could gain access to and re-enter the field once again. These protests in London were, on the surface, routinized into 'typical' Tibetan protests, but the recent media coverage of events in China and elsewhere had swelled the numbers, so that instead of the usual c.100 people, around 3-400 people had gathered for a march from the embassy of the People's Republic of China in London to Trafalgar Square. Tibetan flags were waved and the Tibetan national anthem was sung outside the embassy.

This series of events marked the swinging into action of the Tibet Movement. A few weeks later, the procession of the Olympic Torch was marked by a series of protests in London, Paris and San Francisco. What emerged at all of these events were standardised Tibetan markers of identity such as flags and familiar chants. Yet, at the same time, new splinters of action emerging as individuals decided to take part in actions and the Tibet Issue came to prominence for the first time since the late 1980s.

All of these actions seemed to explode out of nothing, and the networks that had shown themselves to my research in the earlier phases of fieldwork were becoming less useful. Some still seemed to be working, while others had become imperceptible. What I was sure of was that many of these ideas and actions were emerging somewhat jumbled together – Tibetan nationalism was being deployed by middle-aged ladies who spoke of how they just felt sorry for the poor Tibetans. One of my participants appeared on UK national radio proclaiming the Dalai Lama to be the next in line to Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Tibetans in Nepal repeatedly clashed with riot police outside the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu. Governments across the world began to decide how they were going to respond to this uprising and behave towards China and the Beijing Olympics.

My job in all of this was to continue trying to disentangle these various threads of the research. What follows in the rest of this thesis is a rendering of the Tibet Movement, which despite the networked theoretical background, still portrays different components of the Tibet Movement as relatively discreet entities. This is in many ways done for ease of use – to make a fully rhizomatic piece of work would make it virtually unreadable to anyone but an academic audience. Instead, I have built a three-layered approach to the empirical content of the thesis. I begin with non-Tibetan⁷ engagements with and productions of Tibet and Tibetans. These imagined geographies of Tibetanness colour all productions of Tibet, and need exploring before we can understand adequately what the Tibet Issue means to people in its day-to-day existence. Following from this, I build on these themes to show how Tibetan nationalism emerged from the networks of the research. Nationalism remains one of the most potent driving forces for a new generation of Tibetans in exile. Finally, I examine the networks of political contestation – how the Tibet Movement competes against Chinese discourses about Tibet and how it holds itself together.

These three chapters emerged through the research, developing as they became more and more obvious as key drivers of the research. What should become clear upon reading is that they interweave with each other, and they are arranged in such a way as to complement and build up a more detailed picture of the movement as the thesis moves on. However, it is also clear that I have

⁷ Here I follow Moran (2004) in using ‘non-Tibetan’ and ‘Tibetan’ as cover terms for the heterogenous groups of individuals who could be included in these groups. ‘Non-Tibetan’ I use as those who, when self-defining, would not count themselves as Tibetan. ‘Tibetan’ is likewise those who define themselves as such. This is for simplicity, but readers should be aware of the various groups and individuals of different ethnicities, classes and religions who consider themselves ‘Tibetan’.

had to perform some overcoding and striation to these various themes in order to make them fit. Thus, the thesis in places tears apart these themes into separate entities to a much greater extent than reality. In others, it excludes themes which do not fit into these chapters. As a result, themes like ethnicity, diaspora and exile, while obviously important to the Tibet Issue, can be notable for their absence in places. This is one of the necessary problems of doing a networked ethnography. What is visible, and what we can adequately map-out as networked connections will always remain limited. However, what we gain by doing this – an ontologically rich understanding of the workings of political action – is a more than beneficial consequence of these forays into the reality of the Tibet Movement. As Jennifer Hyndman explains: “Situating knowledge is the key practice grounding the imagery of vision, particularly cartographies of geopolitical alliance and enmity. ... Embodied vision, that is to say ontologically committed, partial perspectives, may have the potential to subvert dominant geopolitical narratives” (Hyndman 2004, 309).

Chapter 4 – Imagined Geographies of Tibet

“The question...for me was whether it was possible to make the case for Tibetan independence, which one assumes, all people of good will (when presented with the facts) would support, without invoking the romantic view of Tibet as Shangri-La”

(Lopez Jr 1998, 11)

“So what’s it like working with Tibetans then? They must be very passive.”⁸

Introduction

Politically, the competing discourses of the Tibet Issue remain a product of two lines of argument – China’s claim that Tibet is and always has been part of China, against Tibet’s claim that pre-1949 it was culturally and administratively independent of Chinese rule. This cleaving of the issue into two has been productive of the current impasse in the Tibet Issue, and both sides and their supporters have attempted to justify their own versions as ‘true’ through different readings of history (Avedon 1994; Craig 1999; Epstein 1983; Furen and Wenqing 1984), which have also become prominent in the reproduction of a stylised ‘Tibet’, run through with orientalist connotations that paint both Tibet and China as ‘Other’. As a result it is virtually impossible to understand the Tibet Issue without an understanding of the production of an idealised, semi-mystical Tibet. Indeed, this construction of an imagined Tibet and China would seem to emerge primarily from a Euro-American viewpoint. Yet, China’s record of human rights abuses inside its borders together with Tibetan exiles’ predominantly Tibetan Buddhist traditions continue to provide seeming evidence of China as aggressive and dominating with Tibet as spiritual and withdrawn.

To illustrate this point, one of the most recent media representations of Tibet is from a TV advertisement. A cartoon mountain peak with a monastery perched precariously at its zenith before Tony the Tiger, emblem of Kellogg’s *Frosties* breakfast cereal, appears. According to the English, Asian-accented, voiceover, he has been sent to the ‘Tiger Monks of Tibet’ by Kellogg’s to control his ‘primal desire’ for the cereal. A training montage follows where he is trained in the ‘ancient arts’ of patience, restraint and self control. Of course, Tony cannot control himself, and gives in to his desires shouting ‘They’re grrrreat!’ before

⁸ ResearchDocs/Diaries/General – in this case, a fellow postgrad on a university training course asked me this question over lunch.

enthusiastically eating a bowl of *Frosties* while his monastic mentors make disapproving noises behind him. This is only one of the latest portrayals of Tibet in popular media and advertising. In essence, it distils Tibet into a series of defining characteristics that run through the imagined geographies of Tibet. Fantastic landscapes, monks (or Lamas when necessary), and ancient wisdom that we in 'The West' cannot understand all combine to create a sense of other worldly exotica and paint Tibet and Tibetans as 'other' to our Euro-American selves. Yet, while there has been much written on this subject (Dodin and Räther 2001b; Lopez Jr 1998), what remains relatively unexplored is how Tibetans and their supporters negotiate their use of the underlying languages of imperialism and colonialism in these arguments. It is this lack that this chapter addresses.

While these themes of representation and reproduction have clear links to strands of postcolonial thinking, the Tibet Issue has never been deployed as something overtly colonial. Sautman (2006) argues that there is a lack of evidence for any processes that can reasonably be called 'colonial' or 'imperial' within Tibet, instead pointing out the confused nature of the pro-Tibetan argument and the lack of any clear data about, and definitions of, the processes going on inside Tibet. In addition, the Tibet Issue is not often deployed as an explicitly anti-colonial struggle. Barnett (2001) has argued, from the pro-Tibetan side, there were deliberate attempts by the Tibetan Government in Exile (GiE) to ally itself not with other 'post/anti-colonial' nations, but towards seeking alliances with the populations of the traditionally colonial/imperial states of the West. This was done by elaborating a 'freedom through rights'-led approach, advocating Tibetan autonomy to practice a specifically Tibetan culture as an essential human right. This argument still draws on elements that stress the colonial and imperial aspects of the Chinese occupation – population change through ethnic Han Chinese in-migration, resource extraction, and cultural oppression are all used as justifications for resisting the Chinese occupation, and are often expressed as forms of colonial occupation and sometimes linked with the term genocide. The Dalai Lama, for instance, often refers to a type of 'cultural genocide' being practiced in Tibet (see, for example, CNN 17 March 2008). Thus, rather than exterminating the Tibetan population, the Chinese are seen to be doing irreparable harm to the traditional culture of Tibet.

This notion of a 'traditional' Tibetan culture, preserved in exile while being destroyed in Tibet, creates a need to develop our understandings of how Tibet is imagined and actualised in people's everyday activities. In Tibetan terms, this debate has largely been

used to examine the production of the *Shangri-La* image of Tibet and the Tibetan people and its possible impact (Dreyfus 2005; Lopez Jr 1998). This can be examined through the theoretical tool of Said's *Orientalism*, where the exotic images of an Oriental 'other' are symbolically used by the colonial metropole to dominate the colonial periphery itself. As a result, there are two processes at work here, on one side the antagonistic imperialistic debate against China, but at the same time, a debasing of Tibetans and Chinese by a dominant Western *Orientalist* view that privileges passive Tibetans against authoritarian Chinese.

What this chapter seeks to explore are some of the trajectories of imperialism and colonialism within the Tibet issue and how these are produced, but more importantly, how individuals negotiate and place themselves within these discourses. Initially, the chapter will discuss how Tibet is placed in imperial/colonial literature. This will both act as a broad review of the literature, but will also look at how the competing discourses and histories of Tibet are played out by the Chinese and Tibetan 'sides' of the argument. The second part of the chapter will examine the history of Tibet's relations with the West and think about some of the issues arising from debates around Donald Lopez Jr.'s *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, but will also examine some empirical findings of how this *Orientalism* is produced and practiced. The final section of the chapter will look at how these issues are played out in reality through looking at the ways in which Tibet has been imagined by the various actors within this research.

Imperial/Colonial Relations and the Tibet Issue

The relationship between Tibet and China is undoubtedly intricate and weighed down by a series of historical 'facts' used by both sides to justify their position. This does not stop it being projected by both the Tibet Movement and the pro-Chinese sources in simplistic terms that disavow the other point of view entirely. Pro-Chinese arguments rely upon the continued insistence that Tibet has always been a region of China and before 1950 was ruled by a brutal theocratic regime that was responsible for keeping the majority of the society in a form of feudal servitude (Epstein 1983; Furen and Wenqing 1984). Pro-Tibetan accounts obviously dispute this, but as well as promoting the idea of a Tibetan nation as a discrete entity (which is discussed in more depth in the next chapter), material circulates that tends to emphasise the harsh treatment of Tibetans in Tibet (TCHRD 2007), the extraction of Tibet's natural resources (Anon 2007), or claims the occupation to be akin to genocide (CNN 17 March 2008). However, as can be seen from this mixture of claims, the

apparent imperial or colonial aspects of this become more difficult to discern (Sautman 2006). This section will attempt to unpick and situate Tibet more closely in these arguments and debates.

Broadly, this argument marks a shift in the literature that recognises a turn away from only recognising overt displays of imperial/colonial behaviour towards coded and disguised practises that blur what we could consider as colonial behaviour in contemporary and historical worlds. Work on internal colonialisms (see Hechter 1975 for the archetypal study of this kind), and more recently on the stretching of imperial ideas beyond modern boundaries (Jones and Phillips 2005) and contemporary neo-colonialism (Gregory 2004; Mann 2003) have meant it is now imperative that we think beyond imperialism and colonialism as something that has occurred only in various forms throughout human history.

Imperialism, if taken most directly from its Latin derivation *imperialis* or *imperium*, generally refers to an empire or the power of command over an area. Of course, this derivation has much to do with the classical construction of an 'empire' - a territory which one can possess and control, but it still retains much of its pertinence in the present. The exact definition of what it means to be imperial as opposed to colonial or simply governmental is still something that can be debated according to specific circumstances. To take one well known example, Edward Said argues that in its most general sense, imperialism is "the practice, theory, and attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (Said 1993: 8).

Despite the seeming simplicity of this definition, it already throws up a number of issues. Firstly, it is a multi-pronged process, incorporating *practices*, a presumably overarching corpus of *theory*, and a broad sweep of societal *attitudes* as its tools. Secondly, these practices are all incorporated in order to produce two larger effects - *dominating* and *ruling*. Here, governance and superiority of one place over another are realised and solidified, so that the system of control, once in place, is reinforced as it is performed over time. Finally, Said crucially equates imperialism with *distance*, which is not simply equated with an actual spatial unit of distance. Imperialism can be against those who are not in close geographical proximity to us, but can also be practised against a societal 'other' who can be easily differentiated against the imperial 'self'. There are problems with this marking of distance between coloniser and colonised. Fanon's work (Fanon 1963, 1967) obviously interrogates the relations between coloniser and colonised, but the spatiality of these

relations is also open to question (Jones and Phillips 2005; Massey 2005). In addition to these problems, embedded in Said's notion of imperialism is the idea of it acting on a distinct territory, and here he harks back to the idea that imperialism is linked between geographical units of area, while avoiding the idea that imperialism is explicitly connected to the *possession* of that territory. To him it is the role of domination between the two regions that is the crux of imperial rule – as long as one can force another to do one's bidding, there is no explicit need to take over the other's physical landscape.

Thus, imperialism does not necessarily require the possession of a territorial 'empire'. Territory, and its possession and exploitation have, instead, become increasingly conflated with the related process of colonialism – to continue with Said's definitions, colonialism is about the 'implanting of settlements' (1993: 8) upon an area that one controls. To him it is often, but not necessarily, a consequence of imperialism. The implanting of settlements leads in turn to colonialism's linking with a number of other processes, such as population transfer and resource extraction. Colonialism therefore becomes much more *practical*, involving as it does processes that can generally be recorded in some way, whether in the movement of people, or the economic value of any resources produced from a colonial region. In addition, colonialism is often seen as being a distinctly *discriminatory* practice. A huge amount of literature has examined how colonialism established a system of unequal power relations between the ruler/coloniser and the subject/colonised (Fanon 1963; Fanon 1967; Memmi 1974).

It is with the imperial concepts of domination, rule and distance, together with the colonial processes of settlement and discrimination that pro-Tibet advocates try to situate their particular argument. This argument is built upon a series of mutually constitutive clauses and statements. The initial basis of the Tibetan discourse is, of course, the production of Tibet as an independent nation itself. This is discussed in the next chapter, but here it is important to recognise the foundational basis of this. From the building of a nation myth it becomes possible to separate Tibet from China – they are two distinct political entities and this political separation reinforces the physical, geographical distinction between the two areas. From here, it becomes a short step to invoke Said's version of imperial relations upon Tibet's relationship with China. The physical, political and cultural distance between the two is constructed and maintained through particular versions of history that emphasise different ways in which Tibet proved its independence. When this is combined with the takeover of political control by the Chinese in the 1950s, it becomes a short step

to manufacture Tibet as the victim of imperialistic forms of aggression and domination (see, for example, Avedon 1994 ; Craig 1999 and; Losada 2004 which all deploy this position in a variety of ways).

However, this process is questionable. Most recently Sautman (2006) has criticised scholarship on Tibet for not considering most of the statistics that have emerged from the Tibetan region, claiming that there is no substantive evidence to back up claims of genocide, colonialism and imperialism. While this could easily be argued to be another addition to one 'side' of the Tibet Issue's Manichean discourse, it also highlights some of the issues raised by Mountcastle's (2006) article on defining what is 'real' about the Tibet issue. While she concentrates mainly on the nature of human rights as a political issue, she does raise important concerns about how Tibet is represented in partial ways by scholars. As she correctly points out, "the Tibet Issue has been in many respects an extra-Tibetan issue" (Mountcastle 2006: 88). This reflects that fact that Tibet, despite romantic claims of it being 'closed' to the outside world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, has always been defined and shaped by its relations with the wider world (Hopkirk 1982), and in some cases, defined those places too (Tuttle 2005). This is something that I wish to turn to in more depth later in the chapter, but crucially what Mountcastle does is raise the issue of who is speaking for whom, and how are academics implicated within this. The presumed validity of scholarly work compared to other forms of writing has become increasingly important for each side to establish that their argument is correct while the other's is false. There remains here the broader question of how imperialism is proved to be at work. Claims and counter claims based upon empirical evidence such as Sautman's and various pro-Tibetan arguments tend not to prove anything, instead reinforcing the prevalent discourses. Of course, this fact is recognised by many Tibetologists, and it is through readings and attempts to unpick the Tibet issue in an impartial way and from a variety of standpoints that often yield the most useful work (Barnett 2006; Goldstein 1997; Sautman and Dreyer 2006; Shakya 1999).

It is in these more balanced accounts of the relations between Tibet, China and the rest of the world that it becomes increasingly difficult to recognise something that can clearly be seen as a deliberate colonial or imperial process occurring. Indeed, many of the policies of

Beijing have been ostensibly put in place to benefit the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR)⁹. In terms of population alone, the region was not subject to many of the population policies that affected the rest of China, while the influx of ethnic Han and Hui populations into Tibet, claimed as a deliberate form of population transfer by pro-Tibetans, is mainly a secondary effect of advantageous economic policies put in place in Tibet in an effort to foster development. Thus, while Chinese policy is definitely aimed towards integrating Tibet into China in terms of both infrastructure and wider economic development, according to Goldstein (1997) there is no evidence for a concrete Chinese policy to promote in-migration.

From the Tibetan viewpoint, recently there has been a recognition that many of the ‘facts’ that have been used by TSGs and other campaign organisations have been misleading. French (2003) examined the statistics behind a ‘fact’ that is widely quoted amongst pro-Tibet sources that over 1.2 million Tibetans had been killed as a direct result of the Chinese occupation, and found that the sources were to an enormous extent unreliable. However, this does not stop claims of Chinese aggression inside Tibet emerging amongst the exile community (TCHRD 2006).

In addition, what it becomes important to recognise at this point is that while the Tibet issue is widely debated in terms of absolutisms, the role of the unspoken third party must at some point come to the fore. This is that of the West and its role in defining the Tibet issue. Few would argue that it was ‘the West’s’¹⁰ colonial intrusion into Tibet during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries that brought about the current situation (Goldstein 1989; Shakya 1999; Xu and Yuan 2006). However, it is increasingly recognised that the West both gave impetus to the political situation with its various interventions into the region (including covert CIA-backed guerrilla fighting in the 1960s, see Dunham 2004; McGranahan 2006) but also saw the terms of the debate becoming expressed in the language of Western political modernity. Dibyesh Anand (2006, 2007) has argued that the relations between Tibet and China have only been forced into becoming the Tibet Issue through this engagement:

⁹ Indeed, the ‘benefits’ of imperialism/colonialism to those who suffer under it have always been deployed as a positive – for the latest in a long line of defences of imperialism as ‘development’, see Niall Ferguson’s *Empire* (2003).

¹⁰ I speak here in generic terms of ‘The West’. Rather than suggesting a homogenous group of people who can be labelled under the term, I employ the term in the commonsensical way in which it is deployed by many within the Tibet movement. I follow here Moran (2004) in hoping that by occasionally emphasising the term ‘Western (and indeed ‘Tibetan’ and ‘Chinese’) we should not forget the historically situated, context specific and heterogenous nature of the groups I refer to.

“Both the Chinese and the Tibetans ignore the fact that they are “prisoners of modernity,” a modernity whose terms have been dictated by the West as a political actor as well as an ideational construct. Whether one likes it or not, the West is already within the Tibet Question, as the dominant vocabulary available to political communities derives mostly from Western ideas and language. *This dominance of the West is demonstrated very clearly in the discussion of the Tibet Question, where instead of resisting the hegemony of Western ideas, arguments from all sides buy into them with a vengeance.* ... Modernity, with its universalization of specific Western politico-legalistic ideas and concepts such as territoriality and sovereignty, has offered a highly problematic framing of the Tibet issue and legitimized [historical] colonial reifications of the region.” (Anand 2006: 285-287, emphasis added)

Thus to Anand, far from being a third party in these relations, the West’s influence is deeply pervasive in the Tibet issue. By both constructing boundaries on artificial colonial borders and promoting Western ideas of the state, together with creating a cultural mythology of Tibet and its relations with China, ‘the West’ and its relations to Tibet and China have underscored the nature of the Tibet Issue. Anand argues we need to move beyond the narrow confines of these empiricist and historicist accounts that try to determine the ‘truth’ about Tibet’s past and adopt a more holistic account that works towards resolution of the issue rather than continued use of the same, seemingly intractable, arguments.

This argument raises a number of issues about the Tibet question. The West becomes an additional actor in the seeming binary relationship, and can be mobilised by both sides. For instance, the Tibetan emphasis on Human Rights is culled directly from a desire to engage with a global modernity. China claims that Tibet was liberated from imperialists and maintains that Tibet’s support from the West are part of attempts to split China (Xu and Yuan 2006). This relationship with the West also takes the form of something similar to Edward Said’s arguments against *Orientalism* (Said 1978 [2003], 1993) and the West’s representation and production of a romanticised Tibet is crucial here (Dodin and R  ther 2001b).

What this section has attempted to do is to reassess the political ground on which the discourse of the Tibet Issue sits. Traditional historical accounts from both Tibetan and Chinese discourses are found wanting when claiming Tibet as their own. Thus it becomes difficult to claim with any degree of real authority that Tibet is the subject of colonial/imperial rule by the Chinese regime. Instead, the issue becomes clouded and further and further from resolution as claim and counter-claim are made and distributed through each discursive network. In an attempt to shift the argument from its traditional dualism, I have attempted to take on some of the more recent writing on Tibet that recognises the role of the West and its shaping of the political language of Tibet. I have argued that it is necessary to take this into account and, with this in mind, the chapter will now turn to think through some of the empirical research and look at how individuals involved in the Tibet issue negotiate their position in regard to these issues.

Imagining Tibet – A history of (Western) representation and engagement

Tibet scholars have done much in recent years to examine the varied ways in which imaginings of Tibet have been deployed (Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008; Dodin and Räther 2001b). Tibet's geographical isolation through much of history, although overplayed as I have discussed previously, still led to a dominant vision of Tibet as distant and unknown, while at the same time filled with exotic cultural practices and, at times, of great wealth. These imaginings of Tibet have emerged historically almost exclusively through non-Tibetan readings of the 'Land of the Snows', but have now become so embedded that they circulate through Tibetan and non-Tibetan language about Tibet. As a direct result of this, any attempt to understand the Tibet Issue and its associated political activities must develop an understanding of this long history of engagement. This section will give an historical account of the various ways which Tibet has been both engaged with and produced.

The earliest mentions of Tibet from non-Asian sources come from the Middle Ages, with various travellers, from missionaries to the Mongol Khans describing Tibet as they have travelled through it. Marco Polo writes of it based on rumours he hears in China (Dodin and Räther 2001a). Before that, religious rumours circulated that Tibet was the home of the Christian kingdom of Prester John (Kaschewsky 2001, 7). This contact between 'West' and 'Tibet', predominantly through missionary activity, produced particular understandings of Tibet as a place of religious activity. Kaschewsky describes the travels of the Portuguese Jesuit António de Andrade, whose accounts of 'priests' in Tibet stresses the piety, celibacy, and vows of poverty, all presumably things that he could relate to, and goes on to tell of

various rituals involving the expulsion of evil spirits and use of holy water in certain practices (Kaschewsky 2001, 5). Rumours of Tibet as a possible sanctuary of an ancient Christian sect continued into the eighteenth century, with some accounts thinking that the first Dalai Lama was in fact Prester John himself (see Lopez Jr. 1998, 27).

With the emergence of Western (predominantly, but not exclusively, British) colonial regimes in South Asia, these ideas of Tibet were simplified into blanket ideas of idolatry and shamanistic ritual. These narrow understandings of Tibetan Buddhist culture, and the nineteenth century evangelistic Christian tendency of the British Indian society, lent to more aggressive missionary activity on the Tibetan borderlands. This activity led to the eventual 'closing' of Tibet to outsiders. In reality, this closing tended to apply only to Tibet's borders with the South Asian colonial powers, with representatives of the Chinese Qing dynasty being present in Lhasa throughout this time. However, the border was always mutable, and infiltration of Tibet by individual travellers and agents did occur (Hopkirk 1982; McMillin 2001). The most notable of these were the Indian agents trained by the British colonial government to map out Tibet, but there were additional travellers who attempted to make the journey to Lhasa, now styled as a 'Forbidden City'. Thus, the colonial desire for knowledge of the forbidden, exotic 'other' became one of the major driving forces in the representation of Tibet.

A further influence came in the form of religious study. The growth in the study of 'other' religions in the late nineteenth century culminated in Tibet Buddhism being appropriated by the Theosophical Society which began to represent Tibet as a repository of ancient knowledge (Pederson 2001). Together with long-standing rumours of the riches of Tibet, with stories of ants digging up nuggets of gold from the earth, so rich and untapped was the landscape (Hopkirk 1982), Tibet began to be seen as an area ripe for exploitation by colonial powers.

The development of the 'Great Game' as Imperial Russia's influence in Central Asia came into contact with British India's northward expansion through Afghanistan meant that Tibet became further drawn into Western political imagination. Thus Tibet was coded both as an empty buffer between the two empires, but also thanks to its already well established reputation, as a mystical land of financial and spiritual riches. This meant that having a both strategic and mercantile influence over Tibet became coveted by both sides of the Great Game. The lack of contact between the British Indian administration and the Lhasa Government of the 13th Dalai Lama, together with the reported presence of Russian agents

in Lhasa led to numerous border conflicts and eventually culminated in the Younghusband Expedition of 1903-04. This 'expedition' into Tibet by a British colonial army was led by Sir Francis Younghusband, 'The last great colonial adventurer' (French 1994), who, influenced by the growth in mystical ideas circulating through public life in the early 20th Century, was intrigued by what he saw as the more esoteric elements of Tibetan culture, and would go on to write a number of controversial books on his own ideas about religion, even becoming involved in the commissioning of the musical version of Blake's poem 'Jerusalem'.

This invasion, quite aside from the political ramifications that continue to affect Tibet (as discussed in the Introduction to this thesis), did not 'open' Tibet to foreign travellers, but popularised Tibet as an exotic location with Lhasa as a 'forbidden city', encouraging further travellers to attempt to gain access. Most notable amongst these was Alexandra David-Neel, the French traveller who determined to become the first western woman to enter Lhasa. Her travels to Lhasa, disguised as a Tibetan woman and accompanied by her adopted Tibetan son, documented 'hidden' rituals of Tibetan Buddhism and were popularised through her book, *My Journey to Lhasa* (David-Neel 1927 [1969]). However, it must also be noted here that for many who arrived in Lhasa, the forbidden city of myth and legend was something of an anticlimax. Tibetans and their towns were largely portrayed as filthy and degenerate. Austine Waddell, Younghusband's medical officer in 1903-04 said of the Tibetan town of Phari:

'Appallingly foul and dirty, possibly the dirtiest and foulest town on earth, a vast barrow in a muck-heap, with an all pervading foul stench everywhere', the Tibetan inhabitants were 'to be in thorough keeping with the squalor and filth amongst which they live' (quoted in Barnett 2006, 28).

While Tibet was seen as a repository for ancient knowledge, its people were portrayed as little more than superstitious savages who (amongst other things) believed protective amulets could protect them from Western bullets.

This increasingly popular mystic notion of Tibet as a land of ancient spiritual knowledge was further enhanced through various other publications, most notably Walter Wentz's 1927 translation of an obscure document he called the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which is problematic for a whole host of reasons (see Lopez Jr 1998, esp. Chapter Two - 'The Book'). This, combined with James Hilton's novel 'Lost Horizon' (Hilton 1933 [1947]), created the

notion of Tibet as 'Shangri-La'. Shangri-la is a hidden valley in the Himalayas where a monastery, filled with Western monks who have almost magical powers of long-life, looks over a valley of docile Tibetans who farm the fertile valley floor. So popular that it was turned into a film (Capra 1937), Shangri-La became synonymous with Western understandings of Tibet. These misleading, and occasionally fictitious, accounts of Tibetan culture reached a new peak with the publication of 'The Third Eye' in 1956 by a Tibetan lama called T. Lobsang Rampa (the T stood for Tuesday). In reality, Rampa was a man called Cyril Hoskin, the son of a plumber from Devon who claimed to have been possessed by the spirit of a Tibetan Lama, and over the course of several years to have transformed to such an extent that his very molecules were 'Tibetan' (Lopez Jr. 1998). Even when this part of his identity was discovered, Rampa's works were hugely popular, as they provided a (wildly inaccurate) narrative account of everyday life in Tibet and in particular a series of outlandish ritual ceremonies. Despite being roundly criticised as the work of a fraudster, so popular were these accounts that they spawned two further books.

Thus, by the time of the early years of Communist Party rule over Tibet, the 'imaginary' Tibet of Western discourse was largely cemented. Tibetans and Tibet were exotic others, who may or may not have had access to esoteric rituals and practices, but were themselves uncivilised, either being docile subjects of benevolent rule, or filthy inhabitants of dirty towns. With the move into exile came a shifting of this discourse slightly. Chinese claims that they had liberated Tibetans from a feudalist serfdom were contrasted with accounts by Tibetan exiles that stressed pre-1949 Tibet as something of a golden era, when there was no famine and the people were happy (see also Barnett 2006; Gyatso 1998). This, combined with the evolution of the 'New Age' movement (Korom 2001), has led to the continued production of Tibet as a repository of ancient knowledge, but rather than imagining Tibetans as uncivilised, they instead become peaceful and knowing because of their timeless Buddhist nature (see Sperling 2001 for a useful critique showing the symbolic use of violence by previous Dalai Lama regimes).

Chinese discourses and imaginations of 'Tibet' are important to mention as they too are productive of certain idealised discourses of Tibetanness. Similar to the 'Western' viewpoints mentioned above that place Tibetans as 'dirty' and 'uncivilised', Barnett equates the Chinese view of Tibet as one of "undifferentiated awfulness" in its continued denigration of the feudalist-style system of societal organising in prerevolutionary Tibetan life (Barnett 2006, 35). Heberer (2001) has shown how this construction of Tibet as a 'hell

on earth' has helped to develop the paternalistic attitude of many Han Chinese doctrines. Here, Tibetans are again played out as passive receivers of the benefits of Han Chinese modernity. This attitude has obvious parallels with classical justifications of imperial processes as a form of development, or as introducing civilisation to a barbarous area. But, while stressing the primitiveness of Tibetans, Heberer also argues that Han Chinese imaginations of Tibet are infused with the exotic, and occasionally, the erotic by representing minorities in particular ways that emphasise their sexuality compared to ethnically Han Chinese (see also Stoler 1995 for more on sexuality and imperialism). This is similar to representations of other ethnic minorities in China, and is seen as representative of a greater Han Chinese practice of developing a paternalistic self/other relationship within the contemporary boundaries of the People's Republic of China. While this thesis is not directly about Chinese representations of Tibet, they still resonate with orientalist attitudes and are open to considerable critique and, therefore, are also important to our understandings of the Tibet Issue.

For the rest of this section, I move on to look at a closer theoretical understanding of Western imaginations of Tibet. Taking on the theoretical tool of 'Orientalism' as a starting point, it develops these ideas by turning towards Lopez Jr.'s *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, as well as other Tibetan scholars to assess how these discourses are actually worked through the networks of the Tibet Movement. By examining the ways in which these discourses are appropriated and run through the various parts of the Tibet Movement, we can begin to understand how resistant political actions are mobilised in discourses that would seemingly only denigrate Tibetans and Tibet.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978 [2003]) is well known enough to outline its general argument here. Most broadly it gave recognition to the fact that the Orient is defined to a large degree by the Occident's engagement with it. It is thus produced and manufactured as a site of all that is exotic, base and corrupt compared to the enlightened civilisation offered by the Occidental core. But most crucially *Orientalism* takes away the Orient's ability to define itself. Through an overwhelming weight of cultural reproduction, the Orient ultimately loses its ability to produce an image of itself and is thus defined by an 'imagined geography' created by the Occident. It is from this imagined geography of the Orient as a place of exotic and uncivilised practices that emerge the racism of colonial practices, together with a disempowering of those in the Orient – the subaltern classes can no longer gain any voice unless they perform in ways that the imaginary geography

imposed by the Occident recognises. Of course, *Orientalism* is not without its critics, who have argued that it is either simply wrong to place such an emphasis on those who started the study of 'The Orient' (Irwin 2006) or that its Foucaultian account of creating difference by placing people within grids of power is too rigid in its dividing of Occident/Orient. Ahmed (1992) is particularly trenchant in his critiques of *Orientalism*, and its essentializing of Occident and Orient. Particularly, he argues that by emphasising the ways in which identity is defined through difference, Said is simply employing a classical form of discourse analysis, which ultimately means all of history is one of *Orientalism*, and creates a scenario where imperialism is disengaged from any political-economy type imperatives and simply emerges, almost naturally, without the influence of capitalism. Further, Ahmed argues that Said overplays representation as the overwhelming *modus operandi* of *Orientalism* – why should we assume that representation always makes the other inferior, and do we all necessarily buy into that representation? Thus, Said's history of Oriental-Occidental relations essentialises and overplays accounts of difference and is remarkably disempowering for both of these groups.

Despite these critiques, *Orientalism* remains important in unpacking the idea of how we represent the other, and it is difficult to deny that 'the Occident', as a crude umbrella term, has had an overwhelming influence upon 'the Orient'. What this means is that, in order to attempt to understand many current situations, it is necessary in many cases to review the long history of colonial engagement in a particular place (see Gregory 2004). We must obviously move beyond essentializing the various discursive arguments at work in the Tibet Issue into a domineering West, an aggressive China and a passive Tibet. The temptation with *Orientalism* is to reify it as 'prison' of language from which actors cannot escape. Yet, we must examine how these ideas are deployed in reality to understand how these discourses are actually played out through our participants' everyday lives. A more contingent and sensitive reading of the places and spaces of this imaginary Tibet can, I would argue, help us to develop a more balanced understanding of the Tibet Issue and move beyond simple stereotyping.

Given this need for a context sensitive understanding of how *Orientalism* is played out, it becomes necessary to consider Tibet's subjection to these processes in this light. Thus, the mysticism-infused historical projections of Younghusband and David-Neel become products of their particular circumstances in Victorian and Edwardian European society. Contemporary 'Western' activists would claim to be counter hegemonic in attitude to

Chinese dominion over Tibet, and would generally consider themselves to be acting in a non-imperialistic way (as we will see in the empirical evidence later in the chapter). Whilst there are differences in both space and time in the production of Tibet, a stream of ideas and connections that mean a distinctly 'Tibetan' system of representation can be recognised. Foremost amongst academic understandings of these ideas is Donald Lopez's account of the long process of mystifying Tibet in *Prisoners of Shangri La* (Lopez Jr 1998). Lopez, as one of the foremost Western scholars of Tibetan Buddhism, creates an account that is deeply indebted to both Said and Foucault. His account is a broadly chronological sweep through the history of the West's engagement with Tibet, and more particularly Tibetan Buddhism. Taking several key 'strands' of Tibet that have been perceived to be 'Orientalised' he examines the long history of Tibet's encounter with the West, from 19th/early 20th Century colonial incursions and the construction and changing meaning of the word 'lama' that is in many ways synonymous with Tibet, through to the present Dalai Lama's engagement with the West, his argument centres on Tibet's cultural production as a Shangri-La of ancient mysticism.

This imagining of Tibet is central to a disempowering of the Tibetans themselves. The production of Tibetans as a peaceful and isolationist ethnic group both belies history (Dunham 2004; McGranahan 2006; Sperling 2001) but also crucially removes from them a degree of agency. This has close links to a type of 'New Age' thinking (Korom 2001) and combines with a belief that Tibetans are somehow more spiritual beings, not concerned with the mundanity of everyday existence, rather practicing esoteric rituals that are unknowable to outsiders. By being beyond the everyday realm, they are beyond consideration as political actors and subjects. This comparative lack of power also relates to the relationship between the traditional colonial powers that led to Tibet having little international recognition in the aftermath of its invasion and the Dalai Lama's move into exile (Shakya 1999).

However, while Lopez at points argues that the 'prison' that is Tibetan Buddhism's relationship with the West has become nearly all encompassing (a point disputed by Dreyfus 2005), he does recognise that Tibetans do have the ability to possess some power, albeit within the confines of traditional, Orientalist understandings of Tibetan Buddhism – the power of Tibetan Buddhism's call to people (predominantly in Europe and America, but elsewhere too) means that Tibetans can actively recruit people to their cause, contesting

and disrupting relations by appropriating the representative discourses that surround them:

“In this way Tibetans have quite literally incorporated foreigners into their patronage sphere through their own version of colonialism, what might be termed spiritual colonialism. *Rather than taking control of a nation, Tibetan Buddhists are building an empire of individuals* who, inhabited by birth by the spirit of a Tibetan saint, become, in effect, Tibetans, regardless of their ethnicity.” (Lopez Jr 1998 206-207, emphasis added)

Thus, Tibetans are able to recruit their own population, which, to Lopez, can be easily written in imperial terms. However, by acting in such a way they are, at the same, time still promoting an emphasis on Tibetan Buddhism and spirituality more generally, rather than on Tibetans as beings rooted in a system of political action. Tibetan Buddhism becomes the Tibet Movement’s biggest strength and also its greatest weakness. This is the ‘prison’ in which Lopez places Tibetan Buddhism, and by inference, the pro-Tibetan side of the Tibet Issue.

While there is much that Lopez is correct about here, by widening the issue slightly and taking into account a Tibetan society that encompasses more than Buddhism, there are additional ways in which Tibetans have attempted to attract people to their side of the argument. Studies of Tibetans which examine the daily political actions that they are forced to go through are increasingly numerous, from outright violence (Dunham 2004) through to how life in exile is negotiated (Houston and Wright 2003; McConnell 2008; Yeh 2007). Particularly useful is Barnett’s (2001) examination of the explicit decision in the 1980s to shift the pro-Tibet argument away from colonial/imperial issues (despite the use of colonial language of penetration/violation in the debate) towards a human rights-based approach to politically contesting the Tibet Issue. This seemingly rational political decision-making process shows how Tibetans deliberately attempted to connect their argument not with other subaltern struggles against colonial oppression, but instead turned towards an argument based upon the UN’s conceptions of universalist human rights. This shift has proved both useful and problematic for Tibetans, with a greater degree of access gained to sympathetic audiences in ‘the West’, and thus a greater series of networks with which to voice the Tibet issue. However, when this is combined with, as Mountcastle (2006) has argued, a perceived decline in the *realpolitik* value of the issue, with human rights not

being seen as 'real' compared to other geopolitical issues. This example shows how the pro-Tibet Movement's political strategising is an active process. Rather than being trapped within an anticolonial discursive language, the Movement is able to shift discursive ground, gaining and losing power as its strategies alter to suit particular targets.

So far, this chapter has been concerned with the theoretical make-up of our understandings and labelling of Tibet. The rest of the chapter moves beyond examining Western literary and cultural representations of Tibet in isolation. Instead, it looks towards the individual and everyday practices that Tibet supporters use to negotiate their way through these messy and contradictory practices of dis/empowering Tibet and Tibetans. As a result, we turn now to some empirical examples of how these ideas are played out.

Individual Negotiations of Shangri La

While the issue of *Orientalism* still resonates with academic treatment of the Tibet issue, there seems to be a relative lack of engagement with the issue in the everyday practice of being a Tibet supporter. Particularly, the issue of Tibet as Shangri-la is glossed over by many as belonging to the past. Lhasang Tsering, interviewed in Dharamsala, justifies this as follows

“[Shangri-la] was a help and a problem in the early years [of exile]...[Western people] equated [Tibet] with this mythical Shangri-La, c[a]me here, f[ou]nd we are just another bunch of smelly, problematic human beings and get disillusioned (laughs)... So, to that extent, the very fact that there were people interested, [and] there to help, was of great assistance, and, now we have reached a stage where those who do come, no longer have that illusion about the Shangri-La.”¹¹

Here, Tsering develops this from both his personal history of being a young refugee in India but clearly articulates the idea that most 'Western' people did not have an adequate idea of what to expect of Tibetans as human beings – the mystic construction of Tibet being so pronounced. But crucially, this is only equated to the 'early years'. This imbues past Tibet supporters with a certain naiveté but also presents contemporary Tibet supporters as more capable of understanding Tibet than this first generation of supporters – they are not held by the 'illusion' of Shangri-la as Lopez would have us believe. This idea that the 'Tibet' of

¹¹ Researchdocs/Interviews/IN/LT.

popular imagination does not matter now was also expressed by one of the workers at a UK TSG, who, when I spoke of the problematic rendering of Tibet waved it away by saying that such things “weren’t really the focus of attention any more”.¹²

However, throughout the fieldwork and interviews that comprised this research, it was more than clear that this emphasis on Tibet and Tibetans as ‘special’ was still discursively enacted. This obviously varies depending on whether the interviewee is Tibetan or not, but the Western viewpoint, is elaborated by T, an independent activist based in the UK. When asked about how Tibet was represented in the West, T responded

“I make an analogy between Gandhi and the Dalai Lama...what’s happened with the non-violent movement since Gandhi’s death as sort of taken over I suppose, morally, intellectually and [...] as a figurehead by the Dalai Lama is that non-violence has become equated with non-action. [...] If you [watch the film] Gandhi, you will observe that he did not do nothing, he was an activist, but he was an activist that insisted on stopping short of violence. However, he was only, ‘ha ha’, dealing with the might of the British Empire. The British Empire was brutal, but they were as nothing compared, compared to Communism. *So, what has happened, is that the Tibetan people have genuinely become [...] unable to help themselves [...] under the Chinese government*, I mean I personally met a 19 year old Chinese nun who when the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize went and sat on the pavement and silently held up a little banner that said ‘Long live the Dalai Lama’ and that was her only offence – she was imprisoned for 20 years. So what their policy has done, it has been so severe, so extreme [...] that they, they can’t sit on the pavement silently to ask for their freedom, their independence, their autonomy, their right to study what they want, speak to who they want, discuss what they want...[long pause] elect their own leaders, speak their own language in their own country, they have been totally [...] they, they can’t speak to each other, literally even today, [...] and they can’t even speak in a group of friends in a bar because you never know when there might be a Chinese person

¹² Adapted from research diaries - Researchdocs/diaries/FTC/121006.

amongst you that is prepared to take money for denouncing you [...] *it's a situation that in the West we can't even begin to comprehend.*"¹³

This extended quote highlights the nuanced ways in which activists position themselves in relation to the tripartite arrangement of Tibet, China and non-Tibetan arguments. Initially, she situates the Tibet struggle within the long colonial history of the world, but rather than speaking specifically of Tibet, relates it to popular understandings of Gandhi, the other great anti-colonial, non-violence advocate. This is articulated here through understandings of Sir Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi*, rather than any of Gandhi's writings or thoughts on topics such as *Satyagraha*. This comparison to Gandhi is justified by the placing of the concept of activism and struggle, so Gandhi and the Dalai Lama both become activists. The success of Gandhi's campaign against the British Empire, for T, lies in the very fact that it was against *Britain*. Thus, Communism (and by extension the Chinese Communist Party and its various elements) is painted as a more vicious and cruel form of imperial domination than certain other forms¹⁴. Tibetans are denied, not only democratic freedoms, but human freedoms such as speech under this regime. This overbearing system of domination and control upon the individual is something beyond 'our' comprehension in the West.

Throughout this, there are a series of dislocations and arguments. Thus, the Chinese deprive Tibetans of any form of agency in T's understanding. But, at the same time, this system of oppression is stratified, so that most of the blame is pushed upwards to the relatively abstract 'Communism', only mentioning Chinese people directly when they are the subjects of this system of surveillance and its impacts upon them. This is done to perform a complicated, yet conventional, dance whereby 'normal' Chinese people are not implicated as instigators of the oppression of Tibetans, thereby nullifying any anti-Chinese overtones, not entirely successfully – elsewhere in the interview, T refers to "all the Chinese people that I've ever dealt with have been utterly charming, [...] the thing is about the Chinese, is that, like the Americans they believe their own propaganda"¹⁵. So, while attempting to prove her understanding of Chinese people as normal human beings, T repeatedly casts them as 'other' to not only Tibetans, but also to Western (particularly European) standards. This is used to justify a statement complaining that Tibetans in Tibet are unable to help themselves, and taking this further, this is seen as something 'we' are

¹³ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon1, Emphasis Added.

¹⁴ This can easily lead to a form of competition – 'Our Imperialist aggressor is much worse than yours' and so on. I wish to avoid that here and simply focus on the fact that T is constructing Tibet as the victim of a particularly harsh regime in her own personal reckoning.

¹⁵ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon1.

unable to comprehend in our more civilised Western modernity. This neatly encapsulates what Barnett (2001) calls the 'double-orientalism' process, whereby Tibetans are passive and peaceful and Chinese are evil and cruel, and the concrete processes of oppression are far from our ability to understand in Western society. Crucially, this act creates a system whereby Tibetans in Tibet become powerless and thus are left needing people 'outside', whether Tibetan or otherwise, to intervene on their behalf. These claims are all tempered by a degree of factual understanding – indeed, the human rights situation in Tibet (and in China more generally) is different to that in London. However, while based in reality, and therefore not entirely a 'Western' product, it is T's deployment of these ideas that is productive of particular renderings of the Tibet Issue.

T represents a particularly extreme viewpoint in these arguments, and her particular attempts to cement her position can only ever represent her ideas, but many of these ideas have emerged at various points throughout the research. In Dharamsala, an American resident at my hotel told me of how students newly arrived from Tibet in Macloed Ganj who were being housed and schooled at the Tibetan Children's Village complex were more violent and aggressive towards their fellow pupils than previous refugee cohorts. This, it was implied, was because of the Chinese occupation stripping Tibetans of their 'peaceful' Buddhist culture¹⁶. It is impossible to dispute that Chinese rule over Tibet has undoubtedly been more oppressive than liberal, and Tibetans have had many of their cultural traditions eroded through many of the processes that the Chinese Communist Party has put in place, and I am not intending to claim otherwise. But statements like the ones above (and, similarly, the second epigraph quotation at the beginning of this chapter) hearken back to an idealised Tibet of the past, where Tibetans lived in a golden age of harmony and passivity before 1949, and by extension denigrate Chinese interventions into Tibet as ones of unparalleled aggression and little else. These blanket generalisations trivialise the Tibet Issue and ignore the complicated geopolitical landscape on which it sits.

In many cases, activists are extremely aware of the need to distance themselves from such simplistic rhetorical debates. PG, a non-Tibetan UK-based campaigner, has, on numerous occasions, told me of the need for Tibetans to lead the struggle for Tibet, once in direct opposition to comments similar to T's above. To PG, non-Tibetan Tibet supporters are exactly that; supporters, who can engage in solidarity work, but are there to follow the Tibetans' lead on issues like campaign targets and strategies. However, despite this rational

¹⁶ Researchdocs/diaries/india.

exposition of a distinction between Tibetans and non-Tibetans within the Tibet Movement, this becomes more difficult to play out in reality. PG himself articulates this difficulty in his account of an activist project on the Beijing Olympics that he undertook in Beijing in the summer of 2007.



Fig 4.1 'Racist Park' road sign. Source: <http://beijingwideopen.org/2007/08/04/day-4-fake-tibet-in-racist-park> Accessed: 17/11/08

While in Beijing, PG and a colleague visited the National Ethnic Minorities Park in Beijing¹⁷. The park itself had been the site of some controversy when, due to poor translation from Mandarin to English, it was signposted as 'Racist Park' (see Fig 4.1). However, this park is intended to show various ethnic minorities of the People's Republic of China in re-enactments of their specific cultures. To begin with, I quote a number of PG's reflections upon aspects of the park which he drew attention to.

"[T]hey've built on the top of a small hill a fake monastery. And it really is the size of a small monastery, you know, we're not talking about Legoland here, it's a real building done up to look like a monastery. But as with everything in the park, it looked like it had been built in a rush, it looked cheap, it was obviously not right. I mean, Tibetan buildings, traditionally you know, they're angled, the walls are angled, whereas this was straight, well almost straight, you know, if there was any angle it would have been minimal, you know, it just

¹⁷ Poor translation from Mandarin to English meant that this park had previously become notorious for having signposts directing people to 'Racist Park'. These have since been replaced in the build up to the Olympics.

wasn't right. Walking up to the monastery, they had a courtyard in front of the monastery, and ... they had these sort of boulders and even the boulders looked fake, and they'd painted murals on them which were supposed to be Buddhist murals, but, they were again done so cheaply and quickly there was no detail in them, they looked like they could have been, you know painted on by anybody in about ten minutes, or even like spray painted ... with a cardboard cut-out, it just had that look and feel about it. It had no real detail, therefore no respect to ... what it was supposed to be."¹⁸

PG goes on to describe coming across some Tibetan prayer wheels, which are often used as symbols of Tibet's religious culture:

"...they'd built these prayer wheels, and you know, they were meant to be spun around, but there was no information about them, there was no, detail about what they actually were, what the correct way of spinning them, you know, the correct way to walk around the area that they'd built, by walking around clockwise, spinning the prayer wheels in a clockwise direction. So you had tourists, you had children, a lot of children, walking through, spinning them this way and that and not using the handles, literally like toys. And I couldn't really see what ... anyone would be getting out of any of it. To me there wasn't any real learning or understanding of the culture."¹⁹

These two examples are important as they show how PG constructs a particular style and way to practice being 'Tibetan'. Following Bishop (2000), clear markers like architecture and religious practice are, according to PG, misunderstood by the designers of the Ethnic Minority Park, and so the park becomes 'fake'. This misunderstanding of the 'correct' Tibetan culture allows PG to then articulate two processes of control; firstly he denigrates the Han Chinese ability to understand Tibet, with their crude constructions proving that they are unacceptable guardians of Tibet and its individual culture. There is no 'respect' towards Tibetan culture in the park. Secondly, and by performing the first process, he is proving that he possesses a greater understanding of Tibetan culture - he knows what is right, and more importantly what is wrong with this park, and thus makes himself a more 'true' guardian of Tibetan heritage and culture than the creators of the park. This is also articulated by PG's final comments about the purpose of the park. To him, the park is not

¹⁸ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon2.

¹⁹ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon2.

about fostering any greater understanding between Tibetans and Han Chinese people – the lack of any guidelines about the prayer wheels justify this. Instead, to PG, as he makes clear throughout this section of the interview, the park is a propaganda vehicle. And it is this lack of authenticity, combined with what he perceives as propaganda, which taints PG’s experiences of the park – he initially described it as

“...kind of like a theme park, I guess. And in a way, I kind of felt that it was a bit more like a zoo, because they actually had Tibetans there, as well as the buildings and structures that they built, they also had Tibetans there, who performed...”²⁰

Thus the park becomes something inhumane, with Tibetans performing for Chinese purposes:

“And it all sort of, it all hit home then I think, exactly how China was using Tibet, you know, I mean we don’t know if these Tibetans had volunteered to do it, or they were told to do it, or what, but you could see they weren’t happy [...] they weren’t overjoyed at what they were doing, they were just doing it [...] it obviously just felt all wrong.”²¹

Here PG hints at the fact that his impressions of the park are just that – his own personal impressions, but the effect of the poor recreation of what he deems as ‘Tibetan’ have reinforced his ideas about Han Chinese misunderstandings of Tibet so that the whole place becomes an extreme example of all that is wrong with China’s attempts to package Tibet as part of the People’s Republic. PG was in Beijing for around a week, yet he still described the ethnic minority park as the most ‘significant’ moments of time he spent while in Beijing when interviewed around a month later. During the interview, he was still clearly emotionally affected by the place, so strong were his objections to the park’s production of Tibet.

Thus, while individuals can be rational actors who do not rely on such rhetorical arguments, as many pro-Tibet activists are, these discursive devices are still rolled out. This deployment of rhetorical arguments is a result of the assemblages of which these individual actors are part. PG’s and T’s accounts are crucially influenced by their own relationality to their surroundings. As people who have both been to Tibet, they can claim a degree of

²⁰ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon2.

²¹ Researchdocs/interviews/uk/lon2.

authenticity to their points. T uses this to claim that she knows Tibetans are powerless, while PG deploys it rather more subtly to back up his knowledge of Tibetan architecture and culture. The representations of the Ethnic Minorities Park that PG deploys come out of an assemblage of both his previous experiences in Tibet, his time working at a TSG for over a decade, and his immediate surroundings in Beijing, where he was under heavy police surveillance while documenting his time in Beijing as an activist. Thus, the particular situation, flavoured by his own particular background producing TSG materials supporting Tibet, led to a reading of a situation that he read as demeaning to Tibet and Tibetans, and he can straightforwardly transfer the blame for this onto the Chinese authorities who built the park.

At the same time, activists like PG and T have also balanced these judgements within their own moral frameworks. Thus, even while Tibet is a distant object in its predominant geographical imaginary, T and PG, in their relatively expert positions as pro-Tibet activists, and their interests in human rights more generally²², have constructed a moral framework around Tibet that, somewhat justifiably, allows them to argue that the Chinese occupation of Tibet and their human rights record during this time is wrong and needs rectifying.

What all this tells us is that Tibet, as produced by contemporary activists, is still run through with a set of contradictory imaginaries. While some will see Shangri-La as something from the past, even those political actors who are careful in their representations of Tibet and Tibetans, like PG, find themselves drawn into the language of this 'special' Tibet, denigrating China and emphasising the victimhood of the Tibetan people. Of course, all of these are a part of the wider role of establishing one's argument. In order to maintain and sustain the idea that the pro-Tibet side of the issue is correct, TSG materials, for example, still continue to paint the Tibet Issue with the same broad brush strokes of opinion. One, produced after the March-April 2008 protests in Ethnically Tibetan areas of the PRC, states: 'After nearly 50 years of living under an oppressive and brutal regime, Tibetans have had enough...The response by the Chinese Authorities [to the protests] was swift and brutal...**Tibetans need us now more than ever.**'²³ The reasons for deploying this argument are clear enough, but the emphases on Chinese brutality and Tibetans needing 'our' help continue to play into the troublesome productions of Tibet discussed above.

²² See interview transcripts for more detail on their backgrounds here.

²³ From a UK TSG flyer encouraging new membership. Emphasis in original – copies available from author.

Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the production and maintenance of Tibet primarily, but not exclusively, through the Western imagination. It first set out discussion of Tibet as specifically related to languages of imperialism and colonialism. What becomes clear here is that, while it is difficult to claim outright that Tibet is the victim of a colonial occupation, the languages of colonialism and, in particular, the representation of self/other, runs through the Tibet Issue and the Tibet Movement more specifically. In order to build this further, the second section gave a brief account of Western (and an even briefer account of Chinese) representations of Tibet. These accounts are important as they clearly show the development of specific strands of thinking about Tibet, but they also disprove some traditional theories about Tibet, for example, that it has been isolationist in its world view for much of its history.

The final section took the theoretical arguments of the first two sections and examined how they emerged through the empirical research. What became clear here was that while there is clearly an effort by Tibet Supporters to move away from 'Shangri-La' and simplistic renderings of Tibet as an exotic other, in reality, the discourses employed by the pro-Tibetan side of the Tibet Issue cloud this issue. While individual activists make claims about the nature of solidarity and allowing Tibetans to be the leaders of the movement, their own understandings are still refracted through the problematic imaginary of Tibet as a 'special' place with 'special' inhabitants. The inability of the Chinese authorities to recognise this means that the Manichean discourse of peaceful Tibetans (and their supporters) versus the 'brutal' Chinese continues to be played out. Given that the Tibet Issue has yet to be resolved after 50 years of employing this discourse, questions remain about what is the best use of these imagined discourses of Tibet and China. It is evidently difficult to work outside of these discourses, and so, modifying them again becomes difficult, and while Tibetans and their supporters make a conscious effort to think of issues like Shangri-la as belonging to 'the past' (see Lhasang Tsering's quote above), these issues continue to permeate popular and activist understandings of Tibet.

This chapter has highlighted an important empirical area of the thesis, but it also acts as an introduction to themes that run through the other empirical chapters. The 'Imagined Tibet' discussed here is clearly important to the Tibet Movement. The next chapter examines in more detail Tibetan Nationalism and its production in exile, and many of the themes developed here will be seen running through it as well.

Chapter 5 – Locating the Tibetan Nation

*"I am not Jack, nor am I an Ashok.
My country China has occupied,
Myself into exile expelled,
My papers say I'm stateless,
At heart I'm still a Tibetan.
My name is Tashi, and I am from Tibet"²⁴*

Introduction

The nation and nation-state, despite their seeming dilution by the processes of globalization, continue to exert a hold over us. Ethnic nationalist conflicts like the Tibet Issue continue to be powerful rejoinders to claims that fetishise the world as spaces of flows (Castells 1996). Following from the last chapter, where we examined the creation of an imagined Tibet and Tibetans, this chapter takes this a step further by exploring the networked and heterogenous ways in which Tibet is experienced as a nation in exile. The chapter works through the ways that the Tibetan nation is produced and negotiated in the diaspora by blending what Partha Chatterjee has called the 'nation in heterogenous time' (Chatterjee 2004, Ch. 1) together with more networked understandings of the nation. These accounts stress the ways in which the nation is both produced through a series of interlocking components, but crucially is experienced differently within and across the spaces of 'the nation'.

This is a shift away from the idea of nationalism as an academic subject as it emerged from authors like Anderson (1983 [2006]), Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), and Smith (1986). These predominantly focus on how the nation and nation state emerged as a distinct historical entity. Thus they focussed on theorising the nature of the *development* of nationalism, whether from the development of pre-existing ethnic ties by Gellner or the creation of mass print-media that Anderson attributes with a causal nationalist power. As Jones and Fowler (2007) rightly point out, particularly within studies of the nation within geography, the focus has been on the *representation* of a national community, whether this is through things like a particular landscape, monument or display. Instead, there have recently been increasing calls for work that looks at how the nation is *reproduced* through "manifold processes and institutions that help to form, mould and reshape nations and nationalism within particular spatial and temporal settings" (Jones and Fowler 2007, 333).

²⁴ From the poem 'My Name is Tashi' from the collection *Tomorrow & Other Poems* by Lhasang Tsering, Rupa Publications, New Delhi (Tsering 2003).

This allows a view of the production of the nation that moves outside the purely 'national' scale, examining how spatially extensive processes and actions can be mutually constitutive of 'the nation'.

Similar understandings of the growing heterogeneity of the 'nation' have also emerged from studies of scattered social groups, particularly (but not exclusively) diasporic national communities. Here, the articulation of group identities in spaces that are not contiguous, bounded, uniform geographical spaces necessitates an understanding of the nation that understands the specific linkages such as economic, political and cultural practices that unite the community. As Brah (1996) has suggested, it is through a confluence of narratives that the identity of a diasporic community becomes centred as a uniform construction of community, but at the same time this is negotiated through each individual's memories and socio-spatial specificity. Thus, the diaspora becomes a heterogeneous site of the nation and so "the identity of the diasporic community is far from fixed or pre-given. It is constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively" (Brah 1996, 183)

Despite these calls, there remains a tendency to think about the nation as a particularly scalar institution. Sitting within a nested hierarchy rising from 'the body' to the 'global', the nation (and the nation-state) can still be a powerful actor within the social realm (Mansfield 2005). As a result, much work still sits *within* a peculiarly bounded vision of 'the nation'. While the nation has been opened up, we still tend to think of how terms are essentialised and hardened into groups (Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen 2006), and there still remains a lack in work that positions the nation as something other than a geographically bounded entity.

This chapter assesses the Tibetan diaspora and nation through a series of more networked, spatial arguments. The seeming ease with which people and information can now move between these national blocks increasingly blurs and fractures the boundaries between areas that were once relatively distinct. Through these processes of movement and exchange, I address the production and maintenance of the Tibetan nation, but one that engages with the issues raised by Jones and Fowler, and Brah above, namely, how people relate to and reproduce the Tibetan exile nation. On one level, how do they interact with institutions like the machinery of state and on another, how do they sustain the nation in other ways that are much less visible and apparent. In this case, Tibet exists in a diasporic form of exile that is involved in a political struggle to gain a form of independence and/or

autonomy from Chinese rule. Yet, Tibetan identity, while tied to a notion of 'homeland' and a specific culture (Kolas 1996), is both about and beyond a specific, spatially-limited territory. Turning to ANT-led ideas about space (Hakli 2008; Mol and Law 1994) can lead to interesting ideas about the ways in which the nation is produced. The claiming of a territory from afar creates a meaningful home for exiled Tibetans to attach their identity to. However, the diaspora creates a more networked, and crucially fluid, arena for identities to become malleable and altered, with a resultant breakdown of clearly defined 'Tibetan' identities (Houston and Wright 2003; Yeh 2007; Yeh and Lama 2005).

Empirically, this chapter examines the production and maintenance of 'Tibet' from a number of perspectives. Firstly, it will look at the role of the Tibetan Government in Exile as a producer and maintainer of a specific vision of Tibet, and how it calls to Tibetans to enact Tibet in particular ways. Secondly, the chapter will examine the role of more mundane practices by looking at the role of the Tibetan National Football Team. The National team serves a number of purposes by acting as a symbol of Tibet and its continued existence, by becoming a political tool to create solidarity with others and also to foster and maintain opposition to the Chinese occupation. Before turning to the empirical data however, it will be necessary to try and assess some of the previous work on producing and maintaining the nation and the role of oppositional politics in nationalism.

Nationalism from territory to heterogeneity

The study of the historical emergence of nations as distinct entities, while problematic, is important to situate the rest of this chapter. Benedict Anderson seems to almost regret coining the phrase 'Imagined Community'. Indeed, while it is true that any nation does consist of a community of people who can never meet or possibly know everyone, the phrase to him has become so devoid of meaning that he cannot bear to type it fully²⁵. His seminal work (Anderson 1983 [2006]) has become something of a yoke around the study of nationalism's neck. It is very nearly impossible to think of the study of nationalism without turning to the book (and to a lesser extent Gellner's (1983) and Smith's (1986) interventions in the literature). This is not to say that his book is not a useful tool to understand the processes that produced nationalism. What it is to say, is that the term 'Imagined Community' has become almost universal and, following from this, that the finer points of his argument have become lost. This is not something that I necessarily wish to

²⁵ See note 1 in his Afterword 'Travel and Traffic' in the 2006 Verso Edition of *Imagined Communities* 207-229.

correct here, but it is necessary to point out that Anderson's work has become so all-powerful in the literature that it becomes necessary to sweep over the vast majority of his argument in order to get some mention of the work into any debate on nationalism.

Anderson, Gellner and Smith were concerned explicitly with the production of the 'nation'. More specifically, they were concerned with the emergence of the systems of nationalism through the emergence of various types of material and semiotic objects that allow nationalism to spread throughout a given community. Yet, as Agnew (2004) is right to point out, this style of studying the *emergence* of nationalism is limited in choosing only one 'thing' (in Anderson's case print-capitalism, or 'modernisation' for Gellner) when in fact there are a whole raft of processes that craft and form nationalism. Further, in his explicit critique of Anderson's work, he goes on to say that

"The appeal of nationalism rests initially and finally in the fact that in many parts of the world the political organization of territory into national states has created real, not simply imagined, *material* communities of interest and identity in which large numbers of residents see their fate tied to that of the national state or, if they do not have one of their own, obtaining one for themselves" (Agnew 2004, 225, emphasis in original)

This focus on territory is something that Agnew relies upon explicitly in his formulation of how nationalism is worked through and out. Indeed, this seems to be tied up in many ways with the appeal of nationalism to create an 'other' with whom the nation can be easily opposed and can have the 'line drawn in the sand' between the two groups that act as a boundary (or national border).

The concentration of work on boundaries (and their seemingly explicit geographical nature) is most notable through the work of Paasi (1998, 2002), which has looked variously at how identity, at scales from the national to the regional, is bounded through institutionalised practices despite the increasing mobility of people and things in the world today. Thus through their institutional construction these territorial units can still exert power and maintain their discrete identity as unified objects. While this argument is correct in many ways, with border controls and other means stifling the 'space of flows' that theorists like Castells (1996) would have us believe in, the production and maintenance of identity is not

something that can be simply 'held' in a territorial unit as this implies an ability to simply stop relations across space.

There are of course many other ways to look at the production of the nation, such as Johnson's (1995) work on monuments, Edensor's (1997) on memory and commodification and Gruffudd's (1994) on landscape, as examples of how specific *sites* and *arenas* are implicated in the production of nationalism and highlight the importance of particular places/spaces to the maintenance of wider nationalist projects. However, these arguments still work with a relatively 'closed' conception of the site of nationalist production. Each area is relatively distinct and productive of a spatially limited nationalism, and the nation becomes a collection of what Gellner would term 'cultural threads and patches' (1983, 56) of which any selection, not necessarily the ones that are articulated, can be used to build the 'whole'.

This has been further developed more recently by a turn towards the 'everyday' as significant. In particular, Edensor (2002) has argued that the likes of Anderson, Gellner and Smith have all, to a lesser or greater extent, viewed culture reductively, arguing that the subconscious of culture cannot be subsumed by more overt productions and representations of the symbolic. Indeed, Edensor is right in arguing that much scholarship focuses on the 'top-down' imposition of nationalism by triumphant elite-led cultures. Instead, he argues for a study of national identity that incorporates a non-historicist, non-elite culture that incorporates the 'unspectacular' (p. 12) into its framework. There is a slippage here between 'nationalism' and 'national identity' as Edensor shifts from the seminal theories of nationalism to a promotion of a theory of national identity, which are not the same thing, but he is correct in asserting that the study of the production, reproduction and representation of the nation is more complex and crucially is grounded in sites throughout a nation rather than only in specific places that seemingly make up the patchwork of Gellner's analysis. Thus he argues for a national identity constructed through a complex dialogic matrix of dynamic interactions that include 'images, ideas, spaces, things, discourses and practices' (p.17).

However, this turn towards the 'Banal' or the 'Everyday' has still tended to deploy the notion of the nation as a relatively bounded, territorial institution. The production of the nation or national identity is productive of difference. Edensor, for example, assumes that globalisation and supranational organisations like the EU threaten the bounded notion of the state, which seems to be viewed relatively unreflexively as an attempt to simply move

sovereignty and identity 'up' a scalar level. More recently, Haldrup, Koefoed and Simonsen (2006), have tried to blend some of the cultural understandings brought about by a reading of Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (1995) as a way of creating and building upon the growth of seemingly racist discourses in the everyday language of Denmark. To them, the political production of a particular discourse and its permeation throughout a society show how the minoritarian, immigrant 'Other' becomes homogenised and racially typecast. Of course, this can be read as true in many cases, but their account still views the 'elite' culture of a political party as the starting point for this particular discourse, and crucially, assumes that racist language is a bipolar opposite of normal behaviour, thus producing a clear separation between indigenous self and immigrant other. What this fails to take into account is the multiplicity of relations and discourses at work, and as a result creates a vision of two discrete and competing totalities that do not meet in the middle. Increasingly, the boundary between 'Danish' and 'Non-Danish' becomes hardened and we move towards versions of nationalism that become predicated upon difference to others.

These ideas of nationalism as constructing relatively fixed identities are, according to Bhabha (1994 [2004]), part of the problem. To him, the historicist narrative strategy of nationalism is particularly problematic:

"The linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes, most commonly signifies a people, a nation, or a national culture as an empirical sociological category or a holistic cultural entity. However, the narrative and psychological force that nationness brings to bear on cultural production and political projection is the effect of the ambivalence of the 'nation' as a narrative strategy. As an apparatus of symbolic power, it produces a continual slippage of categories, like sexuality, class affiliation, territorial paranoia, or 'cultural difference' in the act of writing the nation" (Bhabha 1994 [2004], 201).

To Bhabha, this series of slippages is held together through repeated performances at and between sites (the patches and threads of Gellner). The nation both maintains itself but in a vicious cycle also draws in more and more people to belong to that particular 'nation'. However, the continued movement and articulation of these various sites and groups means that the homogenizing attempts of the national are always limited, and it is in the

borderlines between these various groups and sites that Bhabha bases much of his argument. To him, it is the tensions that exist on these borderlines and limits that allow the translation of differences between Gellner's patches to form new kinds of solidarities. Thus, the liminality at the edges of these different groups *within* a particular nation and the interplay between difference and sameness becomes important in the production of a particular nation. All nations are necessarily hybrid and networked constructs of different individuals, and what Bhabha attempts is a movement of the nation outwards, from its traditional conception as something that is generally (but not exclusively) seen as synonymous with a state or sometimes a national 'elite' and instead looks at the various and multiple performances and actions through and across 'the nation' itself.

Partha Chatterjee has also been one of the more vocal critics of these conceptions of nationalism. To him, from a postcolonial and subaltern perspective, Anderson's conception of the nation affords little scope for alternative nationalisms to evolve (Chatterjee 1991). As products of a modernity that privileges ideas of progress, compared to the relative hegemony of the nation as a method of social formation, those who adopt different systems of organisation are immediately classed as backward and pre-modern. The most clear critique comes from Partha Chatterjee's chapter 'The nation in heterogenous time' from *The Politics of the Governed* (2004). Here, he refutes Anderson's claim of nations as imagined communities, claiming that this imagines time as homogenous – neatly packaged and ordered under the influence of modernity (and/or capital). Instead, he takes Anderson's later ideas around the seriality of nationalism in *The Spectre of Comparisons* (Anderson 1998). Serialities are those objects, institutions and discourses which can act as the binding agents for collective subjectivities such as nation or ethnicity. Anderson, attempting to redress some of the critiques of his *Imagined Communities* above, uses a binary of these serialities to try to address the differences between ethnic politics and the politics of nationalism. Unbound serialities are rooted in everyday universality – they can be communicated through things like newspapers and allow for individuals to imagine themselves as part of a community. They are seemingly limitless and not hindered by a need to classify objects, yet are negotiated through space and time. Thus, Anderson argues, 'politics' in Asia was learned, taught and changed as it was practiced through its particular local circumstances. This is in contrast to terms like industrialism or militarism, where the name-labels were applied after the processes had already begun. It is through unbound serialities that nations emerge as subjectivities.

By contrast, bounded serialities are the classifications and categorisations imposed by modern forms of governmentality. Under these terms, individuals become anonymised and fractions of populations are not allowed to exist. Ethnic minorities become totalities who can be counted – 3,000 Jews, 2,000 Tibetans. People are one thing or another, never hybrids of different classifications. Thus, to Anderson, nationalism has at least the potential to be liberating, whereas ethnic politics are bounded and closed to any differences. Bound up with a conception of modernity that allows for a spread of secular politics, and in particular certain notions of democracy, these ideas can be critiqued through Massey's (2005) understandings of the contemporaneity of political action. If we think about these serialities in their 'pure' form, distinct from each other, then they would seem to make sense. However, it is when they are played out in reality, through the spaces of ontological reality, then they become more difficult. The negotiation between pure nationalism and pure ethnic politics (in this case) is messy and problematic. Nations that tie themselves to an *etnie* are inextricably bound into a type of ethnic politics at the same time. Thus, what Anderson is attempting to do is the classic modern act of purifying hybrids (Latour 1993), playing out a particular vision of nationalism against a particular vision of ethnicity and cleansing the ground in between. In Chatterjee's critique of these ideas, the expansion of nationalism can be seen as one aspect of a growing liberal universalism in the world. This leads to a utopian modernism, where progression and the elimination of the backward, pre-modern is the ultimate goal. However, as with all utopian streams of thought, Chatterjee argues that this is ultimately unreal – people can imagine being in these secular and modern nations, but in reality, this is impossible. Thus, rather than imagining time as homogenous,

“Time here [in reality] is heterogenous, unevenly dense. Here, even industrial workers do not all internalize the work-discipline of capitalism, and more curiously, even when they do, they do not do so in the same way. Politics here does not mean the same thing to all people. To ignore this is...to discard the real for the utopian” (Chatterjee 2004, 7)

For Chatterjee, then, we need to begin to think about the nation not in terms of serialities. Bounded and unbounded remain inseparable as opposite poles on the spectrum of social reality. Instead, one must steer a path that moves between the extremes of an unrealistic cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and ethnic partition on the other.

This thinking by Chatterjee, when combined with the work of Doreen Massey in *For Space* (Massey 2005), produces a heterodox reading of both space and time. Massey's argument is explicitly about producing a more mutable and heterogenous conception of space which is equally (if not more) important than time within these framings. If we think back to Chapter Two of the thesis, these lines of argument have links to the planes of immanence present in the work of both Deleuze and Foucault. Chatterjee's notion of heterogeneity is clearly drawn from Foucault's, while the seriality of everyday politics is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking through the classification of immanence emerging as both molar and the molecular. The co-implication of these national serialities as presented by Chatterjee, and the more general thought on political subjectivities by Massey, articulates a reading of Deleuze and Guattari that emphasises ways that political processes are played out across a continuum. Rather than being purely molar (or, as Anderson would have it, ethnic), or purely molecular (national), the negotiation and playing out of the politics of nationalism are always a blend of the two.

To think through how these spatially heterogenous accounts of the national can be played out in reality, I turn to actor-network theory. In particular, the explicit attempt by Hakli (2008) to employ a topological (after Mol and Law 1994) understanding of nationalism to Finland. This topology privileges the notions of regions, networks and fluids as different elements of a nationalist project. Thus, the region is the bounded territory of the nation-state, where the inside can be clearly demarcated from the outside. The networks are the technological organisations and apparatuses, like state-based programmes of governmentality, which bind this region together. These are defined by the intensity, strength and speed of relations between elements. Thus, connection is not measured by distance, but through the stability of the relations occurring. This breaks down the Euclidean notion of space, instead asking us to look at the ability of different elements of a nation-state to speak to each other regardless of geographical distance. Finally, the fluid regions are those that are mutable and negotiable. Hakli defines these as the embodied practices of nationalism, the 'practical sensibility' (2008, 7) of nationalism that people carry with them through their everyday existences.

This topological reading of space produces a rendering of the nation that is not rooted in the concept of territory. Instead, elements of nationalism that are *transterritorial* and *detrterritorial* can become just as easily mobilised and examined by treating the differing spatial ways in which they emerge and are deployed. This fluidity and 'sensibility' of

nationalism develops from an earlier turn in nationalist thinking that begins to privilege the 'everyday' of constituting nationalism. What I want to examine here is to incorporate some of the ideas of Chatterjee's and Hakli's renderings of the nation as a process, and uncover some of the multiplicity of ways that the nation can be enacted and re-enacted, produced and reproduced. While in many ways, Tibetan nationalism works to reinforce its difference to a Han Chinese 'other', there are also ways in which solidarities and ideas from different nationalisms are taken. The boundaries of the Tibetan nation are not fixed, either territorially or discursively. Instead, they can become permeable, variable and much more difficult to pin down. Before I turn to empirical discussion of this, it will be necessary to examine the history of Tibetan nationalism.

Tibetan Nationalism – Religion, Elites and Print Media

To understand the heterogenous nature of contemporary Tibetan nationalism, it is important to situate it within its own particular history. Much of the writing on the production of the Tibetan nation has focussed on some fairly traditional ideas about nation, nationalism and national identity. As we saw in the last chapter, most representations of 'Tibet', unsurprisingly, are problematic and contested, blending Tibet and non-Tibetan ideas together. These representations revolve around a small number of key areas. For instance, Kolas (1996) argues that religion is the pre-eminent structure that shapes Tibetan Nationalism. Karmay (1994) identifies literary and ritual aspects of Tibetan culture that produce a Tibetan identity in addition to the main vehicle of Buddhism. In his account of the production of Tibet from the 'outside', Bishop (2000) examines the media and its role in the production and representation of Tibet, finding three broad areas that these representations inhabit, namely Religion, People and Landscape. Thus, to Bishop, outside reproductions of Tibet have tended to stereotype Tibet as a mystical land of religion and high mountains, inhabited by Lamas and nomads. This argument has obvious connections to the discussions of how Tibet is 'Orientalised' (Said, 1978, Lopez Jr., 1998) that were discussed in the previous chapter. Here I aim to examine the construction of the Tibetan nation in ways that, while encroaching upon these 'traditional' ways of imagining and producing Tibet, also shift the Tibetan nation 'outside' these traditional boundaries of relatively fixed territorial entities. To begin, we must first examine a brief historical overview of Tibetan nationalism until the present. This can be split roughly into two parts. Firstly, Tibetan nationalism 'inside' Tibet is considered to show how the Tibetan nation and state attempted to produce itself from the period c.1900 to 1950. Secondly, we move on to

look at the emergence of more specific types of Tibetan nationalism in exile, examining the ways that the 'nation' has been held together in the period from 1959 onwards.

Nationalism in Tibet – c.1900-1950

The pre-1900 period remains contentious in determining whether Tibetans in Tibet accepted Chinese sovereignty or not. Disputed histories and counterclaims by both sides aim to gain legitimacy over the modern geopolitical entity of Tibet. However, here I want to concentrate on the period from the turn of the 20th century. This is to avoid becoming tangled into a historiographical tangent, but also because, despite the long history of Tibet, China and 'Western' engagement, it is only with the direct encroachment of the British colonial regime in India upon Tibet that the present form and shape of the Tibetan nation as a distinct political entity begins to take place.

The traditional 'Western' preconception of Tibet as a 'closed land' before Younghusband's Expedition of 1903/04 is now widely seen as something of a misconception. True, Tibet had attempted to limit its contact with the English and Russian empires that were encroaching upon its borders, but this process, as Barnett (2006) points out, only pushed the encounter between Tibet and the West towards these borderland regions. In fact, histories like Hopkirk's (1983) account show how, while notionally Tibet 'closed' to the outside, this did not prevent small scale incursions by individuals or small groups in order to gather information. But, in addition, this 'closedness' assumes a western perspective and ignores the fact that Tibet was for all this time in contact with the Chinese government. Indeed, much of the confusion over Tibet's status emerges through the presence of Chinese *Amban* (diplomatic mission) in Lhasa until they were ejected during the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. To the Chinese, this presence shows that Tibet was officially under Chinese control until this point, something denied by the Tibetan state. In addition, much of what we consider as uniquely 'Tibetan' is closely related to China. The *Potala*, the Dalai Lama's winter residence, and symbolic of Tibet to many, together with the *Jokhang* Temple, the most important temple in Tibet, both owe some part of their creation in their current form to China's historic influence (see Barnett, 2006, French 2003). This again acts to confuse the claims to sovereignty over Tibet. In addition, it is also important to remember the historic role of India in Tibet – without the influence of Buddhism from the Indian subcontinent, much of what is considered as uniquely Tibetan culture would not exist.

This unpacking of the Tibetan identity produces a more complex nation, but it is still important that this complexity is still marked by a relatively inward looking government before 1900. However, print media began to circulate through Tibetan society in the early 20th Century (Samphel 2003; Stoddard 1994), and as discussed in the introduction, the 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso (1876-1933), was noted for his attempts to 'modernise' Tibet, both in updating its armed forces and attempting to foster relations overseas, primarily with the British Empire in India (Goldstein 1989; McKay 1997). As a part of this, it was recognised that, in order to function as a 'nation', the territory of Tibet had to be marked out in order to separate it spatially from both China and the British Empire. Thus the Simla Conference of 1913-14 between Britain, China and Tibet came about. This conference attempted to resolve disputes about the various borders between the three groups of delegates, despite China refusing to recognise the Tibetan delegation. Initial documents produced claimed independence for Tibet. However, the Chinese refused to sign them, thus making them invalid. A second round of talks produced a document which recognised Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, but not its sovereignty. This climb-down by the British Government of India meant that Tibet still had little international recognition, occupying a blurry zone where its independence and autonomy was dependent upon what suzerainty could be defined as (Shakya 1999).

As a result of the diplomatic wrangling, the period from 1914 onwards was marked by attempts by the Dalai Lama to produce and maintain a distinct Tibetan identity. Thus overseas delegations were issued with passports to prove their 'Tibetanness' and increase the international visibility of Tibet (Goldstein 1989, Ch. 16). These actions, together with other symbols of national independence such as Tibetan monetary denominations (Bertsch 1997), are now regularly produced by the exile community in order to claim independence in this period. In addition, the 13th Dalai Lama attempted to institute policies that would 'modernise' Tibet. Thus, while attempting to update the army, British diplomats were invited to Lhasa, and eventually, after the 13th Dalai Lama's death, radios were acquired that for the first time connected Lhasa with the outlying regions of *Kham* and *Amdo*, thus allowing a degree of sovereign control from the political and cultural 'centre' of Tibet for the first time.

The period of 1900-1950 can be read as a period of developing nationhood and independence for Tibet. During this period, Tibet emerged from its perceived status as a 'pre-modern' region and began to establish itself as something of an independent territory

according to Western standards of nationalist symbology. By ejecting the Chinese *Amban* (although another delegation from the nationalist *Guomindang* government arrived in 1933) and by attempting to assert itself both through forms of territorial control and, more crucially, attempting to ‘perform’ being a nation through the use of symbolic objects like passports and money, Tibet began to attach itself to some of the geopolitical systems of modernity. This is not to say that such a transition was smooth, however. Many of the reforms put forward by the 13th Dalai Lama were bitterly opposed by traditionalists within the Tibetan aristocracy and, after the death of the Dalai Lama in 1933, many of his proposals and schemes were abandoned (Goldstein, 1989). In this way, while undoubted progress was made in producing ‘Tibet’ as a separate entity to China, it was through the lack of ability to establish concrete links with other nations that saw Tibet as ‘independent’, together with poor use of what technology was available, that eventually led to its inability to defend itself following the 1950 invasion by the People’s Liberation Army (see Shakya, 1999).²⁶

Nation in Exile – Maintaining ‘Tibet’ after 1959

Following the Chinese invasion in 1950, the Tibetan government led by the 14th Dalai Lama²⁷ attempted to appease the Chinese government while attempting to gain international support for their cause. However, timed as it was with the decline of British imperial influence in the region at the end of the Second World War and given the lack of international recognition for ‘Tibet’ as an independent state, Tibet itself was left with relatively little support. The Tibetan delegation sent to parley with the Chinese army was

²⁶ Dunham, (2004) describes the famously shambolic, almost comical, conversations between the Lhasa administration and the defenders of Eastern Tibet in the following radio conversation:

“Chamdo [the administrative centre in Eastern Tibet] to Lhasa: Look we have sent three urgent messages and haven’t received a single reply. What is going on? As far as we are concerned we see ourselves as virtually caught and every second is important to us. If you don’t give us a reply we don’t know what to do.

Lhasa to Chamdo: Right now it is the period of the *Kashag’s* [the Tibetan Government’s Cabinet’s] picnic, and they are all participating in this. Your telegrams are being decoded and then we will send you a reply

Chamdo to Lhasa: Shit on their picnic! Though we are blocked here, and the nation is threatened and every minute may make a difference to our fate, you talk about that shit picnic”.

(Dunham, 2004, 72).

²⁷ The 14th (and present) Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, was sworn in to his official duties ahead of traditional schedule in an attempt to provide some stability while the Chinese invasion was underway.

coerced/duped²⁸ into signing the now infamous '17-Point Agreement' that essentially admitted that Tibet had always and would always be a part of China. Following from a near decade of diplomatic wrangling with the Chinese occupying forces and unsuccessful appeals to international bodies like the UN (Shakya 1999), the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile in March 1959 meant that there was a perceived need amongst exiled Tibetans to sustain and maintain Tibet in exile. This was done initially by the formal repudiation of the 17-Point Agreement in order to revert back to the independent status of Tibet. But, in addition, there are a number of initiatives that have been established by the Government in Exile in order to more explicitly keep Tibet 'alive'. Things like education and settlements were quickly put in place, as the Dalai Lama shows in his autobiography;

“[W]e have established boarding schools in the foothills for about a thousand children, and we are preparing enough schools for them all. *All refugee parents are eager to send their children to these schools, where they can grow up healthy, and as true Tibetans.* They are taught Tibetan, religious knowledge, and Tibetan history as their main subjects; and also English, Hindi, mathematics, geography, world history, and science” (Gyatso 1977, 226, emphasis added).

Thus education acts as a site of continuation of the Tibetan identity, but also as a site where Tibet now encounters the 'outside' world. The importance of education systems in maintaining and producing nationalisms has not been unnoticed by scholars of nationalism (Kaplan 1992; Resnik 2003), but mostly this is done in terms of solidifying the nation as distinct. Here, the ability of education to formalise what Tibet 'is', is combined with a broadening of students' knowledge of the world. This also represents an explicit turn away from the 'Old' Tibet of isolationism towards an expansionist modern Tibet, where Tibetans can act and move in new and different ways. Thus, while preserving what is perceived to be important about being 'true Tibetans', the exile education system is notably different to education in 'Old' Tibet, but also in contemporary Tibet. Exile becomes a dualistic process of preservation and distancing from Chinese-ruled Tibet. Thus, the version of Tibet taught and practised in exile becomes hybrid and heterogenous – taking on different ideas while attempting to maintain some forms of 'traditional' Tibetan culture.

²⁸ This remains a point of contention – the role of Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the defeated governor present in Chamdo, Eastern Tibet, and his perceived complicity with the Chinese in these negotiations remains a controversial topic for most Tibetans (see Shakya 1999).

This establishment of education systems has been combined with the growth of a modern 'state based' system of democratic governance, which will be discussed in more depth later on. However, it is suffice to say here that the increasing systematisation and development of democratic goals has served to tie the Tibetan people together, but also to expand the range of people that Tibet in Exile can speak to, and that this has hybridised the Tibetan nation at the same time (Ardley 2003). By moving into exile, the Tibetan people, led by the Dalai Lama and the Government of Tibet in Exile, have had to attempt to speak to numerous other groups to legitimise themselves. First appeals shortly after the invasion of 1950 attempted to speak to supra-national organisations like the UN. In this solidarity was sought with other 'post-colonial' nations such as the Republic of Ireland and Malaya who agreed to sponsor Tibet's appeals to the UN Security Council. As a result, Tibet was effectively abandoned by many of the nations which it relied upon for support, namely the United Kingdom, India and the United States (Shakya 1999).

However, in exile, while still lacking formal relations with the overwhelming majority of states, exile Tibetans themselves have attempted to reconfigure their political relationships by seeking to enter into discourses that are not explicitly anti-colonial in order to legitimise their claims. The most prominent of these are the attempts to attach the Tibet Issue to issues such as universal 'Human Rights' and western notions of civil society and democracy while moving away from representing the issue as one of present day 'colonialism', which saw the initial phases of international support from the Republic of Ireland and Malaya;

“[E]xile leaders, having realised in the mid-1980's that foreign governments had no strategic or political interest in raising the Tibet issue, decided instead to pressurize them by mobilising popular support amongst their constituents. The colonial concept, however, offered none of the easily communicable attractiveness of the vivid imaginary worlds conjured up by the models of specialness and violation. ... The Tibetan exiles instead turned for support to former colonizers rather than the former colonized and chose public relations rather than political alliance as its form of politics. ... *[T]he Tibet issue in the international domain is thus not really a political debate, since it does not address the political interests of other social forces; it is more an attempt to achieve political effects by engaging people in a shared image or representation.*” (Barnett 2001, 279, emphasis added).

Thus, crucially, the representation of Tibet becomes part of the politics of Tibet. Creating a specific realm of 'Tibetanness' that can appeal to the discourses of 'human rights' and 'democracy' both produces and reproduces Tibet, but also spreads the message of Tibet beyond the Tibetan people themselves. It was with this in mind that the discourse of 'Tibet' shifted in the mid-late 1980s, as discussed by Barnett above, and presumably led to the Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1989. This was awarded in recognition of the continued message of non-violence and negotiation which the 'Middle Way' policy²⁹ advocated. However, this led to one of the major nationalist protests that has occurred 'inside' Tibet since the 1959 Lhasa uprising.

The political protests in the Tibetan Uprising of 1989 are well documented (Barnett 1994, 2006; Barnett and Meysztowivz 2004; Schwartz 1994) with a series of riots and protests occurring in both celebration of the Dalai Lama's award, but also in protest at the continuing occupation of Tibet by the Chinese. To Schwartz, these protests are, for Tibetans, "a means of articulating national identity" (1994, 218). They represented an overt expression of ill-will towards ongoing Chinese rule and the associated inability to express fully any 'Tibetan' identity. Thus they ignored protests about 'minority status' that would come as an admission of belonging to China, and instead explicitly targeted the apparatus of the Chinese state and its social control over Tibet (and in particular Lhasa). Thus, to Schwartz, the ethnic dimension of Tibetan nationalism is subsumed by a political dimension. Running contra to Gellner, rather than imagining the nation as emerging from a progression from pre-industrial society, Schwartz argues that Western notions of the nation must be treated with caution, as Tibet's seemingly isolationist past and the recent emergence of Tibetan nationalism in response to Chinese occupation do not easily tally with Gellner's productions of *Volk*. Nor have the Chinese attempts to invent a tradition (after Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) that incorporates Tibet into greater China been, according to Schwartz, particularly successful. These ideas continue to highlight the ways in which renderings of the Tibetan nation, which rely on traditional theories of nationalism, cannot properly understand the nuanced, heterogenous ways in which the Tibetan nationalist project emerged. Indeed, to some, it is arguable whether the riots in Lhasa in the late 1980s and in Lhasa and elsewhere in March 2008 were overtly nationalistic, and

²⁹ The 'Middle Way' policy called for 'Genuine Autonomy' for Tibet rather than independence from Chinese rule. As such it was a major concession by the Tibetan Government, representing the first climbdown by either side of the Tibet Issue. It still remains controversial amongst the Tibetan community today, with many hardliners seeing it as little more than ceding the homeland to China.

instead are expressions of more general social discontent with Chinese Communist government policies (Blondeau and Buffetrille 2008; Shakya 2008).

These accounts of the Tibetan nation are particularly centred on what happens *inside* Tibet, yet there are obviously links here to events outside Tibet, particularly with Chinese claims of the Dalai Lama acting as a major motivation for the protests to begin (Xinhua 2008). Indeed, with the Dalai Lama as symbolic of Tibet, combining as he does both the 'Religion' and the 'people' of Tibet, there are important processes of border crossing here. Schwartz's account necessarily focuses on the interior of the territorial region of Tibet and the processes of national resistance going on, but this precludes wider accounts of what it means to be a 'Tibetan'. It is into this category that much of the more recent research falls. In Bishop's (2008) article on Tibet and the media, Tibet is produced by a Western-dominated media that 'Orientalises' Tibet and produces a dominant account of what Tibet *is* that becomes all pervasive. Emily Yeh and Kunga T Lama (2005) have usefully explored this issue in their account of how diasporic Tibetans perform their identity, and how those who do not conform to the Tibetan identity, instead adopting behaviours of where they reside (in this case the Afro-American Hip-Hop 'Gangsta' culture) become more marginalised within a given culture. A similar exploration of diasporic Tibetan identity by Houston and Wright (2003) finds that Tibetan diasporic identity is malleable across space and place, with a distinction between home and exile, but it is also curiously static, with traditional class relations still remaining important, despite the movement into exile destabilising many other aspects of national identity.

As a result, the Tibetan nation can be seen as a web of intertwining relations, symbols and objects, which both Tibetans and non-Tibetans have degrees of control over. In some cases, identity seems to be 'nailed down' to certain behaviours – going to a Tibetan school in exile to maintain 'Tibetan values' in exile, or the continuation of class boundaries in settlements and work patterns in Nepal (Houston and Wright 2003). In others, identity becomes negotiable and fluid – becoming a Hip-hop gangster or adopting Nepalese citizenship. There thus emerges a gap between the representation of Tibet, as shown in the last chapter, and the actual production of the Tibetan identity. Thus, by examining the representation of Tibet, we have a focus on how Tibet is a territorial space which exists both as a present region of the People's Republic of China, but also as an exile community. Counter this to the production of Tibet, and there are still some seemingly clichéd accounts of the Orientalism of Tibet, but in addition there are other identities and other symbolisms

of what it is to 'be Tibetan' at work. Diasporic behaviours that do not enact the three pillars of Bishop's analysis are seemingly the liminal spaces that Bhabha (1994 [2004]) attempts to convince us of. It is with this in mind that I turn towards thinking through what this means for the empirical research of this project.

Centralising the nation – producing and representing 'Tibet in Exile'

“How rich our mutability, how easily we change (and are changed) from one thing to another, how unstable our place – and all because of the missing foundation of our existence, the lost ground of our origin, the broken link with our land and our past” (Said 1986, 26).

When one thinks of the imagined geographies of India, sometimes, Dharamsala and Macloed Ganj leave a lot to be desired. Instead of the hot, dusty landscape teeming with people which forms my imagined geography of India, invariably I find myself on the pine-covered ridges above the town of Dharamsala, standing in the rain and wandering through the muddy main streets of the smaller village of Macloed Ganj. While they bustle with activity, a two minute walk will find you walking through the forests and streams that run down the steep slopes to the Kangra valley below. In many ways, this reflects the diversity of the South Asian environment, but at the same time, Dharamsala and Macloed Ganj occupy a different place in my mental landscape. My research diary on this trip records my feelings adequately. It had not started well, with the overnight trip from Delhi on a rickety bus that needed to be push-started by the passengers only the beginning of my problems. Due to a ticketing mistake, which I still don't quite understand, I found my seat was in the driver's cabin, directly above the hot and noisy gearbox casing which threatened to melt the soles of my shoes and my belongings. The Tibetan family crammed in with me proceed to fall asleep on me, with a small child dribbling on my leg, while the Indian driver simply laughed at me and my predicament. Indeed, so sorry did he feel for me, that as the only two people who had been awake all night, he made it his special job to try and get me to drink chai with him on his occasional tea stops. While this made me remember some of the great pleasures of travelling through South Asia, by the time the bus rattled up the narrow roads to Macloed Ganj, the journey had made me a particularly tired and unhappy person on the morning of the 4th of March 2007. When I eventually found an overpriced room (most rooms had been taken in this height of pilgrimage season when the Dalai Lama gives his annual spring teachings), I found myself on a bright, sunny morning eating breakfast on the roof of my hotel, with kites and buzzards gliding on thermals above and the Kangra valley

*and plains of India stretched out below, I felt able to relax for what seemed like the first time in days. Then, I wrote that “the madness of Delhi and the bus journey seem to pale already now that I’m actually **here**”³⁰.*

However, memories of Macloed Ganj as wet and cold were swiftly reaffirmed when it rained heavily for the next four days. I’m sure I’ve read somewhere that Dharamsala advertises itself as the second wettest place in the world, and as I got drenched walking along with the other protesters on the 10th of March, the anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan (or Lhasa) uprising, I didn’t feel very much like I was in India at all. But at the same time, I didn’t feel like I was in Tibet either. Never having been there, the Tibet of my imagination remained one of snow capped hills, grassy or barren plains and yaks, despite the fact I knew this was a stereotype at best. Here, despite the presence of the Tibetan style temple on the main street and the prayer flags strung between buildings was a hybrid space, with the last remains of the British colonial hill station³¹ still present in the name and the Christian church and a few colonial bungalows still sitting on the hillside. Indian-style buildings and shop signs are visible all around, and Tibetan cultural symbols seem to sit upon this landscape as the latest layer of its history expands and occupies the spaces around us.

Dibyesh Anand argues that Dharamsala is primarily projected through one specific set of ideas, that of Dharamsala as ‘Little Lhasa’;

“It is thus not surprising that Dharamsala is projected as the Little Lhasa in India, and several dynamics support such a depiction. Not only is this the residence of the Dalai Lama and (therefore) a place of pilgrimage for many Tibetans and non-Tibetan Buddhists, but it is also the focus for the individual, communal, and institutional practices of Tibetan culture. Earlier pilgrims used to visit Lhasa, which for them was a source of refuge from the everydayness of life with hope of good in the next life. Now refugee status is itself seen as a sort of pilgrimage during which a *darshan* (sight) of the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala provides compensation for hardship.” (Anand, 2007, 116).

Thus, combined with the presence of the Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala and its surroundings provide a ‘centre’ around which Tibetan political life revolves. At its most basic level, ‘Dharamsala’ is a blanket term for the two settlements of Dharamsala, the

³⁰ Researchdocs/diaries/india/04/03/07.

³¹ In an example of the strange circularity of history, Sir Francis Younghusband’s parents owned one of these bungalows in Dharamsala in the mid-nineteenth century.

administrative capital of the Kangra District of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, and Macloed Ganj, a small hill station left over from the British colonial period which perches above Dharamsala on a ridge descending from the Dhauladar mountain range. Avedon's (1994) writing on this period sums up the general situation of the hill station at the time as an area that had fallen into decline after the removal of the colonial regime. The arrival of the Dalai Lama into a small house in what has become the *Tsuglukhang* temple complex in Macloed Ganj (see Figure 5.1) has created, as hinted at by Anand above, an economic stimulus to the region through tourism. In addition to bands of tourists seeking spiritual enlightenment, come tourists, from India and beyond, who are simply curious, combined with Tibetan and more general Buddhist pilgrims. Dharamsala, and more specifically Macloed Ganj, have become cosmopolitan centres which attract pro-Tibetan political activities throughout the year.

This cosmopolitanism is reflected through the makeup of the towns themselves, particularly Macloed (see Figure 5.2). Restaurants promoting Amdo-French cookery (promising a blend of the best of Tibetan food with the best in world cuisine) nestle next to esoteric, 'new age' practitioners. Bookshops catering to the tourist trade sit with the Indian owned handicraft emporiums. While many of these experiences can be replicated in the many areas across India (see Blunt 2005 for an account of a different, Anglo-Indian, community settlement in India, especially Ch. 4), the Tibetan influence and the presence of the reincarnation of the *Chenresig*, the *Bodhisattva* of Compassion, mark out the area as different. There are obvious statements of Tibetan nationality – Tibetan national flags, replete with their own symbology³² are outnumbered only by the Buddhist prayer flags that cover buildings. Like Lhasa, Macloed Ganj in particular is surrounded by monasteries³³. Rocks have been carved and painted to become *mani* stones, covered in Tibetan Buddhist mantras so that the prayers become part of the very landscape itself (see Figure 5.3).

³² The flag contains, amongst other things, six bands of red for the six tribes of Tibet, six bands of blue to represent the clear blue skies above the Tibetan plateau, and a variety of specifically Tibetan Buddhist symbols.

³³ Unlike Lhasa, these are not exile recreations of Sera, Ganden and Drepung, the ancient seats of conservative monastic power that surrounded the Tibetan city. These have been rebuilt in other settlements across South Asia in an attempt to create Dharamsala as a secular seat of power for the CTA.



Figure 5.1: The Tsuglukhang, or central Temple, sitting in a courtyard of the residence of the Dalai Lama (Author's Own, March 2007)

It is therefore unsurprising that one finds Tibetan political posters and nationalist rhetoric written deep into the life of the area. The Central Tibetan Administration buildings sit halfway down the hill, between Dharamsala and Macloed Ganj itself. In these buildings are the Offices of most of the administration, but also the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, which has the specific goal of preserving Tibetan culture in exile³⁴. TIPA, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, and the *Norbulingka* Institute, dedicated to preserving Tibetan crafts and arts, have similar goals. Posters and billboards call for, amongst other things, the release of the Panchen Lama ('The World's Youngest Political Prisoner') in English and Hindi (see Figure 5.4). Thus, the Dharamsala area becomes an arena for a particular construction of what it is to be Tibetan. Implicit in this construction is a privileging of Tibetan Buddhism as the unique cultural heritage of Tibet in exile. The *Norbulingka*

³⁴ "Once safe in India, many of these sacred books were presented as gifts to the Dalai Lama. In order to preserve them, His Holiness conceived of and founded the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives." (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, N.D.).



Figure 5.2: Street Scene, Macloed Ganj. Tibetan-style Temple sits amongst retail outlets (Author's Own, March 2007)

Institute in particular trains people in the production of artefacts like *Thangkas*³⁵ and Buddhist statues.

These connections create a blurring between purely 'nationalist' projects and those that are political. The anniversary of the 1959 Lhasa Uprising on 10th March is a case in point. This begins with a ceremony in the Tsuglukhang Temple (see Fig. 5.1). In 2007, surrounded by monastic and lay dignitaries, together with sympathetic members of the Indian Parliament (or *Lok Sabha*), the Dalai Lama gave a carefully worded statement³⁶ on how talks with Chinese officials aimed at a resolution of the Tibet Issue had both made progress and suffered setbacks in the previous year. Despite the conciliatory tone of the speech (Gyatso 2007), this official segment of the anniversary was swiftly followed by a more overt and antagonistic nationalism. Organised by the Tibetan NGOs and TSGs in the area, a march of an estimated 5,000³⁷ Tibetan exiles and their supporters moved down the hill,

³⁵ Painted hangings incorporating Buddhist themes, most typically a representation of one of Tibetan Buddhism's *bodhisattvas* or a Buddhist Mandala.

³⁶ Available at http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=d_tnud&rmenuid=1 (Accessed 16/10/07).

³⁷ Estimate by a Tibetan NGO in Dharamsala – see interview ResearchDocs/India/Dharam04.



Figure 5.3: 'Om Mani Padme Hum', the Mantra of Chenresig, carved into hillside boulders, Macloed Ganj (Author's Own, March 2007)

from directly outside the Tsuglukhang towards the centre of Dharamsala. Directly outside the Tsuglukhang was a scene of pandemonium, as people were crammed into the narrow road. It took around twenty minutes to move the 150 yards from the exit of the temple onto the road from Macloed Ganj to Dharamsala. Groups of young Tibetans daubed the Tibetan flag onto their faces, a common practice amongst demonstrations. This seemingly harmless expression of national pride is (so I have had whispered to me) also deployed as a means of hiding one's identity. Many young Tibetans in exile have family still inside Tibet, and face painting provides an effective means of hiding one's identity to protect those who remain in Tibet from recriminations.

Trucks full of similarly dressed young people from groups like the Tibet Youth Congress, the most militant and outspoken of the many Tibetan NGOs, led chants by loudspeaker. Crammed into the backs of these trucks, they present a curious parallel to images of imprisoned Tibetans being paraded around the streets of Lhasa by the Chinese authorities after the riots/protests of the late 1980s.

TIBET'S STOLEN CHILD - The 11th PANCHEN LAMA GEDHUN CHOEKYI NYIMA

THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST POLITICAL PRISONER

- HE WAS BORN ON APRIL 1989
- MAY 14, 1985, HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA OFFICIALLY PROCLAIMED HIM AS THE REINCARNATION OF THE 10th PANCHEN LAMA
- MAY 17, 1985, HE & HIS PARENTS DISAPPEARED FROM THEIR HOME AFTER BEING TAKEN INTO CHINESE CUSTODY.
- MAY 28, 1986, CHINA ADMITTED TO HAVE THE CUSTODY OF THE YOUNG BOY AND HIS PARENTS.
- HE IS DEPRIVED OF HIS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & TRADITIONAL UPBRINGING ESSENTIAL AT THIS AGE.
- HIS SAFETY AND FUTURE REMAIN A MAJOR CONCERN
- HE IS CONSIDERED AS THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST POLITICAL PRISONER
- CHINA FAILS TO PUBLICLY DECLARE THE BOY WHEREABOUTS DESPITE INTERNATIONAL APPEALS.

THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST POLITICAL PRISONER (TWA) AT AGE 6 IS NOW 6 YEARS OLD & STILL MISSING. HE TURNED SIXTEEN ON 15th APRIL 2005. THE SEARCH FOR THE PANCHEN LAMA WILL NOT STOP. GLOBAL CONCERN & CAMPAIGNS ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE PANCHEN LAMA'S FREEDOM. TWA APPEALS TO INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATION, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO BELIEVE IN TRUTH AND FREEDOM TO JOIN US IN OUR SEARCH.

TWA DECLARED THE YEAR 2005, AS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE PANCHEN LAMA.

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN EXPRESSING YOUR SUPPORT FOR HIS RELEASE.

TAKE PART IN TWA'S FREE PANCHEN LAMA CAMPAIGN

- WRITE ABOUT PANCHEN LAMA | TALK ABOUT PANCHEN LAMA |
- THINK ABOUT PANCHEN LAMA | ASK ABOUT PANCHEN LAMA |

TOGETHER, WE CAN SECURE HIS FREEDOM

- फेदन लामा का जन्म २४ अप्रैल १९८९ को हुआ था।
- १४ मई १९८५ को फेदन युवनीय धर्मगुरु दलाई लामा ने गेधुन चोयकी नीमा को दसवें फेदन लामा के रूप में घोषित किया था
- १६ मई १९८५ को गेधुन चोयकी नीमा व उनका परिवार दल लै-गाम-रत-अ-रत-रै
- १८ मई १९८६ को चीनी अधिकारियों ने यह तर्क दिया कि वास्तव में (फेदन लामा) व उनका परिवार चीन की सुरक्षा में है।
- फेदन लामा को दलाई लामा की छत्र-छाया में रखने वाली शास्त्रीय शिक्षा से वंचित रखा गया है।
- फेदन लामा की सुरक्षा एवं अभिव्यक्ति सम्बन्धित विचारों के लिये गंभीर शिंका का विषय है।
- फेदन लामा विश्व के सबसे कम उम्र के राजनैतिक कैदी है।
- चीन सम्बन्धित विचारों की अपीलों के बावजूद फेदन लामा के बारे में कुछ भी बताने से छुपची साधे हुये हैं।



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विश्व के सबसे छोटे राजनीतिक कैदी जो ६ वर्ष की आयु में कैद कर लिए गए थे आज १५ वर्ष के हो चुके हैं २५ अप्रैल २००५ को १६ वर्ष के हो जायेंगे। फेदन लामा की खोज की गहन अभी समाप्त नहीं हुई है। फेदन लामा की स्वतन्त्रता को लेकर समस्त विश्व समुदाय चिन्ता है तथा अपने-अपने स्तर पर सहित चला रहा है। तिब्बती महिला संस्था प्रत्येक व्यक्ति, संगठन, एवं सरकारी अधिकारियों से जो सत्य एवं व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता में विस्वास रखता है अपील करती है कि वे हमारे साथ कच्चे से कच्चा मिलान कर हमारे खोज में सहायता करें।

सन् २००५ को तिब्बती महिला संस्था अन्तरराष्ट्रीय फेदन लामा रीष के रूप में घोषित करती है। हम आशा करते हैं कि उन्हें स्वतन्त्र कराने में हमारी मदद करें।

तिब्बती महिला संस्था के फेदन लामा की स्वतंत्रता अभियान में आएं।

- फेदन लामा के बारे में लिखें।
- फेदन लामा के बारे में बात करें।
- फेदन लामा के बारे में सोचें।
- फेदन लामा के बारे में पढ़ें।

Figure 5.4: 'The World's Youngest Political Prisoner' Billboard in Macloed Ganj (Author's Own, March 2007)

In contrast to the Lhasa images, where passive, shackled Tibetans stand in Chinese military vehicles and are displayed to the rest of the population to reinforce Han Chinese authority, 'Little Lhasa in India' sees young Tibetans packed into the back of an aged van. They scream and shout, expressing their support for the Dalai Lama, and their hatred for the Chinese regime that they see as occupying their country. Surrounded by other supporters, they lead the call-and-response chants, 'Long Live – Dalai Lama' 'What do we want? - Free Tibet!', galvanising marchers as the rain and wind batter them in the long, two and a half hour trek down the hillside. Small groups of Tibetans, predominantly young men, took this display even further – wearing torn clothes stained red in imitation of the bloodied clothing of political prisoners who had allegedly been tortured during their detention in Tibet.

This march, despite the large turnout, was overwhelmingly attended by younger Tibetans. Later, activists told me that this was mainly due to the poor weather, and older Tibetans had not wanted to walk the long distance in such weather³⁸. However, it is also symptomatic of what has been described elsewhere (Norbu 2003; Tethong 2003) as the

³⁸ See Researchdocs/Interviews/India/Dharam04.

split between old and young in the Tibet Movement. This, it is generally argued, is a result of the increasing democratisation of Tibetan society, where the education policies of the GiE have increased the younger generation of Tibetans' knowledge of concepts like 'Human Rights' and 'Civil Society'. This is seen as developing a younger generation of Tibetans who are more willing to question the Dalai Lama and, in particular, the Middle Way Policy directly associated with him. Thus, young Tibetans are more willing to express a commitment to nothing short of an independent Tibet. This gives rise to split in ideology between NGOs like the Tibetan Youth Congress, and the GiE. Thus, nationalism in practice becomes, for the GiE, about preserving Tibetan culture and a 'correct' version of it, while for groups like the TYC, it becomes about promoting a difference to China and agitating for Tibetan Independence. This obviously begins to blur boundaries between nationalism and activism (which will be covered in the next chapter).

However, despite this ideological split on the aims of the Tibet Movement and its nationalist project, the actual practice of this split is harder to define. The TYC, despite its name, has no age-based barriers to entry of any kind, as Sherab Woesser, International Relations Secretary of the TYC Central Office in Dharamsala explained:

“... although it is called the Tibetan Youth Congress it is not an organisation of the youth. Although we are compelled to call ourselves NGOs, we strongly believe we are not just an NGO or organisation. We are a movement for the freedom struggle of Tibet, and although it might sound a bit feebish sitting on a comfortable chair and talking about a freedom movement when really this is a place where elected people come, through meetings, through discussions, where people really pour out their hearts, where people really feel, where people really are confident that they and their friends and their families can sacrifice everything for Tibet. So of course, uh, when you come in the Tibetan Youth Congress, you realise the weight that this office holds, and so, because it is a movement for the Tibetan Freedom Struggle, it is not limited to just age. The recent working committee that we had in Mussoorie in August, we had the opportunity to meet a certain representative from Ladakh, [from] Leh, and, the person was 78 years old – [he was] still a member of the Tibet Youth Congress, and still a regional committee member of the Youth Congress. He had been a member since the inception of the TYC, and was still going very

strong and he still maintained that until there is freedom for Tibet, he would continue to work.”³⁹

This view was seemingly confirmed speaking to another activist in Macloed Ganj, Tenzin Choeying of Students for a Free Tibet’s regional branch:

“AD - I was speaking to someone on 10th March, on the walk, and I was saying, everyone here is young, or under the age of thirty, it was rare that you saw someone over the age of thirty, and he said, ‘Yes, all the older people like to think that the *Dharma*⁴⁰ will, help solve the problem, and they don’t want to do active things, or protests and things like that, they’d rather do *Kora*⁴¹, or whatever they think is best. So, not asking you about the religious side of things, but do you think that there is an age gap in terms of the younger people want more-

TC – I don’t think so, because after my experience with elderly peoples [sic], what I have realised is, it is between people who have a more broad vision, and who have less vision. Even among older groups I have seen lots of people who really, can, when we talk, they always encourage us. But then there are lots of older people who have not seen the world view, who have not been very much educated [sic], it’s about more or less, a shorter vision and a broader vision. I think it’s not about religious, or about youngsters and old people, that’s how many, many people, you know, these days, observe us.”⁴²

Thus, to Choeying, the situation is more subtle than accounts suggesting older generations of Tibetans are less strident in calling for Tibetan independence. Instead, a number of differing influences interconnect to foster an individual’s relation to the concept of Tibetan nationalism and independence. Education and exposure to different ideas broaden someone’s worldview to increase their involvement within the movement. Those who have experienced the world and who attempt to understand it more are seen to be more committed to the project of Tibetan Freedom.

³⁹ ResearchDocs/Interviews/India/Dharam01.

⁴⁰ Buddhist Scripture/Practice – one of the three ‘jewels’ of Buddhism, together with the Buddha and the monastic community, or Sangha.

⁴¹ Tibetan Buddhist ritual circumambulation of holy sites.

⁴² ResearchDocs/Interviews/India/Dharam04.

It is here again that the various projects of the Tibetan GiE come into practice (Bernstorff and von Welck 2003a). The establishment of the Tibetan Children's Villages (Pema 2003) and other educational institutions give a degree of control and centralisation to the education of Tibetans. This conforms to the relatively normal practice of states using education to normalise certain procedures and indoctrinate new generations into a nationalist project (Paasi 1998). Indeed, the GiE actively promotes the idea of a particular, bounded geographical notion of Tibet. The administrative boundaries of today's Tibet Autonomous Region roughly conform to the Tibetan region of *Ü-Tsang*, the central region (or *Cholka*) of Tibet. The outer regions of *Kham* and *Amdo*, which each have their own distinct cultural practices, are subsumed within the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. However, in order to establish a pan-Tibetan identity in exile, Tibetans in exile are still assigned a home region to which they belong. Thus, while Tibet as the three regions did not exist as a functioning administrative entity due to the Lhasa government's inability to extend its sovereignty much beyond *Ü-Tsang*, in exile this larger Tibet is held together through a series of administrative practices designed to maintain pan-Tibetan identity. The links to the governmentality of Foucault here are clear, with disparate Tibetans being sorted under a series of umbrella units in order that they can be categorised and ordered to suit the nationalist project. This practice of 'sorting' a population into its constituent parts is an effective overcoding of a population, and echoes the serialities of Anderson, where people *become* both Tibetan and *Khampa* or *Amdowa* depending on their place residence within Tibet. This continues with Tibetans born in exile, who are assigned the same category as their parents in order to continue this connection with the homeland. Thus, direct experience of living in Tibet is not a prerequisite of 'Tibetanness'. Ethnicity and lineage become relatively more important in designating oneself as 'exile'. However, these also give rise to racial and regional tensions persisting which existed in Tibet (for example, the perception that residents of *Ü-Tsang* felt superior to those from the other *cholkas*) through the Tibetan community (Kvaerne and Thargyal 1993).

Thus, the very nature of 'Dharamsala' creates and enforces a standardised Tibetan national identity. In many ways, it is characteristic of a traditional reading of a nationalist project. Tibet is represented through a variety of clear cultural emblems, from the Tibetan flag through to inscriptions on stones that make the landscape a hybrid of Tibetan and Himalayan identities. The placing of the elite level organisations such as the Government in Exile, together with Tibetan NGOs like the Tibetan Youth Congress's central office also act as particular centres of both exile political life, but also as a centre of circulation of what

the correct exile Tibetan identity is supposed to be. The long period of exile and the stability provided by the GiE and its measures to care for the exile community have meant that the Tibetan Diaspora has become 'one of the most successful in the world' (Bernstorff and von Welck 2003a). But, with the stability that these organisations have provided comes a homogeneity, even an attempted suspension, of time. Tibet in exile has chosen certain cultural practices as representative of pan-Tibetan identity. This is an attempt to recreate a still and calm Tibetan identity which can be held in place permanently. The policies of the GiE therefore represent an attempt at the suspension of the Tibetan identity, preserving what is left after the destruction of much of Tibet's cultural history in the Cultural Revolution⁴³ in the hope that one day, when the Tibet Issue is resolved, this culture can be reimported, relatively untainted, back into Tibet once again. But, as Said's quote at the beginning of this section and the cosmopolitan cultures that have emerged in places like Macloed Ganj and Dharamsala show, the condition of exile creates ruptures and changes within any society. For the rest of this chapter, I move beyond these bounded and secure notions of Tibetan identity as it becomes visible in the rhetoric of organisations like the GiE and as it partially emerges through places like Dharamsala/Macloed Ganj to explore the 'actual' spaces of the Tibetan nation in heterogenous time and networked space as it emerged and as I experienced it through the sites of this research.

Hybridity, Liminality and Heterogeneity in Exile

"No-one back in Tibet would understand us – we speak Central [Ü-Tsang] Tibetan which has been modified by Hindi and English – if I went back to Tibet and started speaking like this, it would be very difficult"⁴⁴.

The above was said by an activist to me towards the end of my month of fieldwork in Dharamsala. Thus, even in this, one of the Indian epicentres of Tibetan life, the project of preserving a true, 'Tibetan' identity comes apart under scrutiny. Brah (1996) argues that diaspora are configured by relations of power both internal to a specific diaspora, and in relation to other diasporic formations. They are

"composite formations made up of journeys to different parts of the globe, each with its own history, its own particularities ... these multiple journeys

⁴³ The Cultural Revolution and alleged Tibetan complicity in the destruction of, amongst other things, Buddhist relics and monasteries, remains controversial. See Wang (2002) and Shakya (2002b).

⁴⁴ Researchdocs/Diaries/India.

may configure into one journey via a *confluence of narratives* as it is lived and re-lived.” (Brah 1996, 183, emphasis in original).

Thus, while Dharamsala forms one particular nodal point of stability and a particular zone of confluence in the creation of the Tibetan narrative of nationality, we must also accept that the travel done by this narrative, both to Northern India and beyond, creates different sets of particularities. Language, as shown above, is clearly one particular set of articulations of this travel, as dialects shift and change according to the spatial movement of people across the planet.

While conducting parts of this research with the Tibetan community in the UK, the confluence of narratives within the Tibet Movement was clearly visible through performances of traditional Tibetan culture – whether the celebration of the Dalai Lama’s birthday, or the performance of traditional dance routines. Instead, here I concentrate on the emergence of different types of Tibetan nationalistic practices, and focus on one particular instance in Central London.

The Forbidden Team – Football, Film and the Fundraising as constitutive of a liminal nationality

In June 2006, one of the UK’s largest Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) put on one of its regular fundraising events. This one took over the Institute of Contemporary Arts (the ICA), which, situated on The Mall in central London, is one of the most prestigious centres for the Arts in the UK. The fundraiser was a film screening of *The Forbidden Team*, a small piece of independent cinema by two Danish directors who completed the project as part of their studies. The film follows the journey of the Tibetan National Football Team, from initial beginnings at team selection tournaments across South Asia, through various problems encountered in training, travelling and in finding a suitable international team to play. The screening of the film was preceded by a ceremony by two Tibetan monks who blessed the assembled audience and afterwards was followed by a question and answer session with a panel comprised of a member of the Campaigns Team of the TSG, a high level member of the international sportswear brand who sponsored the Tibetan National Team, one of the two directors, and the Danish individual who was first inspired to ‘create’ the Tibetan National Team. After this ‘formal’ element of the fundraiser, there was a social event after in the bar/café area of the ICA, which involved performance of contemporary Tibetan

music by a DJ together with merchandise sales from the TSG and a slideshow of 'Tibetan' images.

The event in question represented one site in a particular network that had emerged around the Tibetan National team. This section of the chapter explores the ways in which Tibetan Nationalism and the politics of this were mobilised around the event, within the film itself, and how the themes and issues generated by the Tibetan national football team have continued to resonate in unlikely ways as the research has continued. It begins by exploring how the film itself fits into a 'politics of football', before going on to explore the event itself and the continuing reverberations that the Tibetan National Team has in the Tibet movement.

The Film and Football: Enacting, reproducing and stretching the Tibetan Nation

The Forbidden Team is presented as a chronological exploration of the emergence of the Tibetan National Football team. The title refers to the fact that as Tibet is not internationally recognised as a separate entity to Tibet, it is not allowed by the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA), the world governing body of association football, to participate in any of its tournaments. Thus, it is effectively excluded from the majority of 'International' football competitions. The film begins showing the selection process of the team, with a number of trials throughout Tibetan settlements in South Asia.

The focus then shifts to Dharamsala, where the team is trained by a Danish coach. In the meantime, team management tries to organise a friendly match against another similar 'non-nation', and given the Danish connections manages to organise a game against Greenland in Copenhagen. This then means that the management has to try to organise travel documents for the team members. According to the film, this then proves problematic, with layers of bureaucracy meaning that some members of the team are left in India as they cannot get the requisite Indian travel documents in time.

The final stages of the film are concerned with the build up to the match in Denmark. Here, the Chinese Government becomes involved, as it tries to put diplomatic pressure on the Danish and Greenlandic Government.⁴⁵ This is resolved by the original Danish organiser

⁴⁵ This pressure was applied in economic terms, and manifested itself in shrimp exports. One of Greenland's major exports is of shrimp to China. According to individuals at the fundraiser, it was implied by the Chinese that upcoming trade negotiations over the shrimp trade could be viewed unfavourably for Greenland if the game went ahead.

visiting the Chinese embassy in Denmark and arguing a counter point which is not elaborated in the film. The final scenes of the film show the match taking place in a small stadium in Copenhagen, with a grandstand full of Danish people waving Tibetan National Flags. Much pomp is accorded to the scoring of the first ever goal for Tibet during the course of the match, but the eventual outcome is Tibet being somewhat outclassed and losing by 4 goals to 1. A final, fairly comical, scene shows the directors handing the Dalai Lama his own Tibetan National Football Shirt.

Throughout the film itself, there are numerous references by many of the participants to how 'political' the Tibetan National Team is. The team's Tibetan manager states on numerous occasions that the football team has 'nothing to do with politics', instead, expressing the ability to play football as being about being free to do what one wants. However, it is of course impossible to extract the game and the creation of an explicitly Tibetan team from a nationalist discourse. Football has long been recognised as having a complex relationship with politics, and more specifically nations and states (Duke and Crolley 1996; Wagg 1995). However, this relationship with nationalism is always situated and often comes with an emphasis on the 'tribal element' of supporting a football team (Hughson 2000). The nationalist element of supporting the team of one's nation is dealt with relatively unproblematically – the football nation coincides with the bounded nation-state in most cases. Duke and Crolley (1996) touch on the problem of boundaries in examining how, in Spain, Catalan nationalism has played out in different ways to Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish nationalisms in the UK. At a 'club' level teams can cross national borders, for instance, at the time of writing, Berwick Ranger's headquarters were in England, but the team played in the Scottish league. But, overall, the issue of national boundaries in football is left relatively unexplored.

More recently, Lechner (2007) has attempted to examine the influences of globalisation on the creation of a specifically 'Dutch' national identity. To him, the creation of a myth around a specific style of football that is said to represent a country's characteristics (and therefore sustain its imagined community) both fits the national team into global patterns of established international norms, but also sets up barriers by excluding 'non-Dutch' ways of playing football. However, this myth is exactly that, a myth, and he argues for a more reflexive and fluid account of football as it has become increasingly 'global'. Of course, it would seem to be jumping the gun to be arguing for a specifically 'Tibetan' style of football, but there is a clear circuit of representing 'Tibet' at work throughout both the film and the

team in general; players are shown meditating and incorporating aspects of Tibetan Buddhism into their ethos – at one point the team manager claims the winning is not important, it is getting better that counts, thus discounting the competitive aspects of sport and promoting more personal goals of attainment and improvement common to Buddhist practice (see also GlobalGame 2004a). In addition, the association of more mundane objects like the team’s kit or uniform with symbols that are uniquely ‘Tibetan’ such as a Tibetan Flag, a snow lion badge and even the colours⁴⁶ of the kit become important in the maintenance of ‘Tibet’. Thus, the football team enacting certain representations of Tibet brings about solidification of a specific Tibetan National identity.

But the ‘global’ elements of this ‘Tibetan’ sports team are hard to ignore as well. The initial impetus for the creation of the Tibetan National team is generally credited to one Danish individual, who freely admits that his desire to create the Team was down to a dream he had whilst in Tibet. This gives a seemingly mystical element to the creation of the team, but more importantly removes a degree of agency away from the Tibetan people themselves. Thus, rather than any desire by Tibetans for a national team to foster unity amongst the exile community, the seeming ‘outside’ influence of one Danish individual seems to carry more weight and thus begins the process of building the team. Thus, from its inception, football is not, nor has ever been⁴⁷, something that Tibetans can claim ownership of. Throughout the film, this Danish presence remains a constant. The coach of the team is Danish, and the filmmakers are obviously Danish too. This influence would seem to extend to who the team plays as well, with the semi-colonial relationship of Greenland to Denmark allowing a match to be arranged between the two ‘non-nations’, notwithstanding the fact that the first game Tibet plays is in Copenhagen. The threatened trade dispute over the match (see note 45, p. 132) would seemingly stretch this network to the seas off Greenland and incorporates the political economy of international fish trading.

A further complication to this network that is made explicit in the film is the Government of India. The requirement of Tibetans who wish to travel outside India is based around a system of travel documents, which, while not passports, act as much the same, but

⁴⁶ The original colours of the kit were red and blue, said by some to symbolise the original peoples of Tibet and the clear blue skies of the Tibetan plateau, as per the Tibetan flag. However, other sources have informally said that the kit was simply a copy of FC Barcelona’s kit, a team that is popular amongst the exile community, blurring the boundaries of the team’s ‘Tibetanness’ already.

⁴⁷ It should be noted here the football in Tibet was largely imported by British soldiers during the 1903-04 Younghusband Expedition, and was played by troops stationed at trading missions in southern *Ü-Tsang* province. So, while football has proved popular amongst Tibetans, its origins are distinctly colonial (McKay 1997, 2001).

explicitly show the Tibetans as refugees in India and not Indian nationals. They are therefore markers of Tibetan identity in exile, maintaining the difference between Tibetans and Indians within the borders of the Indian state and beyond. However, it is a notably drawn out and difficult procedure to go through the diplomatic channels to obtain one of these documents and, secondly, to ensure, once the documents are granted, that the state receiving the Tibetan in question will actually allow this to happen. The circuits of belonging and differentiation that are created through this material procedure are shown, but not necessarily examined in any depth within the film. Rather, the bureaucratic wrangling is shown as members of the team's management attempt to get all the members of the team the correct documents and notify the Danish embassy in Delhi of the individuals who are intending to travel. In the event, some members, for reasons left unspecified, are not allowed travel documents or do not receive them in time for them to take part in the game.

As a result, there is already a process of marginalisation of Tibetans at work here, with Tibetan exiles granted less freedom of movement than 'regular' citizens of a given nation. However, despite the problems that the ownership of an 'Indian Travel Document' creates for an individual Tibetan, it is still important as a marker of separation and maintenance of a distinct 'Tibetan' identity. This practice extends beyond the instances of the football match mentioned. Tibetans who form part of the diasporic community all have to face similar problems, as the following conversation from a later period of ethnographic work with a TSG in London highlights:

“Volunteer – So were you born in Tibet?

Tibetan– No, North India, so actually I'm Indian!

AD – So do you have Indian nationality then?

T – No, I have Indian Travel documents.

Colleague – So is that like a passport?

T – Well, yes, but not many countries recognise them. So for example, I was in Berlin for a meeting last month, and when I was going through passport control, it was at a very small airport, and there were only three or four customs officials, and they all had a look at the documents, none had seen them before, occasionally they'd just laugh at them, you know, when everyone else had gone through the queue, all four of them were just passing them round looking at them – it was amazing for them I think. I just stood there, I'm used to these things now, so I just sat down

and waited for them to finish. After about half an hour, I think they'd phoned the embassy or something, but they stamped them and let me through. I was lucky though, because I had some [Tibetan] friends who'd gone previously and who'd had the same problems and they told me it would take some time, and so I was able to plan for it – if I was in a rush I would have started to panic about the hotels and getting everything ready on time.

C – So how does all that affect you here?

T – Well, it's fine here, because I have residency. I've lived here since '82, and have had residency since '94, so 12 years now. I could actually apply for citizenship!

C – So why don't you do that, wouldn't it make your life easier?

T – I don't want to be British! Why would I want to do that! (Laughs).⁴⁸

Thus, while the Tibetan in question here is fully aware of the problems and difficulties of 'being Tibetan', which hinder his work as a Tibetan activist, he still finds these relatively unimportant compared to the perceived importance of being Tibetan and the symbolic importance of the Travel Documents as a marker of his Tibetanness. However, this means that to those who wish to steadfastly remain Tibetan, one automatically becomes relatively disempowered compared to other residents of India. The subaltern, marginal status of the refugee is therefore maintained, even amongst those who are relatively affluent members of the diasporic community.

In addition, the site of the screening of the *Forbidden Team* is another site of particular relations to Tibet. While Tibetans were present at the screening, the location at what was the centre of British Imperial power, and the overwhelming presence of white, Euro-American individuals at the event meant that Tibet was again being produced through a set of relations where Tibetans were unwittingly marginalised as exotic 'others'. Tibetans were spoken for at the talk immediately after the screening by a variety of Europeans, and while Tibetans who were present were occasionally referred to or asked a question for clarification, Tibetan input was limited. Thus the film became the only 'Tibetan' voice, through the thoughts and ruminations of its characters/participants who were shown through the film. As a result, it is through screenings like this that the partial and fragmented imaginings of Tibet that were discussed in the last chapter emerge. Rather than

⁴⁸ Researchdocs/diaries/london.

thinking about them in abstract theoretical terms, it is through the relations fostered by events such as this screening that Tibet as a land of passivity is truly mobilised and produced.

However, to return to the production of the nation in the Tibetan national football team, what the above ideas about the involvement of 'others' in the production of 'Tibet' attempt to highlight is the fact that the nation is not necessarily constituted within the nation itself. It is the interaction of the nation at its boundaries with other different nations that is also crucial in the constitution of the nation. This liminal creation of the nation is important not simply because it creates a series of 'others' to define Tibetan identity against. The Tibetan national team, by borrowing from Danish ideas about sport (and presumably adopting some Danish football 'styles' in training), cooperating with Greenlandic expressions of difference to Denmark, and agreeing to work within a uniquely Indian system of individual representation creates a melange of different ideas used strategically as and where necessary in order to continue the idea that Tibet in exile is a coherent community that actually exists in a material world. While this section has focussed on *The Forbidden Team* as a film, a film screening and the associated representations of Tibet that can be drawn from this, the next section seeks to expand the Tibetan National Team outside the film and look at the ways in which the impact of a national football team continues to resonate in the oppositional politics of Tibet.

Tibetan Football through the Network

From the previous sections, we already have a picture of Tibetan nationalism being produced in hybrid and heterogenous ways in the various sites it is encountered in. This section attempts to uncover some of the ways that the research has encountered the Tibetan National football team outside of the *Forbidden Team* screening itself. Already in the section above, it has become clear that much of the film cannot be cleanly extracted from other elements of Tibetan, and indeed global, society,⁴⁹ whether it is through the production and movements of documents through space that relate to the everyday life of a diasporic exile, or the repeated performance and signification of particular practices that are seen as 'Tibetan' both within and without the confines of the film itself. However, what this section sets out to explore are the ways in which the Tibetan National team has moved outside the representation of it that the film portrays. This to some degree is both an

⁴⁹ This is of course predicated on there being such a thing as 'society' to begin with, given Actor Network Theory's arguments to the contrary (Latour 2005).

intensification and extensification of both the space and time of the Tibetan National Team. Firstly, it tries to look at how the Tibetan National Team has tried to establish and ground itself in order to become a solid part of the nation of Tibet. This is done through the establishment of a governing body, the Tibetan National Sports Association (TNSA), which acts for all sports, but is particularly focussed on the football team, but also in extending the boundaries of who the team interacts with, and thus it looks at the role of the FIFA Wild Cup, a world cup of alternative nations. Secondly, the ways that the notion of Tibetan Sports has recently become important in fomenting support for a current series of campaigns/protests around the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 is examined. Thus, this section seeks to try to understand how the nation of Tibet as produced through football is 'latched' onto other forms of political ritual in an attempt to promote one side of a discursive argument.

The TNSA emerged as the organisational wing of the Tibetan National Football team. While information about its formation is vague,⁵⁰ it is now the body which takes charge of organising the selection, training and fixtures of the Tibetan team, both for senior players and an under-13s' youth team. This emergent systematisation gives the team an organisational core that will allow for stability, and presumably longevity. Indeed, something not mentioned in *The Forbidden Team* is the role of the TNSA in organising the inaugural international match against Greenland – officially a Danish TSG, the Danish Tibetan Cultural Group, invited the Tibetan Team to play through contacting the TNSA. The organisation itself is based in Dharamsala, thus maintaining close spatial proximity to the centre of Tibet in exile and the links to international organisations based in the region.

In addition, this stability means that there is now a reference point for outside organisations to refer to, and it is through these emergent linkages that the TNSA can attach itself to other causes. Here, the largest 'movement' that 'Team Tibet', as it is increasingly known, has become involved in is FIFA, an organisation that promotes itself as the alternative to FIFA, playing matches between nations without states. This led to the 2006 FIFA Wild Cup. Played in Germany before the 'official' FIFA World Cup, this 6 nation tournament involved Tibet playing games alongside the likes of Northern Cyprus, Zanzibar and Gibraltar. While this attracted press attention (Hawley 2006), what I want to argue is that rather than spreading awareness of Tibet, what is more important here is the tying in of Tibet to other struggles. The Wild Cup was organised along similar lines to a professional

⁵⁰ See www.tnsa.info for details (accessed 17/10/08).

tournament, with draws of teams placing them into particular groups, the top two teams from a group moving on to a knockout semi-final and final.⁵¹ This semi-professional organisation created a system whereby these ‘non-nations’ were granted a degree of legitimacy, if only amongst themselves. By playing in such tournaments, Tibet is seemingly moved into a relationship of semi-solidarity with these other nations – playing them recognises each team’s various attempts to become more integrated with other networks that are seemingly subaltern to conventional ‘internationalist’ narratives of football as a global sport. As a result, new connections are played out across these alternative networks, which help to maintain Tibet as an issue that is of international importance, albeit an alternative, almost invisible, form of international struggle.

To turn to the second issue, that of ‘Team Tibet’ as campaign material. This section of the chapter emerges from time spent in Dharamsala. Here, while there were a number of political protests taking place to mark the anniversary of the Lhasa Uprising in 1959, there were also a number of other meetings taking place to discuss plans for future protests. One of these was directly concerned with the plans for protests related to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Here much of the talk was about linking themes like Human Rights and individual freedom of expression (and, by extension, the presumed lack of them in China) to the Olympics, and thinking up possible strategies to get as much attention as possible for the protests themselves. As a result, it was mentioned at these meetings and in some documents that *The Forbidden Team* could and should be used as a means of attracting people to the Tibetan cause. People at the meetings spoke of how ‘inspiring’ and ‘amazing’ the story of the Tibetan Team was. One activist claimed that one of the speeches by a monk in the film was “so powerful, if everyone heard what he had to say and the way he put it, I mean everyone would be on our side, y’know?”⁵² As a result, *The Forbidden Team* became a campaigning tool used for political ends, which to some extent is something that the creators and participants did not intend – throughout the film and during the course of the fundraising event it was made clear that the Tibetan National Team was something that was not political, instead it was an expression of unity and freedom.

Of course, this is an area that is difficult to define clearly – where does an expression of independence start and the sporting team finish. But here the role of the film itself

⁵¹ Tibet failed to make the knockout stages, finishing bottom of their group having played the Republic of St Pauli (a district of Hamburg allowed non-nation status as it was the host of the tournament), losing 7-0, and Gibraltar, losing 5-0.

⁵² ResearchDocs/Diaries/India.

becomes important. Once the film had been created, it became a commodity and object that could be used independently of the wishes of both those who are in the film and those who created the film. So, in the first case, *The Forbidden Team* being shown at a fundraiser for a TSG is a political statement that at least one of the directors was willing to go along with given that he was in attendance as a speaker, and a few members of the 'cast' of the film were also present. The film is also advertised for sale on the TNSA website on the Indian budget VCD (Video Compact Disc) format. The film has been reviewed as being 'overtly political' (GlobalGame 2004b). The inclusion of it as an explicit means of promoting and garnering support for what eventually became in March 2008 some of the largest pro-Tibet protests for many years shifts 'the film' as an object and translates it across space in a similar way to Law's (1999) ideas about how objects and their uses alter and become *actants* of their own. Thus, by shifting the focus from Tibetan football and the nation as represented through the film to the movement and engagement of the film with other strands of Tibetan politics, some of the threads and tangles of this oppositional politics become clearer and more defined.

This was marked by a broadening of 'Team Tibet' into a separate campaigning tool⁵³ that would attempt to both create a team of athletes willing to compete for Tibet in the Olympics, but also to create a team of celebrities, former athletes and other notables who would be willing to speak out for Tibet while the Olympics were in progress. As a result, the following statements are already being put forward:

"They want to march into the Olympic stadium with their flag raised along with the athletes from the other nations at the opening of Beijing Games on August 8, 2008. It is a greater vision of freedom for their country that gives them the strength to believe in his [sic] audacious mission.

In August 2008, the eyes of the world will be on China when it hosts the 2008 Olympic [sic] Games. The Games are supposed to be a celebration of the power of sports to bring people together in peace to respect universal moral principles. Tibet and Tibetans have every right

⁵³ See www.teamtibet.org accessed 17/10/08.

to be a part of these celebrations, looking back on its long history as people, culture and nation.”⁵⁴

(www.supportteamtibet.org, accessed 21/06/07)

These statements continue to promote the idea that Tibet is a distinct nation. One of the Tibetan athletes wishing to compete for Tibet states “I want to proof [sic] Tibet as independent nation through sports” (*ibid.*). As a result, the production of Tibet in the run-up to the Olympics becomes easier to imagine as a process of unfolding potentialities. The Tibetan National Football team is obviously closely related to the series of ethno-symbolisms of Tibet itself, but by following the flow of ideas, knowledges, peoples and materials through space, the nation becomes less and less ‘bounded’ in the traditional sense. The Tibetan nation both rubs up against other nationalisms and constructs itself according to its needs – adopting football as a particular way to help create a set of practices that inform and construct boundaries – but the ‘nation as politics’ expands this arena of practice and relations still further. Rather than adopting and changing systems of representing the nation, the spaces of performing the nation shift ever outwards, with the nation becoming almost unsaid as practices of resistance to Chinese rule over Tibet emerge. In this particular case, it is here at this liminal space at the edges of what we could consider ‘the nation’ that human rights and talk of democracy become enfolded with the struggle for something like a Tibetan nation. Performing ‘Tibet’ is done not through an elite or a subaltern class who are attempting to impose their own standpoint on the rest of the nation. Instead, it is through this process of mixing and strategic political decision-making that the nation moves through space and can be stretched across the boundaries we typically associate with the nation – playing football in a foreign country, establishing ties with other ‘nations’ who share similar circumstances, combining the nation with other issues in order to widen and deepen one’s cause. These all represent different ways in which various networks that spread out from an event like the film screening at the ICA can be produced, enacted and maintained.

Conclusions

This chapter has reassessed some of the ways we think about the Tibetan nation. The multiple ways in which a symbolic nation is created and maintained (the ‘rags and patches’

⁵⁴ After the protests/riots of March 2008, the website has now been changed, stating that Team Tibet withdrew their attempts to participate in the Olympics in protest at the perceived response of the Chinese Government.

of Gellner) are bound to introduce complexities and many ideas about what a particular nation is experienced as by its subjects. However, most of work that has attempted to try and get at these processes has tended to treat particular 'places' as distinct entities in a broader space. Rather than treating the nation as something immutable, that is held together in 'homogenous time', I have applied postcolonial and networked thought to argue for a heterogenous and mutable reading of the nation. In this case I have shown how Dharamsala, as one particular place, is both constitutive of some stereotypical and staid representations of Tibet, but how this and other places are, at the same time, also productive of new and different arenas of interaction. Tibetan Football and its representation within a film have solidified certain aspects of the Tibetan identity, but have also introduced new elements and strands. The attachment, translation and practice of these themes in different arenas become part of the socio-political nature of the wider Tibetan struggle for independence. It thus becomes necessary to consider nationalism not as something that is produced in 'centres', where certain acts become important and are then dispersed to the wider population, but to create a wider understanding of how (in this case a political) nationalism travels, how it is picked up, adopted, adapted and manipulated to be productive of one side of an argument.

Chapter 6 – Activism, protests and the everyday: the networked politics of the Tibet Movement

“There’s many things you can do with a few clicks of a mouse.”⁵⁵

“I often say the pro-Tibet Movement is not just a ‘pro-Tibet’ movement – it is a pro-justice movement.”⁵⁶

Introduction

By now, we can see that the pro-Tibet Movement is bound up with a series of contested and often contradictory imaginaries. I have argued that in order to understand these ‘messy’ geographies of Tibet, we need to consider them in a networked and relational way. While politics has been very much on the agenda, the Tibet Movement and the increasingly contentious nature of the Tibet Issue have not been the direct focus of discussion. This chapter turns towards these overtly political areas, exploring the networks of activism and contentious politics that are mobilised through the Tibet Issue. It argues that Tibetan Activism is again productive of a series of networked relations that are present throughout the most mundane of tasks within the Movement. Thus, it examines ‘activism’ as more than simply the notion of being ‘on the street’, involved in protests or demonstrations (although these are important parts of the Movement). Instead, building on the ideas of co-implication and relationality that have been present in the last two chapters, it also examines the ways in which mundane, everyday activities such as the sending of a TSG’s mail are run through with networked relations, and without these relations, the Tibet Movement would cease to function. On one level, the chapter explores ways that activism is both a series of profile-building contentious political activities, and, at the same time a series of routine, in some cases unseen, power relations. On another, it argues that without a networked, relational understanding of contentious political action it is impossible to understand the Tibet Movement.

The chapter builds on a number of themes within contemporary geographical work on the nature of contentious politics within justice movements. It argues that debates around scale and the spatial extent and territorial intensiveness of political action are relationally networked. In particular, it examines the ways that thinking relationally about these

⁵⁵ ResearchDocs/Interviews/US/GV.

⁵⁶ Speech given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “Universal responsibility in the modern world”, London, 22nd May 2008.

connections can rework hierarchical and dominant relationships. The empirical core of the chapter attempts to unpick a dual set of processes. Firstly, there are a range of activities that are trying to create stability within the pro-Tibet Movement. These include the marking of specific days as 'traditional' for the Tibet struggle, but also more mundane practices of attempting to extract donations from people to fund particular Tibet Support Groups (TSGs). The second strand is concerned with fluidity and change. Lofland (1996) characterises Social Movement Organisations as "insurgent realities" and although the Tibet Movement and its associated activism are not exclusive to Social Movement-type organisations, the Tibet Movement is explicitly attempting to shape and alter its own idealised pro-Tibetan reality. In this, the ability to adapt and react to changing circumstances remains crucial. Activism remains the most likely arena for adaptation and innovation within this sphere, with the emergence of a more radical front in recent years led by the likes of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT).

This constant flux between fixity and movement inside the Movement is what this chapter will concentrate on. As much of this activism is carried out by TSGs and Tibetan NGOs, the chapter will, by way of a theoretical grounding, begin by considering how geographers and other social scientists have thought about the role of networks within contentious politics. In particular, I want to examine the ways in which they have developed ways of thinking about the spatiality of politics and political action.

Much of the literature on social movements concentrates on how transnational social movements are increasingly connected in a 'globalised' world (see, for example, della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht 1999; Tarrow 2005). Similarly authors have also considered how relations between different connections/nodes in a network are important in understanding the maintenance of Social Movements (see Diani 1992; Diani and McAdam 2003; Oleson 2004). Broadly speaking these all reflect a shift in understanding that begins to question how 'transnational' or 'global' these new societies actually are and how solidarities between these spatially differentiated social groups can work. While this is undoubtedly a valuable question to be thinking about, David Featherstone has recently argued that these theories do not adequately consider the importance of space within these networks and their connections (Featherstone 2008). Differences between different places and scales seem to be transcended in ways that are often partial and do not consider the complexities of how these movements of people and things are actually played out in both expected and unexpected ways (see Featherstone 2008, esp. Ch. 7).

This is not to say that there has not been a history in Geography and elsewhere of examining the power relations of domination and resistance that Social Movements and activists attempt to disrupt and alter to their advantage. For example, writers like Allen (2003a), Herod and Wright (2002), Hinchliffe (2000), Pile (1997), Sharp, Routledge, Philo and Paddison (2000a), Slater (1997) and Thrift (1997) have all written on how we can place power and its resistance within more contingent theoretical understandings.

Here, I want to use Tibet and pro-Tibet activists to consider how collective actions in one place have resonance with other actors and places. I argue that understanding how the diffusion of knowledge, ideas and practices are actually played out within and across space is important to understanding how politics works on a day-to-day basis. A first section will deal with fixity in the Tibet Movement, looking at a particular set of practices mainly, but not exclusively, within UK Tibet Support Groups that seek to cement relations within a network. This process is an attempt to tie explicitly both people and items to the Tibet Movement and thus give a greater structural stability. It is this stability that then helps to foster a second section on fluidity and innovation within the Tibet Movement. The establishment of connections between different transnational groups allows the building of innovative demonstrations and global days of action. This will be illustrated through an account of the events surrounding a day of protest to mark the start of the countdown to the Beijing 2008 Olympics. These moves open up ground for a more nuanced spatial understanding of relational politics of contestation, where space becomes neither fetishised as fluid and mutable, nor closed and rigid.

Spatially contentious politics – Space and Agency in politics today

To begin, we must first explore the underpinnings of the relationship between the Tibet Movement and activism. The politics of contestation, and in particular, the examination of people mobilising in support of particular issues, is not a new trend in social sciences. In geography, the emergence of a more radically oriented scholarship around the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s was most prominent in David Harvey's work in Baltimore, and the resultant growth in work on the themes of power, politics and activism within the social sciences has been unsurprising. While there are a number of streams within this broad scholarship that need to be identified and thought through in relation to the Tibet Movement as a particular expression of contentious politics, this section argues that adopting a networked approach to spatial politics of the Tibet Movement allows us to

understand the various sites of the Tibet Movement within a much wider and yet more detailed spatial environment than more typical social movement style studies would allow.

The geography of social movements is at present an issue undergoing some contestation within academia. The arguments surrounding the scale of political action discussed in the earlier chapter on networks, power and scale resonate with many of these ideas. There I argued that scalar understandings of political action need to be readdressed in the light of critiques by Marston, Jones and Woodward (2005) to understand why the site is more deeply affected and run through with interaction than scalar accounts would allow. While this approach is not unproblematic (for critiques, see Collinge 2006; Escobar 2007; Leitner and Miller 2007), these site-led understandings of relations of power offer a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which actors take part in political movements.

This has obvious effects on the ways in which we theorise social movements. While broad enough in its own right to include a number of sub-theories and disciplines, social movement theories incorporate a number of themes which are important to the Tibet Issue. The most obvious here is the development of so-called 'New Social Movements' (NSMs) since the 1960s. While associated with the rise of the New Left and a rejection of the economic/class based ideologies of earlier Marxist struggles, NSMs are also seen as the latest phase in what is a cyclical nature of political protests (della Porta and Diani 2006). Thus, rather than assuming that there is a changing global structure to politics (brought about by globalisation) we must also still pay attention to 'traditional' issues like class and anticolonial campaigning that remain of importance. In terms of the Tibet Movement, it becomes relatively easy to create an image of the Tibet Movement as a type of NSM – its goals are independence/autonomy for a region, and the mobilisation of the human rights based discourse has led to a different type of movement than the anti-colonial struggles of the immediate post-WW2 period (see Barnett 2001, for more here). However, class based issues are still important within the Tibet Movement. Work done within the Tibetan diasporic community has shown how elite level actors still function as such in exile (Houston and Wright 2003), and how certain behaviours are seen as 'correct' for Tibetans (Yeh 2007; Yeh and Lama 2005).

There has been a growing recognition within social movement theory that globalisation, in its general sense of the quickening and intensifying of spatially extensive relationships, has become increasingly important to understanding how political action takes place. The work done by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilley (2001), which emphasises the dynamic nature of

political action as an interconnected system of various actors and organisations is important here. More generally, material has engaged with the increasing spread and scale of activism in social movements in a number of ways. Reflecting a trend in social sciences, in the late 1990s a number of edited collections (Cohen and Rai 2000; della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht 1999) began to examine transnational connections within social movements. These recognised that the growing quantity and intensity of transnational connections was allowing for a reshaping of the contemporary political sphere. While I agree that currently we are seeing an increase in the intensity of relations between political actors under globalisation, I see these transnational connections as nothing particularly new. Jones and Phillips (2005) have argued effectively that the politics of imperialism have long existed, and resistant transnational political identities have been highlighted by Lambert (2005), Lester (2001) and Featherstone (2008) – solidarity and political action across international borders has a long history. The present period is both representative of an increase in the number and intensity of these relations, but this increase in relational connectivity also necessarily means that new and different forms of political activity emerge.

Indeed, what seems to unite most of these struggles is who the struggle is against – most often neoliberal globalisation – rather than any particular newness of struggle. Rather, it is a continuation of old struggles (Shukaitis, Graeber and Biddle 2007). This does not preclude an ability to employ social movement-led ideas to the Tibet Movement. Instead, problems of power, scale and spatiality are present in most social movement theory writing. The first of these problems is the presence of resource mobilisation as a means of establishing power within a relationship. Here, to put it simply, power is equated with the amount of resources one is able to gather and thus objects and people become imbued with an amount of power from this. Allen's account of power as immanent and spatially diffuse neatly shows how these understandings of resistance as a form of resource claiming cannot fully understand the nature of power relations (Allen 2003a). Obviously, resources do form a part of the matrix of relations occurring within a political movement, but we must refrain from overemphasising the potential of resources to *perform* an action. Thus, this chapter looks at the ways in which human and non-human actors become part of the matrices of power and contestation and, crucially, it is their *relations* that determine how successful these networks eventually are.

Some more pressing problems with some of social movement theories ideas about transnational political activities emerge when we consider some of the ideas of Sidney

Tarrow. Together with Doug Imig (1999), Tarrow argued that claiming of political territory by a social movement becomes increasingly hard at transnational and global levels of interaction. The argument is broadly similar to militant particularisms, with increasing complexity and distance from the initial political claim having a negative effect on any forms of activity that encourage incorporation into the movement. In his *The New Transnational Activism* (2005), he attempts to understand the expansion of ideas within a movement by promoting what he terms 'scale shifting'. While diffusion of movements provides a way of explaining the spatial extensity of a social movement, Tarrow argues that in order to move 'up' a hierarchical level of organisation (i.e. from the local to the global) social movements need to enact a series of performances by agents. Thus, while transnational movements can spread through diffusion of their networks across space, they can also, by brokering and negotiating, incorporate new claims and claimants:

“Whereas diffusion is a traditional process that moves horizontally between one initiator and one adopter and has done so since long before the idea of globalization gained ground, scale shift would need to be the first process in the work of building a global social movement” (Tarrow 2005, 139).

It is at this point that the lack of a truly transnational political action leads to a breakdown in the process of scale shifting. Tarrow argues that many actors remain rooted in local politics, unable to break away from the constraints of their uniquely local circumstances – they are unable to become the 'rootless cosmopolitans' who are the truly transnational actors. Those who do begin to act at a 'higher' scale, according to him, are more likely to transpose some of their work upwards and still remain rooted in their particular circumstances.

Tarrow's ideas are problematic on a number of levels. Firstly, diffusion is not necessarily a visible or knowable interaction between an initiator and an adopter. As ANT has proved, there are any number of actants who can intervene in these processes of diffusion (Law 1999). Thus, more actants become a part of diffusion, and more mutable and immanent relations occur between these actants, than Tarrow would seem to account for. It does not move 'horizontally', it can move in any direction – the posting of an activist weblog has rhizomatic offshoots that are unknown and its results are unknowable. That the concept of scale shift is a new idea can also be refuted in the work of historical geographers mentioned previously who have examined the ways in which networks of social activity acted at a number of scales at one and the same time. Finally, the conception of rootless

cosmopolitans as drivers of a seemingly purer form of transnational activism devalues the work of those who are engaged in many of these struggles. While many are rooted in place, their engagement across borders does not make them any less transnational. Indeed, the mundane and routinized performance of many 'local' practices is key to the functioning of many transnational networks. Paul Routledge's work on applying networked and relational ideas to activist work is important here. Calling for accounts of activism that emphasise convergence spaces, where activists come together in solidarity for limited periods of time (Routledge 2000, 2003), and more recent work on 'imagineers' - individuals as relatively more-networked than their counterparts - within social movements (Routledge 2008; Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel 2007). Routledge's work offers a more spatially sensitive account of how individuals and their associated movements become implicated within large, spatially extensive systems. Transnationalism becomes not a case of cosmopolitan actors travelling on the benefit of others. Instead, it becomes bound up with concepts of solidarities and relations with others, often at a geographical distance.

Following from Routledge, calls within geography on these topics have been varied. While there has necessarily been a turn towards thinking about the transnational and networked understanding of the social, whereby 'territory' becomes opened and connected with its wider surroundings (Amin 2004; Massey 2004), there has also been a turn towards imagining the social as dominated by flows (Castells 1996). This in turn has been critiqued for its emphasis on a smooth 'space of flows' at the expense of spaces of blockage and interruption and for possessing little in the way of an account which looks at how these networks are held together (Allen 2003a). As a result, emphases have emerged which look at the various ways in which processes of contentious politics are spatially contingent (Martin and Miller 2003). Beaumont and Nicholls (2007), for example, have called for the adoption of Michael Mann's sociological approach, where spatially extensive networks of connection are co-existent with the claiming of territory by social movements. Thus, while some areas of a social movement are fluid and networked, they are at the same time working towards specific claims and actions that mark out certain political territories as 'theirs'. This develops an account of spatiality of social movements that is neither bounded, nor completely fluid. While this call for a more nuanced accounting of the process politics of social movements is useful, Beaumont and Nicholls go on to argue for an approach that privileges resource mobilisation at the expense of other accounts of contentious politics, and this is less convincing – while certain contexts of political actions undoubtedly privilege

the use of certain resources, these do not necessarily constitute a prerequisite for the success of a movement.

A similar reworking of the spaces of activism is offered by David Featherstone's reworking of the concept of 'Militant Particularism'. Taking Raymond Williams's (Williams 1989a; Williams 1989b) concept, and David Harvey's subsequent work on it (Harvey 1995, 2000), Featherstone takes a relational reading of space that envisions militant particularism, not as bounded spaces of political activity which need uniting, but as the products of networks of interrelationships that vary over time and space. Featherstone's work is explicitly engaged in trying to reconcile the relevance of past struggles to the relationships in the supposed global society. The role of militant particularisms both today and in the past can suggest some continuity in the struggles and resistances active in society. This is not to suggest an unbroken tradition of resistance, but rather to examine the commonalities of contestation that have occurred in the multiple and fragmented histories of resistance that can be uncovered, allowing resistances to be expansive and multiple, rather than conforming to the narrow frameworks put forward by neoliberal ideologies. As a result, the 'long histories' of Williams can become more usefully engaged in, with aspects of past struggle becoming useful references and even building blocks for future acts of resistance. In addition, relational accounts allow for the inclusion of the various others left out by Williams's own readings of history, and as a result engages more completely with the various aspects of society that are at work within contentious politics.

More recently, Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto (2007) have argued for a different account of the spatialities of contentious politics. While arguing for a conception of politics that privileges neither scale, place, networks, positionality nor mobility, they agree that, given the likes of Massey's (2005) accounts of place as often messy assemblages of people and things which do not necessarily cohere, then at times, scalar politics with its associated bounded spatial entities, does not always work. However, their understanding of networked spaces of contentious politics produces only partial understandings of their nature. While they call, rightly, for networked accounts that can stress the hierarchies and power relations within networked spaces, their networked understanding of space produces peculiar renderings of ANT, critiquing the concept of the immutable mobile as not relating to contested politics. However, the immutable objects that move through Mol and Law's (1994) topological reading of space are important. For example, Routledge's accounts of activism taking place transnationally show how various actors move and connect social

movements together. So, while I agree with Leitner et al.'s assertion that the study of contentious movements is about more than simply a networked understanding of space and place, their version of a networked politics is limited and needs further exploration to understand how networks are important to the everyday workings of political action.

By attempting to understand how networks of interactions are co-implicated, we can move beyond the idea that social movements need to simply shift scales or mobilise more resources to gain more political momentum. It is through the coming together of a variety of actors/actants and the specific relations that occur between these interlocking elements that politics either fails or succeeds. The workings of actors performing routinized tasks to hold these relations together are important in making these transnational political movements endure over long periods of time. Indeed, what I consider empirically in the rest of this chapter are the ways in which these networked understandings of politics run-through the relational heart of the Tibet Movement.

Organising Relations – Creating and Maintaining Connections

Tibet Support Groups and Tibetan NGOs are one of the main tools for the Tibet Issue to be mobilised. By attempting to influence civil society (in its general, not the Gramscian, sense) they, together with other organisations like the institution of the Dalai Lama, seek to create and maintain a reservoir of support for Tibet and use it to campaign for a resolution to the Tibet issue. Each TSG or Tibetan NGO has its own particular programme – some are interested in disseminating information about perceived human rights violations in Tibet, some are democracy awareness advocacy groups, some are pro-independence, some are pro-autonomy - however, all will see themselves as a part of the Tibetan struggle, or at least as supporters of the Tibetan struggle. This section looks at the specific sets of connections that help to maintain these Tibet Support Groups and Tibetan NGOs. In this, it will be necessary to separate the processes into two categories, those 'internal' (in the loosest possible sense) to the TSG and its immediate Office/surroundings, and those that involve interaction with elements that are 'external' to the office, i.e. those processes explicitly involving connections that range outside the Office and its surroundings. Of course, these distinctions are relative, as the networks that circulate ideas and things within the TSG always have some connection with the outside and *vice versa*, but here it is done to show the differing sets of practices that go into both stabilising the TSG's internal relations and its relations with the 'outside' world.

“The transformation of organisation from arborescence to rhizomatic is performative as much as it is structural. Organisations, as they are encountered by the lonely travellers within them, do not appear as fixed things (in spite of their unmistakable power) but rather as assemblages of ideas, experiences and representations.” (Kornberger, Rhodes and ten Bos 2006, 67)

As John Law’s explorations of both the techniques of organisation within a laboratory (Law 1994) and his wider ideas about the nature of space with Annemarie Mol (Mol and Law 1994) have shown, organisations take on numerous forms within themselves, and necessarily with those outside them too. While organisations are presented as coherent objects with coherent parts, the interplay between and across different elements within these networks highlights the nature of political action as embedded within everyday processes.

‘Internal’ Dynamics

... S is busy training B on how to use the office postal franking machine. Occasionally she speaks to me to see how I am doing as I am working in her ‘section’ of the office that afternoon. She asks what I am studying, and as I explain about the networks I’m trying to follow and how they reach out to different places and people she says “Yeah, and then you end up with people like me working here – I didn’t even know where Tibet was when I came here”. I hadn’t realised, but S has only been in the office a couple of months, and I get the impression she is an office ‘temp’ and this will be her last week...Later on, while I’m processing some cheques we chat about the amounts of money coming in. I remark about the largest amount so far [around £100] to which she replies “Yes, well I’m always amazed at people’s generosity. It always shocks me that places like this can actually exist”⁵⁷

The above extract highlights the difficulty of making assumptions of homogeneity about TSGs. While the Tibet issue is undoubtedly one that often arouses passionate responses and an active commitment to the cause from those who are members or workers for the organisation, it would be a gross over-simplification to assume that all those who work for or within Tibet organisations feel a deep commitment to the Tibet Issue or the Tibetan struggle for independence. Indeed, S shows a relative lack of commitment and goes some way to distance herself from the organisation as shown by her statement “It amazes me

⁵⁷ Adapted from Research Diary - ResearchDocs/Diaries/UK/FTC/051006.

that places like this can actually exist". Even though she is an employee (albeit on a temporary basis) she obviously does not feel any intimate attachment to the organisation – it still remains relatively alien to her and her preconceptions of the type of organisation still filter into her understandings of it.

The training process taking place also shows how different members of an organisation possess different skill sets, and thus differential power relations. So, while S is temporarily in charge of her section, she has to train B, a full time member of the organisation, in some of the more mundane office tasks so that the organisation will continue to function. Thus, while the office is divided into sections for smoother running, competencies are shared out across different sections to an extent to allow the office to continue to run as workers come and go. These tasks can be relatively mundane (as the franking machine example shows) as the basic workings of the organisation are played out no matter which member of personnel is directly doing it. So, in this case, the object of the franking machine becomes the centre of a particular network of individuals who have the skill to know how to make it work. This was, in practice, more difficult than it would seem, as the temperamental nature of this particular machine meant a degree of skill had to be used in order to make it work and function on a day to day basis. As a result, in subsequent weeks, I saw B and S's replacement struggling with the franking machine and trying various previously acquired successful strategies (e.g. balancing the machine on a particular desk) to make the machine work. This seemingly mundane action becomes crucial to the wider running of the organisation, as the breakdown of the machine delayed posting of materials out of the office, from campaigning literature being sent to TSG supporters, to the posting of that day's merchandise deliveries. If these were not delivered then the subsequent impact on the organisation, spatially, in terms of packages/letters taking up some of the limited office space, and financially, as merchandise and campaigning for funds both create much needed revenue streams for financially vulnerable organisations like TSGs.

Organisationally internal skills and activities come to form a key set of networks to allow an organisation to continue functioning on a day to day basis. Relationships with particular objects, like the franking machine, build over time and develop into the particular working habits and structures of an organisation. While the relatively disordered practices of making the machine work emerge from previous experiences, they quickly become hardwired into the movement as a set of ordered and learned practices – "try putting the

machine there, it works better there for some reason” – which become an intrinsic and coded part of the organisation.

Intra-TSG Dynamics

TSGs do not exist in complete independence of one another. The variegated nature of their individual structures and strategies means that most speak for specific interests or segments of the Tibetan struggle, but with the rise of large scale ‘global day of action’-type events within the Tibet movement, it has become even clearer that the interaction between TSGs and TNGOs is productive of networks that are specifically ‘activist’. By this, I mean that they are productive of a unifying agenda that is mobilised by all the groups around a specific action or set of actions. Thus, mobilization around a key theme allows groups to cooperate and foster connections. The most obvious of these connections within the Tibet Movement occur around certain key dates, like the March 10th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising in 1959, but there are occasionally other dates and events that mobilisation occurs around, such as the demonstrations that evolved around the One Year Countdown to the Beijing Olympics in August 2007. However, as within any network of different organisations, there are moments of tension as well as moments of co-operation. Many of these networks are, however, fostered in specifically local circumstances and emerge longitudinally from a history of action with Tibet. For example, Giovanni Vassallo of Bay Area Friends of Tibet and The Committee of 100 for Tibet, describes the somewhat messy situation in the Bay Area of California as follows;

“... like I said before, BAYFoT [Bay Area Friends of Tibet] was the original [group] so we had rather substantial membership, you know, over 4,000 people were mailing us just for that group, but then as the Tibetans formed their own [groups], the Tibetan Membership kind of migrated. They, and all the lawyers (laughs), left BAYFoT to become members of Tibetan Justice Centre, and that’s why you sort of use that ‘mother’ terminology. I think one of our past BAYFoT presidents described BAYFoT as ‘the Redwood Tree’ where the mother Redwood tree dies, and by the time it dies there’s all these little redwood trees all around it (laughs) so I feel like, in some ways, from BAYFoT’s perspective that’s what sort of happened – we can point to our own success by looking at the seeds that happened around us. You also have this attachment (laughs) as you work for Tibet. You know, it’s not about, in some ways, one organisation, it’s about the overall cause, and it’s about the fight for

freedom, so, um, I don't care what hat I really have to put on if it's gonna really, you know, free Tibet, or work to help free a political prisoner, or something along those lines, I'll put it on..."⁵⁸

Here Vassallo grounds the processes that are happening as natural and organic. Organisations flow from one another and give rise to one another, and in this sense, it seems like an evolutionary process of groups emerging from other groups as new situations and circumstances arise. However, like the Redwood trees he speaks of, they are also rooted in place – the Bay Area and its specific, local circumstances shape the growth and production of each group. However, the tree metaphor employed by Vassallo here is also curiously reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the root tree. While there is a degree of fluidity between the groups, the organisations are standalone *organisms*. The various TSGs, while related, are seen as distinct from one another and, while the three groups he mentions are all Bay Area orientated, they all have their own specific goals. Crucially, this organic reference point allows Vassallo to place BAYFoT at the 'centre' of these groups, he builds this theme elsewhere:

"...so working from BAYFoT's perspective I felt I was sort of central - as best you can [be] with all these different groups...so, how do we stay together? Uh, it comes down sometimes to just a few individuals reaching out and making contacts, in my role as Secretary and President of BAYFoT, you know I would often have to be on the phone or the email with the president of TANC [Tibet Association of Northern California] or the President of the Committee of 100 or the Tibetan Youth Congress, and host meetings to develop our plans for the years, I mean things like March 10th and Tibet day are sort of like on autopilot now (laughs) - we kind of do this every year. But, for instance with this upcoming Olympics Situation, um, you know there's this need currently to try to get together and develop something, uh, cohesive, cohesively."⁵⁹

Thus BAYFoT forms part of its own localised network of TSGs and TNGOs, which, while having become relatively decentred as other groups emerged from it, still remains important as some of its individuals form part of the 'core' of people who actually try and coordinate things. Important here is the realisation that while many people will be members of a group (i.e. the 4,000 members Vassallo speaks of earlier) crucially it is the

⁵⁸ ResearchDocs/Interviews/US/GV.

⁵⁹ ResearchDocs/Interviews/US/GV.

activity of a small number of activists who actually organise things. Also here, the ability to learn new skills and the experience of past events allows them to run certain annual events “on autopilot” compared to others. Thus as long as certain key actors remain *in situ* within these particular networks, they are more or less able to function coherently for certain ‘key’ events or performances. These are the hierarchically more connected actors who range across the movement. While, in this case, not quite transnational ‘imagineers’, they provide the skills and experience that binds groups together and act as translators between various groups. As part of this act of translation, people become key nodes for the network acting as micropolitical actors who perform tasks of striation and overcoding. While the fluidity of the various groups who leak members and actors to each other provides a fairly rhizomatic imagination of San Francisco’s TSG community, these actors who run Tibet Day or other activities on ‘autopilot’ inscribe certain behaviours and striate the movement to behave in certain ways. The ebb and flow between organisation (i.e. overcoding) and free movement (i.e. rhizomatic fluidity) moves us between critiques of Deleuze and Guattari that emphasise the binary nature of this duality, instead showing how this plane of organisation is a spectrum of behaviours.

This is highlighted where there are limits to this ability for individual actors to function (and overcode space as they would wish) however, and in these accounts Vassallo also seems to brush over tensions that can occur between groups and speaks of Tibet, the “overall cause” as being the decisive issue and the thing that overrides all other concerns. However, there are undoubtedly tensions, as he makes more explicit elsewhere:

“Sometimes there isn’t enough communication, frankly, so there’s always when you get people together, uh, petty factionalisms that creep in. Part of the frailty of the human condition I guess (laughs) is, some of that happens and there is...occasionally I’ve found with some of the Tibet Organisations, [are] more concerned about their own organisation. But then ultimately, I think as a whole and overall, there’s this genuine sense that we all need to work together (chuckles) so then we all end up coming together. If you look at many of the events that have been posted in the ‘Past Events’ of the Bay Area Friends of Tibet website, or the Tibet Association of Northern California’s Website, or the Tibetan Youth Congress website, you’ll see the same five organisations that co-sponsored it, so I think we, in spite of many difficulties

and even language barriers in communications between Tibetans and Non-Tibetans, uh, we do kind of tend to come together...”⁶⁰

However, where these tensions emerge they are again framed as somewhat organic – “part of the frailty of the human condition”. This attempts to shift blame away from individuals and ‘upwards’ towards a more abstract form of humanity where conflict, antagonism and individual ego are involved. This also ties in with Vassallo’s individual biography; a former Buddhist monk whose father was a Tibetan Buddhist Priest, this inscription of certain unifying values bears a certain resemblance to general Buddhist beliefs and ethical systems concerning the nature of being. Above all, this inscription of relations is optimistic, providing some sense of reality to the situation “petty factionalisms that creep in” etc. but the overall belief that when it is necessary, people will work together.

This situation is mirrored somewhat by relations between TSGs in London. Here, during the course of ethnographic fieldwork, members of certain organisations have made claims about others that are rooted in factionalism. Late one day at an office, before heading to a protest event, one member of staff complained that “I love going to these evening long protests. We’ve got a campaign organisation that’s supposed to do this kind of stuff [organising protest events], but we [i.e. the organisation] end up sorting things out.” Once at the event, however, members of the two groups chatted and intermingled relatively freely. So, while tensions between groups surface at times, these are often forgotten when at the events themselves – as Vassallo puts it, the “overall cause” overrides any tension between groups, and this process of rationalisation helps to keep the movement ‘together’. At the same time, aspects of coordinated organisation also remained fragmented, so, whilst at this event, an anti-Beijing Olympics protest, members of different groups all wore differently branded merchandise relating to their specific group. This is despite the existence of a transnational umbrella organisation (the International Tibet Support Network, or ITSN) suggesting a specific style of merchandise to create a unified visual experience. The inability to coordinate between the various groups highlights the embedded and fragmented nature of the social organisations between these British based groups.

⁶⁰ ResearchDocs/Interviews/US/GV.

Extra-TSG Dynamics

It's my first day working with [a London TSG], and they are struggling to think of a task that is suitable for me. It's mid-afternoon and the Office Manager, S, is struggling with processing the latest campaign appeal slips that have been sent in by members and donors, so I've been asked to help out. The work consisted of processing cheques for one of the campaigns which they've just started – one for two Tibetan brothers who've just been imprisoned inside Tibet.

This processing consisted of sorting out postal donations into different piles of documents. Firstly the donation slip they had initially been sent and asked to fill in with their details. These coded to record what type of supporter they were and were marked with a date they had been received. These were sorted into those who had donated by card or by cheque. Occasionally I found a completed postcard written in Chinese which the individual was supposed to send directly to China, but obviously people had often returned them to the TSG instead. The completed forms were then sent along to the database section, where their individual records were updated to show what they had contributed and to which campaign. The cheques were then processed and put into this specific campaign's account. The amount of money donated varied from coins taped to the form, through to hundreds of pounds, and while many had simply sent a form and a cheque, occasionally people had attached a note expressing their anger or sorrow at the situation. Some would say how they were praying to God for a resolution for Tibet and Tibetans. Once a letter spoke of how the individual could not afford to donate any more than a small amount at this time in an attempt to justify their donation to the organisation.⁶¹

The above account attempts to highlight some of the deliberate systematisation that formed one particular network of an UK-based TSG. It is worth going through this exact process in some detail as it highlights the complicated series of connections that a campaign produces and forms. At one level this system is created to ease the process of dealing with a campaign about a specific issue and its associated paperwork, and could simply be read as a process of good and accountable housekeeping by a political organisation. However, there is a greater degree of both connection and separation going on here.

⁶¹ Adapted from Research Diary - ResearchDocs/Diaries/UK/FTC/051006.

This process was done largely by the administrative section of the office. The campaigns team had been responsible for the production of the campaigns leaflets but once this initial production had been done, the leaflets are then sent out and returned to the administrative section. This is a discrete section of the office, where the three members, Office Manager, Finance Officer and Database Officer circulate these various objects within their discrete section of the office. Campaign Materials (i.e. postcard to send, an information leaflet which contains donation slip, a freepost envelope to TSG) are first packed into an envelope (often by giving them to a volunteer, allowing office staff to concentrate on other activities) and then sent off to the TSG's members. Having negotiated the intricacies of the postal system and its own set of networked relations, they are then (presumably) opened and read by these individuals, who then decide whether they want to donate to this particular campaign. Some will send the postcards, some will donate money, some will do both, some will do nothing, but each will act in their own particular way to these mailings. As such these mailings act as a means of connecting the members to a TSG, and form an important part of maintaining the bond between members and the TSG, however temporary and partial this bond turns out to be. As shown by the notes attached to some donations, these contacts allow a point of emotional, affective connection – those people who write in to explain why they cannot donate more obviously display an affective connection to both the Tibet Issue, but to this particular TSG and this particular campaign that is strong enough to provoke the need to justify their position. This could be down to a sense of guilt or another moment of affective contact, but what is clear is that these mailings provide a moment of relative intensity in the relational networks between TSG and supporters/members.

At the most basic level, these moments are a way of reaffirming and reproducing relations (both of connectivity and of separation) to the widest possible audience. Keeping people informed of the current struggles and campaigns helps to maintain a certain basic level of support. Members of TSGs can range in numbers from hundreds to tens of thousands, so mail shots like this serve to remind those who are less active that they are a member of the organisation, but also to provide a stimulus to those who are more active – the regular production of new campaigns and associated materials is also an attempt to show the members that the TSG is active and that progress is being made on the Tibet issue (something that is not always readily apparent given the deadlock on negotiations). Thus the targeting of small, reasonably achievable goals like a campaign to release two political prisoners in Tibet is a way of reassuring members that their money is not going to waste.

But in addition, the flows and connections created by the sending of this campaign leaflet also serve to highlight the immanent power relations built up within this particular TSG. The TSG, in sending out these flyers, is attempting to persuade people to conform to its campaign goals and commit to them. However, once the material has left the office, the power of these objects to elicit a response from people emerges from the circumstances they arrive in. Those people who felt compelled to give an amount, no matter how small, were willingly complicit in allowing the TSG to inform them of the issue (in this case the two political prisoners) and the best way to react to this. However, those who do not react in such a conformist way are playing out their own relationship with the objects and, by extension, with the TSG. This power only arises in their particular space or place, and thus helps to determine the extent of the network. Thus, each mail shot will give a different impression of the TSG and its influence. Those campaigns that are more effective at getting people to donate will give the impression of a much wider network of connections, while those that are less fruitful will obviously give the impression of a smaller, more incoherent system.

However, the mail shot also becomes part of a system that produces connections to the Chinese and is therefore meant as a direct challenge to Chinese practices in Tibet. In this case, the inclusion of a postcard is also a way of connecting the individual to the struggle directly. Most campaign material asks people to write to the relevant Chinese authorities, the State Security Bureau or the Chinese Embassy, in order to make their grievances known. This spreads the map of grievance (Featherstone 2003), allowing non-Tibetan people to call for change in what China perceives as its internal affairs. Indeed, much TSG literature is explicit in its attempts to show that letter writing can force changes in the cases of individual political prisoners in Tibet. Here, though, the additional postcard is designed to simplify this process. The postcard removes the need for the individual to write a letter to the relevant authorities. Instead, all they have to do is attach a stamp and put the postcard in a post-box. By believing that they can influence and change the terms of struggle by writing a letter or sending the postcard, these individuals make a seemingly greater investment in the campaign than those who simply donate money. In addition to this, according to a different activist not associated with this TSG⁶², this was the first time that this TSG had used Chinese language in one of its campaign materials, which also shows a shift in strategy. The deliberate move to Chinese represents an attempt to ease

⁶² ResearchDocs/Interviews/UK/Ion1.

communication with the Chinese authorities, opening up new ground for grievances to be aired. Presumably this allowed everyday Chinese postal workers to read the postcards as well as the intended recipients and thus creates a whole new set of connections for Tibetan issues to be raised.

A final element of this particular network I want to highlight, and one of the most obvious, lies in the act of performance. By sending out regular updates and campaign requests, the TSG is *performing* a prescribed role – that of a campaigning TSG – and by doing this, it is proving to its membership that it is a valid organisation that actually does things (whatever those things may be) and thus helps to ‘shore up’ people’s belief in the TSG and its role as an important player in the Tibet Issue. Thus, these micro-processes that occur within the organisation become constitutive of the organisation as a whole. The projection and performance of this constitution then helps to maintain the organisation as a stable entity – as mentioned in an earlier example, during my time at this particular TSG there had been lots of staff changes and a relative level of fluidity in the organisational structure of the group. However, the sending of the campaign material, which contained the TSG’s logo and other standardised information like addresses, meant that the TSG remained (to those who were not in immediate contact with it) a stable organisation. Thus, despite the movement of people and objects through the office, the perception and performance of the organisation remains the same as certain key markers are deployed and redeployed to maintain a semblance of order.

This one example of mailing shows how the organisational networks that extend out from a TSG act as spaces of flows and movement that attempt both to extend and intensify relations within the TSG’s membership at the same time. Thus, while seeming to give stability to the organisation, in practice they are all about movement and change – the creation of rigid organisational structures are designed to help speed the flows of information between different networks. Each item of post constitutes its own assemblage that has different sets of relations as it moves through and around the TSG and its members. These relations are bound up with immanent regimes of power, as people dictate their compliance or resistance to the TSG’s campaign according to their own set of spatial relations. Thus, the simple mailing of information to members becomes an infinitely more complex process of connection and negotiation and the seeming coherence of the organisation becomes radically decentred and materially heterogenous (after Law, 1994). Rather than simply the TSG and its staff contained by the walls of its offices, the various

elements within and beyond this relatively intimate office space become complicit in the Tibetan Freedom Movement. Postal vans, the franking machine, the local postman and the letters themselves all become actant-assemblages who are passing Latour's rugby ball (Latour 1988) through the networks of power, connection and association.

Activism beyond the TSG – Relational Understandings of Demonstrations and Actions

Barry (1999) argues that demonstrations work as both sites and sights of protest – the direct encounter with an action that can be witnessed at first hand becomes important in fostering a connection between the individual and the act they are witnessing and so the act of demonstrating becomes technical in its production and performance – by constructing a demonstration in a certain way, the claims made by a demonstration are mobilised in ways that are more efficient. Barry, for example, looks at broadcast media and the role it plays in trying to present itself as an impartial observer and broadcaster of a subject. Thus, if the demonstration wants the 'truth' of its situation to be made obvious, it must produce it in such a way that media reporters can easily disseminate the information. This can lead to reductivism, as Barry points out,

“...in so far as they treat political disputes impartially, as a clash of parties, ideologies or interests, televisual news and current affairs may simply avoid engaging with the complexity of what is being demonstrated about” (1999, p.87-88)

However, given the rise in the use and manipulation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), these networks of diffusion from a demonstration are also extending beyond the impartial coverage offered by traditional broadcast media that Barry talks about. I want to use this section to argue that the demonstration today is bound together with more extensive systems that can spread beyond the immediate surroundings of the demonstration site. So, witnessing the 'sight' of a demonstration, or any other action for that matter, is now something that is not necessarily bound up with an intimate experience of 'being there' although this is still an important factor. Instead, shared values and personal connections mean that information can be spread and disseminated more widely and quickly. The growth of ICT allows images and documents to be shared and spread quickly across the world but, crucially, I want to try to think about the ways this extension of space is a mixture of both technology and personal connections that allow spaces of resistance to become fluid and relatively instantaneous. In addition, the Tibet movement

has long been international in its scope and scale, with connections by email and phone common and those connections involving the movement of objects occurring with some regularity, as shown here:

“AD - ...and then thinking about SFT, rather than inside India, thinking about it in terms of its global links, what kind of things go on with you with SFT in America and in Europe? How do you have your contacts with them?”

TC – Oh, we, we do most of our, correspondence through email, sometimes when it is important matter we just call someone, maybe twice a week, once a week, it keeps on coming [sic]. And also we have contacts with SFTUK, and also we have this organisation Tibetan Youth UK.

AD – oh, yeah, yeah

TC – So we just want to make it a global – so last time during 10th March, the banner - we made it here

AD – oh, wow

TC – Yeah. What do you call this, uh, where the police, traffic police wear?

AD – oh, the vest?

TC – the vest, yeah something, we made it here, because they don’t have much time, because most of them are just doing the volunteer work, so they can’t spend much time, because they have their work and also during their free time they go for protest [sic] and organise these meetings, and then earlier, because two years back we met here in India.”⁶³

Here, a Tibetan TSG in Dharamsala speaks of how, in previous years, they made objects for demonstrations in London, as those activists in London did not have time to do things. This internationalism is something that is prevalent throughout many pro-Tibet organisations, with the sharing of information and communication via email and phone taking place daily. However, recently there has been an intensification of these movements, both in speed and density. To explore this, I wish to look, in some detail, at the mobilisation of actors and activists that occurred on one particular protest event in August 2007.

On Wednesday 8th of August 2007, the Tibet Movement attempted to conduct a worldwide day of action. This date marked the beginning of a one year countdown to the Beijing Olympics. The Olympics are contested by Tibetan and other Human Rights organisations as

⁶³ Research Docs/Interviews/In/SFT.

they are seen as international legitimisation of the current situation in China. The Olympics themselves are also seen as an opportunity to put direct pressure on the Chinese regime in order to force change on the Tibet Issue. As a result, on the 8th of August there were a number of actions and events taking place simultaneously across the world. In and around Beijing itself two groups of activists had been at work for the previous week. One group had hung banners off the Great Wall of China which proclaimed, in a subversion of the official 2008 Olympic motto, "One World, One Dream, Free Tibet". This was filmed by one member and then quickly distributed via the internet using both campaign groups' websites and the online video distribution site Youtube.com. Those taking part, including one British activist, were quickly detained by the authorities. The other group spent their time in Beijing itself and documented preparations being made by the Chinese Government in the build up to the Official Countdown event and the building works and tourism developments being constructed. These were then put online as a blog on the website www.beijingwideopen.com and included regular video updates from Lhadon Thetong, the Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet International. The website begins with the following statement by Lhadon,

"China has invited the world to visit in August 2008. Exactly one year out, I've traveled [sic] to the heart of the nation that has brutally occupied my homeland for over 50 years. Follow this blog, as I share what I see, feel, and experience... leaving Beijing wide open."⁶⁴

Accompanying Thetong was a British activist, Paul Golding, who was responsible for visually recording Lhadon's statements and acted as her assistant. These two activists spent several days recording and posting onto the website before being detained on the 7th of August. Crucial to these actions was the ability to use technology to disseminate the message, as the blog states:

"The importance of video, and YouTube specifically, to our countdown protest cannot be overstated. For people around the world to see the banner on the Great Wall and what I was doing in Beijing almost as it happened, had a huge impact on the action. It created excitement amongst our supporters, helped us get a response from the IOC, grabbed the attention of the media and may have protected us from a harsher response by the Chinese government. And

⁶⁴ www.beijingwideopen.com (accessed 29/10/07).

while we were doing our thing in Beijing, so many other Tibetans and supporters were using the same technology to create a buzz around the International Day of Action for Tibet on the 8th...To some, this technology is dangerous. It challenges the control the Chinese authorities have over people and the ideas they are exposed to. That's why they try to block people from using it in China and Tibet."⁶⁵

This strategy of disseminating as quickly and as widely as possible was clearly pre-planned; however, there was a degree of fluidity to the actual organisation itself. Golding, when interviewed, described how he was contacted only shortly before flying to Beijing as someone else had dropped out.

"I was actually painting a fence, a friend's fence, and I got a phone call from the States, saying "do you want to help out with this action in Beijing", well they said "an action" in Beijing. Um, I said "Maybe, when is it?", and they said "Three days time."⁶⁶

This was also marked by a relatively free flowing strategy that was modified throughout the time in Beijing. Golding speaks how as they spent more time in Beijing, they became more bold as their routines became regularised, and so they began to perform more blatant actions, making themselves more visible to the Chinese authorities, but also seeking to expose how 'free' people were to make comments in and around Beijing.

"We were initially very cautious, because we had no idea how this would be received by the authorities, because as far as we know, it had never been done before – there's never been an activist blog directly from Beijing. Um, so yeah, we had no idea how it was gonna be received. Well, we didn't even know if [we] would get in for a start... Over the days we became more and more open, we became more and more confident, as we were doing things, we were obviously refining our strategy as well – what we wanted to film, what we want to do"⁶⁷.

This development of a system and of an increasingly antagonistic performance and display of grievance implicitly involves the integration of technology (the need to get internet access and to use film) but is also marked by an iterative intensification of the system.

⁶⁵ www.beijingwideopen.com (accessed 29/10/07).

⁶⁶ Research Docs/Interviews/UK/Ion2.

⁶⁷ Research Docs/Interviews/UK/Ion2.

Golding talks about how every day they became bolder and, the more visible the Chinese security presence, the more determined they became to show their information to as wide an audience as possible.

This distinctly active and confrontational form of political demonstration is seemingly at odds with the general perception of the Tibet Movement. The non-violent message of the Dalai Lama is often equated with non-confrontational politics, and often compared with Gandhian *satyagraha* struggles in the Indian Independence movement (Ardley 2002, and also the comments made by activists in Chapter 4). This has, I would argue, led to a construction of the Tibetan Struggle as something seemingly metaphysical and 'New Age' in its rejection of violent confrontation (Korom 2001). However, in reality, this is far from the case. The struggle had an armed resistance movement for twenty years in the 1950s and 60s (Dunham 2004; McGranahan 2006), and elsewhere in this research activists have spoken variously of the need to reassess what we mean as "non-violent" action and of their desire to struggle, violently if necessary, for the freedom of Tibet, as eloquently expressed by Lhasang Tsering in Dharamsala:

"I have decided to dedicate my life [by] what I, uh, have outlined as my Four Humble Truths⁶⁸. So, and these are firstly that, I find it strange that when we talk about our basic needs and necessities, we only refer to our physical needs, which we share with any other living creature - air, water, food and shelter. Are there, is there any need which is basic, is specific to us as human beings? My answer is yes and that basic need is freedom. And first and foremost by freedom, I do not mean freedom *from* this world, but freedom *in* this world – national political freedom. And secondly by freedom I do not mean the condition of just being in the wild and not in a cage, but national political freedom. However, national political freedom is man-made, it was not part of our original national state, so my Second Humble truth follows that unlike in the morning sun and the evening star, in the summer's rain and the winter's snow, national political freedom, will not, cannot come by waiting. The Third Humble Truth follows, freedom must therefore be fought for and won, and the Fourth Humble truth states that freedom is not free, there is a price of

⁶⁸ Tsering's reworking of the Buddhist concept of the 'Four Noble Truths'.

freedom, and the price for freedom is not paid in silver and gold, not in US dollars, it is paid in the currency of life and blood.”⁶⁹

As a result, there is a need to consider the varieties of ‘non-violence’ and the various types of activism that are taking place within the Tibet Movement. In this case, the concretisation of the system over time leads to the development of more explicit confrontations with authority.

This however, is only one aspect of the demonstrations I want to consider. By the 8th itself a situation had arisen where two groups of activists had been detained by the authorities in Beijing, but such was the amount of information that had been disseminated from them, most Tibet activists had been kept fully aware of their situation. In London, the main UK campaigning organisations of the Tibetan Movement were organising the launch of Team Tibet. Team Tibet was the campaign launched by the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN), an affiliation of TSGs and TNGOs which acts as an umbrella organisation and attempts to co-ordinate global campaigns and initiatives. Team Tibet attempted to subvert the Olympic ideals of a non-political equality through sport and involved a number of initiatives that were due to occur throughout the build up to the Beijing Games. At these relatively early stages, most effort was going into promoting the idea that Tibet could have a sports team, and that this team could go to the Olympics and compete with all the other nations. This would demonstrate to the world that Tibet still existed as a nation, and also that it would compete in a peaceful and cooperative way with the Chinese athletes. Team Tibet was therefore to be made up of a number of athletes selected from various Tibetan diasporic communities. As a result, each country which had a recognisable Tibetan community was encouraged to select a group of people to act as that community’s representatives.

In London, which has a relatively small Tibetan community of around 200 people, 4 athletes were chosen, and the events of the 8th of August initially centred on them. Firstly, they were unveiled to the public in Trafalgar Square at 5.30pm and, in celebration, did a warm-up routine to show their athletic skills. Present were around 100 Tibetans and Tibet supporters, many of whom wore traditional Tibetan costume, TSG apparel or waved Tibetan flags. Many also wore specific ‘Team Tibet’ merchandise, which, given the relative

⁶⁹ Researchdocs/interviews/IN/lon1.

lack of coordination between TSGs and TNGOs in the UK, differed from organisation to organisation⁷⁰.

These events were cut short by the intervention of a number of 'Heritage Wardens'⁷¹. These wardens would not allow Tibetan flags to be waved, and watched the protest for five minutes before deciding it was being too disruptive and asking people to move on. As a result, the group of people moved on to the pre-planned second part of the protest outside the Chinese Embassy on Portland Place. Here, a protest took place where people waved Tibetan Flags and lit two symbolic Tibetan Olympic Torches. These were in fact garden oil lamps, but were intended to symbolise the desire of the Tibetan people to take part in the Beijing Olympics. During this protest, which ran for about 1 ½ hours, standardised chants like "Free the - Panchen Lama!" and "China! China! China! - Out! Out! Out" were shouted and passersby on foot and in vehicles were given flyers and pamphlets.

But more importantly, members of these two events in London were in contact with the Beijing activists support team in Hong Kong. The Beijing activists had made their actions extremely visible over the internet, and created a palpable sense of excitement amongst the protestors at the event – one supporter told me "This [what had happened in Beijing] is really exciting, so many people have seen it, I mean Canada is really kicking off about this"⁷². This both referred to the comparatively large amount of international press coverage that these actions had received, but also gives some idea of the excitement felt at these events. Some activists believe the Tibet Issue has stagnated in recent years and these events were reinvigorating for many campaigners.

But in addition to these feelings of excitement and euphoria, it was also well known that the Beijing protesters had been detained for over 24 hours at this point. This information had been disseminated outwards from Beijing to Hong Kong and posted on various blogs

⁷⁰ This is despite ITSN providing standardised logos and slogans for Team Tibet, and highlights the poor communications between groups in the UK.

⁷¹ "It is important that Trafalgar Square is a safe, enjoyable environment for Londoners and visitors to the capital. Heritage Wardens are employed there at all times to make sure it is, and to help our visitors to enjoy the square. The Heritage Wardens are there to help and give information to visitors on local attractions and the square's heritage and provide assistance during events. They wear distinctive uniforms and are on Trafalgar Square 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Since they were introduced in 2000, the Heritage Wardens have helped reduce graffiti and have made people feel safer on the square. Eighty five per cent of visitors said that they felt safe on Trafalgar Square in the 2007 user survey." From <http://www.london.gov.uk/trafalgarsquare/visit/wardens.jsp> (Accessed 30/10/07).

⁷² Research Docs/Diaries/UK/TS/080807.

and Tibet Websites from there. This meant that friends and relatives of those in Beijing who were present in London had a relatively clear idea of what had happened, and indeed was happening, in Beijing. Certainly, during the course of the event, telephone calls between London and Hong Kong established that all the Beijing groups had been released from detention and deported. This relatively seamless and instantaneous transfer of information brought about a noticeable change in the atmosphere of the demonstration and, whereas some people had initially been worried, the mood of excitement returned.

This whole series of events enacted a complex spatial network of connection and ruptures. Variable degrees of intensity and confrontation in Beijing led to information being transferred quickly around the world, but eventually being disrupted by the Chinese authorities. The severing of these connections had direct effects (and affects) upon the protests in London (and doubtless in other areas around the world). So, while the London events were caught up in their own distinctly local power relations, such as the Heritage Wardens or the Metropolitan Police outside the Chinese Embassy, the Beijing protests vectored into the centre of this network and had powerful effects on the nature of the protest.

Interaction across borders is not something unusual in contemporary politics, as I have shown earlier in this chapter, but what I want to stress as unusual here was the relatively direct and simultaneous nature of these connections. The various connections here moved across spaces and, rather than 'jumping scales' from local to global activities, the various resistant political actions here were run through with connections and trajectories that were pre-existing and altered and shaped by this 'global day of action'. Local actions in Beijing, Delhi and London produced a set of temporary networks that connected with international and national media outlets, TSGs and individuals to name only a few actors that were visible. These networks were heavily imbued with previously established relations, like Golding's connections to the movement, but were radically altered for a short period of time – the global day of action caused a range of occurrences which were wholly contingent upon the day's events, which in turn collapsed afterwards. For example, in Beijing, the lack of a sustained activist presence meant that any pro-Tibetan presence swiftly disappeared until the next activist interventions there.

Conclusions

The geographies of contentious political action have come under scrutiny recently with an increasing amount of debate about the nature of transnational action. These debates have concentrated on ideas like scale-jumping and the diffusion of ideas across space. This chapter has examined these debates in the light of the ideas of scale and networks presented in the initial chapters of this thesis. Here, we have looked at the ways that activism in the Tibet Movement is productive of a heterogenous set of relations that occur throughout its spaces. These occur at a seemingly mundane level through spaces like TSG offices, and more visibly (and explosively) at demonstrations.

What has become clear is that these networks occur at levels that are both global and local at the same time. Rather than expressing a clear process of moving from small scale to large scale, we have encountered processes that are at once intimate and spatially extensive. Envisioning these political actions as located within sites that are run through with connections to different spaces and places (Marston, Jones and Woodward 2005; Massey 2005), we can build accounts of activism that both show how political actions work themselves through the spaces of everyday life, and also open up ground to develop thinking about the ways in which transnational political action can be mobilised effectively.

The work of the activists discussed in this chapter is undoubtedly difficult, and organising transnationally is never easy (Tarrow 2005). But what I have attempted to do here is to stress the ways these political actions are infused with a mobile and mutable structure. While there is a constant ebb and flow between fixity and fluidity throughout the Tibet Movement, the potential for new political actions is always present, as the Beijing Olympic protests highlight, with new forms of activism and action being employed alongside traditional protest methods. It is this potential that occurs throughout the Movement, and in my view, throughout a spatially networked understanding of contentious politics, that can drive forward a progressive politics that is adaptable and productive of social justice.

Conclusions – Networking Tibetan Resistance

To conclude this thesis, I want to reflect again on the theoretical and empirical interventions that the research makes. Overall, I have constructed an image of the pro-Tibet Movement that is rooted more in the academic circuits of contentious politics, rather than in its traditional realm of Tibetan or Asian Studies. This is important as by positioning the Tibet Movement in an overtly political arena, we can begin to understand it in a more nuanced, yet also more contingent way. The Tibet Movement has gone through a series of changes since the bulk of this research took place. The emergence of protests in March and April 2008 that spread across Tibetan areas of China (see Fig 1.3) and beyond created a new set of connections which have yet to play out fully. Yet, in many ways, this is exactly what the networked nature of this research would lead us to expect. The sets of connections that were forged through the various sites of this research are inherently fleeting and temporary. They are nonetheless important. The networks that run through the pro-Tibet Movement combine to create a multifaceted political system that is more than simply 'politics', 'nationalism' or 'representation' individually. Indeed, the importance of a spatially networked approach to studying the political is it allows us a better understanding of the interlinked ways in which materiality and discourse are played out in reality.

Theoretically, the thesis has been driven by a commitment to networked understandings of modern society. Networks and relations have clearly become important to our spatial understandings of the world. Indeed, materially heterogeneous relations of power and action occur throughout all political action. It is these varied, temporary and mutable sets of relations that are productive of the array of political movements at work today. Without turning towards research that undertakes geographically contingent research, we are always in danger of missing some of the key elements of any political movement. While this contingency means we are by no means guaranteed to get a complete picture of political action (and more on this shortly), networked approaches create understandings that allow us to 'fit together' the various elements of a political movement in more nuanced ways. Indeed, empirically, one of the things I have done here is to shift understandings of Tibetan politics and, indeed studies of politics more generally, so that we can understand how there is no such thing as 'pure' political activity. Instead, discourses, cultures,

demonstrations, office practices, football teams and a whole host of other socially-produced constructions come together to form the Tibet Movement.

Yet, while the idea of the network is commonplace in academia, I have argued that we still need to think through what these poststructural ideas actually do for our research practices. As Massey (2005) has argued, the spatiality of these relational politics is not unproblematic, particularly when we think about the openness of 'the site'. By thinking through some of these ideas more methodologically, I have argued for a more nuanced account of both ethnography and the site. What is clear is that there are so many different interlocking elements of the Tibet Movement, which we cannot hope to write legibly into one all-knowing account. Instead, we must think about how we are in particular places and how the connections to other sites and elements of the Movement have palpable effects upon our surroundings. If we are doing our job as researchers correctly, then the impacts we see upon a particular space can usually be traced somehow. In this thesis, the connections between the London protest in the activism chapter and my later interview with PG about his time in Beijing are an example of this. It is this act of following in a sensitive way that the best multi-sited ethnography performs. What I have written through this thesis is one attempt to perform a more spatially nuanced multi-site ethnography. Within geography, we should indeed be at the forefront of pushing these debates about the spatiality of 'doing' political research. While these theoretical interventions are important and key to the thesis as a whole, I wish to end on some empirical, indeed more practical, reflections on the thesis.

The empirical findings of the thesis run from discourse mobilisation through to material practices and routines. Thinking about the prison of language that seems to dominate Tibet allowed us to think about the ways in which activists become embroiled within these dispersed discursive networks. Thus, seemingly postcolonial activists can still be entangled within languages of the colonial era. However, individual's negotiations of these languages show how the practice of discourse is not uniform and not necessarily stultifying to the Movement. The discursive language may be prison-like, but how activists use and deploy it through the spaces of contention offers up different possibilities.

By examining the nation, we began to see how discourse and material practice work together in different scenarios to produce competing versions of the Tibetan nation. Some networks attempted to create a stable identity, and were largely successful. The resilience of the Tibetan Diaspora is rooted within these networks, where the policies of the Central

Tibetan Administration create fixed and relatively bounded ideas about where Tibet is and what it means to be 'Tibetan'. Other networks, like the ones that surround the Tibetan National Football Team, create a more fluid and dynamic form of Tibetan exile identity. The hybridity of these networks unfolds due to the relational spaces they occur in. The spaces of Tibetan Exile are dynamic and productive of new ways of being Tibetan. Thus, there is an ebb and flow of relational identity – at some times, Tibet and Tibetans are more fixed as certain objects and understandings, at other times, they are more ephemeral. Thus, rather than fetishising fixity or fluidity within a network, we must look at the ways in which processes like nationalism involve a movement between these two polar opposites.

The final empirical chapter dealt most explicitly with the materiality of political action. It looked at the way that political networks are both spatially intensive and extensive and, crucially, need a lot of work to hold together. This work is rooted in the mundanity of modern life - things like where the franking machine is placed are seemingly unthought elements of contemporary office work. Nonetheless, these ideas show how the practice of politics is inherently mundane. Indeed, the everyday nature of political action, and the way that the most emotive and contentious of political subjects are held together and forced to work by routinized practices, such as the ones described in the preceding sections, is one of the points that I wish to emphasize.

Crucially, all of the spaces, discourses and practices I have described are interconnected and relational. Indeed, while the Tibet Movement has not been successful in its ultimate goals, its continued existence is a marker of the resilience of its networks. These are important points to consider for activists, as the continued functioning of the network highlights the fact that there is still a perceived need for dissent against the current political situation in Tibet. What has become clear is that, despite the continued presence of thinking that the Tibet Movement is something like a new-age movement, this is now further from the truth than ever. Activists have been at work for decades in some cases, and all are highly skilled in the various roles that the Tibet Issue calls on them to undertake.

Yet, there is still something of a lack in the thesis in understanding why the Tibet Movement has been relatively unsuccessful. Of course, I can make a number of well reasoned attempts to think this through, most of them being rooted in the perceived economic necessities and geopolitical fears of the governments that the pro-Tibet movement looks to for some form of salvation. I was also struck throughout the research by the lack of any real, meaningful attempts to communicate on a large scale with Chinese

people by the Tibet Movement as a whole. Yet, I am left with more questions than answers on this point. Indeed, as a researcher who believes that research should be a process that involves communication between participants and researcher on an equal basis, I will be somewhat intrigued to see what my participants make of the findings when I send them a report in the near future. The Tibet Issue at times remains something intriguing and slightly unknown at the edges of my vision. And this, I suppose, is what the networked approach I have undertaken ultimately means in reality. Fleeting glimpses of different segments of reality as they shift and reorganise themselves around us. Yet, I still find these glimpses far more useful and productive than any conceptions that attempt to treat Tibet specifically, and politics more generally, as something that can be disaggregated into discrete segments and understood completely. The theory and methodology of 'the network' allows us to understand the resilience of seemingly marginal political groups like pro-Tibet activists and these understandings are important for activists and theorists alike. Relational and networked understandings, in my mind, open up political space and offer us new possibilities for a more just future, something that is important both inside and outside the academy.

Methodological Appendix

This appendix outlines in more detail the specific research processes and methods that were undertaken in the course of the PhD. The research process discussed in Chapter 3 is summarised in Table 8.1.

Date	Activities
April - October 2006	Desk-based research and Occasional meetings/visits with TSGs
October 2006 - February 2007	1 Day per week spent at TSG Office. Cultural and Social events attended on <i>ad hoc</i> basis. 1 London Interview Conducted
March 2007	Fieldwork in India/Dharamsala
April-July 2007	Desk-based research and Occasional meetings/visits with TSGs. Interview in San Francisco
August - September 2007	2 days per week in London based TSG. Cultural and Protest events attended on <i>ad hoc</i> basis. 1 London interview
October 2007 - August 2008	Attended protest and cultural events on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis.

Table 8.1 – Research Schedule

This schedule can be ordered into 3 chronological sections, as discussed below.

Phase One – Exploratory Phase April – October 2006

This phase of research was an intense period of ‘snowballing’, which involved desk-based research concentrating on identification of possible target Tibet Support Groups (TSGs) and activists and establishing contact with them. This had varied effects and had clear consequences for the transition into Phase Two. As mentioned in Chapter 3, initially, research was focussed on the very local circuits of potential activism in North West England. These were targeted with the assistance of a list of ‘Active’ Local Support Groups maintained by a London-based TSG. When contacted, many of these groups had stopped existing. By expanding my search parameters within this particular source, it became possible to contact some local groups. Indeed, during this phase, it became clear that most pro-Tibetan Campaigning was centred in London. Of the 20-30 local TSGs listed as affiliated to the particular London TSG, the only one conducting events on a regular basis in 2006 was located in Scotland. As a result, I spent a brief period with this TSG and its organisers on one of their sponsored walks. During this time, I discussed with members how they had become involved in the Tibet issue, and how they perceived the TSG network in the UK to be working. In particular, members of the group complained to me of how they felt

relatively disconnected from events in London. Indeed, while this group had two or three events per year, London campaigning organisations seemed to be advertising events on an almost weekly basis. This reaffirmed my belief that most UK campaigning/activity was done in the London area, and so it was decided to focus my efforts on this region in the future.

In addition, with the thesis's clear need to understand some of the transnational linkages at work through the pro-Tibet Movement, I also attempted to initiate contact with some non-UK organisations. In this case, I adopted Houston and Wright's (2003) strategy of establishing contacts within the Movement before contacting any organisations in Asia, particularly as I was aware that I would probably be going to India in the next phase of the research and would thus be able to make contacts through traditional snowballing/gatekeeper recruitment strategies. However, during this time I also attempted to make contact with TSGs in the USA, as I knew I would be in the country on a short break during late 2006 and for academic conferences in 2007. This was before I could feasibly make contacts to act as informants/gatekeepers within the Movement, so I attempted to contact a New York-based TSG. However, this generated no response despite trying on a number of occasions, so as a result I could not make contact with this particular organisation, but also decided to concentrate fully on embedding myself within the UK movement for the period until at least December 2006. It is this period of embedding that constitutes the first section of Phase Two of the research.

As a final stage of Phase One, I began to attend fundraising and other advertised events in London. This allowed me a period of networking and engagement with some of the key TSGs and leading activists. It was as a result of attending these events that I was able to make contact with both main London-based TSGs, and in particular to negotiate entrance into one of these TSGs as a volunteer in the Autumn of 2006.

Phase Two – Detailed Longitudinal Engagement October 2006 – September 2007

This phase was marked by a transition towards more routinised ethnographic practices. Having negotiated entry into a London-based TSG, I found myself spending one day a week for four months between October 2006 and February 2007. This involved performing mundane tasks as an entry level volunteer within the office environment. This meant I was able to observe and account for the everyday practices that took place within and around the TSG that were discussed in Chapter Six of the thesis. During this time, I was exposed to the workings of the TSG in times of 'normal' behaviour, but also at times of crisis – for

example, during one afternoon there was an alleged shooting on the China/Nepal border that the TSG had to respond to. However, at the same time, due to the limited access I was allowed during this period, it soon became clear that while I was able to take part in mundane activities, access to campaign issues and higher level decision making would be restricted. As a result, after a few months of exploring the workings of the TSG, it was decided that strategically, the best decision would be to move forward into different areas of the Tibet Movement. This was mainly done for practical reasons, as any further access at the TSG would have been restricted to workers who had been a part of the Movement for many years. Thus, rather than hope to commit large portions of research time to work with the possibility of further results not being forthcoming, I began to explore other research avenues.

During my time with the TSG, I came into contact with a number of Tibetans who were a part of the Tibetan Community in the UK. Through these meetings it became clear that the Tibetan Community in the UK was an active organisation which performed and organised a number of cultural and political roles within the exile community in the UK. I thus began to attend a number of cultural events within the Tibetan Community, such as the *Losar* Tibetan New Year celebrations in February 2007. These events were something I attended throughout the rest of the research process. However, while they formed a part of maintaining the sense of community within the diaspora, most of the events were choreographed to certain Tibetan cultural standards. Thus, while they provided useful ways of meeting members of the Tibetan Community, their input into the more political aspects of the thesis was limited, and as a result, are not mentioned in any great detail in the thesis. They did however provide a useful way of snowballing and allowed me to develop a fuller engagement with the broader Tibet Movement within the UK, and in London specifically. In particular, these events allowed me to make contact with officials at The Office of Tibet in London. The Office of Tibet was one of a number of similar pseudo-embassies run by the Central Tibetan Administration in countries across the world. Through these meetings, I was able to ascertain that March 2007 would be a useful time to visit Dharamsala – Tibetans in London provided me with a number of contacts to speak to, and officials at the Office of Tibet provided me with access to officials at the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, particularly Thubten Samphel, Secretary of the Department for Information and International Relations. As discussed in the body of the thesis, the month of March in Dharamsala also coincides with the Spring Teachings of the Dalai Lama

and the anniversary of the 1959 Lhasa Uprising. Thus, travel to Dharamsala was timed to coincide with this highpoint of the Tibetan Buddhist cultural year.

During this period in Dharamsala, due to the more limited time spent within the community, traditional participant observation was not possible. Interviews therefore formed the basis of the research engagement. These interviews were with key individuals both identified through 'snowballing' in London, but also through informal contacts made during time in Dharamsala. The questions during these interviews focussed on how individuals and their groups perceived themselves to be a part of a 'network'. The idea of a social network is common amongst activists, and most were able to comment upon how they saw connections at a variety of geographical scales, from global to local. Particular attention was paid to how the local circumstances of Dharamsala allowed various groups to communicate and organise amongst themselves. This was done in order to counteract the lack of research time spent in India compared to London. Through contacts made in Dharamsala it was also possible to arrange a meeting with a TSG based in Delhi, who were also interviewed upon my return from Dharamsala.

On returning from India, it also became clear that in order to understand further the transnational elements of the Tibet Movement it would be necessary to uncover the workings of the movement in areas other than the UK or Dharamsala. Thus, while in the US for a conference I was able to conduct an interview with Giovanni Vassallo of Bay Area Friends of Tibet. This was achieved through desk based research on active Tibet groups in the greater San Francisco area. Again, while I contacted a number of organisations in the Bay Area of California, responses from other groups were limited, and as a result, I was only able to speak to Vassallo. However, his interview, which was conducted with the same emphases as the India interviews, also confirmed many of the ideas that had emerged from the interviews in India and the ethnographic engagement in London.

The summer of 2007 was spent in the UK and returned to a similar pattern of ethnographic engagement. Having previously worked with one of the two office-based TSGs, the second was approached, who agreed to a period of volunteering in a similar fashion to the previous work with a TSG. There were a number of differences here, where I had previously worked for one day a week for a 4 month period, here I volunteered for 2 days a week for a two month period from August to September. This was to maintain a degree of longitudinal similarity between the two groups when I was beginning to reach the end of the in-depth research period, which was scheduled to end in September 2007.

The final part of the second phase of research was two interviews conducted with individual activists in the UK. While the other sections of this phase of the research followed each other relatively contiguously, these interviews were conducted on a much more *ad hoc* basis. This was based on the nature of these activists' emergence within the research. On both occasions, while engaged in work in London, each of these activists emerged as actors who did not fit into the framework of the ethnographic research, working as they did outside the TSG system to some extent. Thus, their interviews were structured slightly differently to the rest of the in depth interviews conducted. The interview with T concentrated on similar issues as the others, namely, how local and global networks within the Tibet Movement were perceived by the activist, but focussed on why they chose to work outside this system to an extent. The second interview with PG was, in some regards, a follow up interview. It mainly concerned PG's role within a global day of protest. Indeed, while I was present in London at this day's events, PG's actions in Beijing were an important part of these events, and as such the opportunity to interview him about exactly what happened represented an important part of trying to stitch together the various threads of a global network. These two interviews did not occur chronologically however, with the interview with T being conducted relatively early in the research process in December 2006, while the PG interview effectively marked the end of the second phase of the research, taking place in September 2007. This again highlights the emergent nature of these interviews within the overall research framework.

Phase Three – Supplementary Data Gathering September 2007 – August 2008

The third phase of the research reverted to less intense and more informal engagement with the Tibet Movement. This was a deliberate attempt to extricate myself from the Movement while writing up the research in order to gain a degree of critical distance. At the same time, events in Tibet, such as the series of protests and uprisings in March and April 2008 meant that I maintained a limited engagement with the Movement. This was mainly in the form of attending pro-Tibet rallies in London, such as the anti-Olympic Torch protests on the 6th of April 2008, but also included volunteering at events like an official visit to London by the Dalai Lama. Attending these events allowed me to see the partial and temporary nature of the research networks I had uncovered (as discussed in the Intermezzo) but also allowed me to continue some degree of engagement with the Tibet Movement at a crucial time in the struggle over the Tibet Issue. Thus, while it was important to develop an understanding of these events, they did not necessarily conform

to the overall findings of the research. These events occurred on average once every two months, reaching a peak during April 2008 when protest events reached their peak. By August, the focus of the Movement had shifted towards Beijing and away from London/the UK, so it was at this time that the field-based research process officially ended.

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