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The Geographies of Citizenship in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region
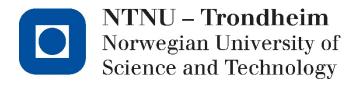
The Deterritorialized Citizenships of Refutable Mobile Myanmar Laborers in Suburban Bangkok Periphery

Master's thesis in Development Studies - specializing in Geography

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ABSTRACT

According to recent statistics published by the International Labor Organization, it is estimated that around 150 million people are currently working in a country different from their own country of birth. When resettling permanently in a new country, all the international labor migrants compromise their relationships with their home communities, including the political relationship with their countries of birth and hence, their citizenships, since the current consensus on citizenship is connected to ideas of national political territories and national identity. This paper is a contribution to the creation of an empirically-based theoretical construct that challenges this dominant rhetoric on citizenship.

By adopting a human geographical lens as well as a dual relational approach to citizenship, this thesis explores the interlinkages between citizenship, mobility, and territory in a context of international labor migration in today's most economically thriving and ethnically complex region in the world: The Greatest Mekong Sub-Region in Southeast Asia. More specifically, this paper unveils how do the Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of Bangkok Metropolitan Region think, feel, practice, and experience their everyday lived citizenships.

It can be argued that although Myanmar deterritorialized actors think themselves as territorial members of their home country, they barely manage to verbalize what citizenship is for them. From an emotional point of view, Myanmar deterritorialized citizenships are robust and resilient; regardless ethnicity, the workers feel like belonging to the Union of Myanmar. In contrast, the practices of Myanmar citizenships in Thailand are alarmingly suppressed because of structural reasons such as the repressive political system in force and worker's deficient patterns of mobilities, something that entails a refutable experience of Myanmar citizenship dominated by fear and a sense of alienation.

Keywords: Human Geography; Citizenship; Territory; Mobility; Identity; Myanmar; Thailand.

DEDICATION

To the omnipresent almighty and merciful all-knowing creative ruler above us all.

PRELUDE

အေမ့အိမ်

"အိမ်ပြန်ချင်တယ် ဟူး…

အငြိမ်းချမ်းဆုံးအမေ့အိမ်

အိမ်ပြန်ချင်တယ် ဟူး…

အိနွေးထွေးဆုံးအမေ့အိမ်

အိပ်မရတဲ့ညများစွာထဲ အို…

ရထားဉသ်သံလေးများကြားရင်

အိမ်ပြန်ချင်တဲ့စိတ်ကလေး တားမရေကူး".

(ထူးအိမ်သင်, ၁၃၅၉)

Mother's House

"I want to go back to my home…

the warmest in the world, my mother's house.

I always want to go back home…

How can I control my mind?

If I want to go back home…

When I hear the train horn,

I cannot control my mind missing my home,

my mother home".

(Htoo Ein Thin, 1997)

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to recent statistics published by the International Labor Organization, it is estimated that around 150 million people work outside their country of birth and the rate of international labor migrant stock is steadily increasing. The majority of the international economic migrants are unskilled or low-skilled performing labor in suburban enclaves of developing nations in the Global South (ILO 2015a; UN DESA 2016).

When resettling on a permanent basis in a new host country because of the purpose of labor, the international immigrants sacrifice – in one degree or another – the personal relationships they have with their communities of origin, including the relationship they have with their home nation-states and thus, their citizenships. According to the current consensus on citizenship, those holding the ultimate political power to releasing citizenships to the people are the nation-states based on the idea of existing national territorial borders. Therefore, the formal notion of citizenship is connected to ideas of national political territories and notions of national identity instead of being linked to its substantial element: universalism (Cohen 2006; Cresswell 2013; Dell'Olio 2005).

Recently, it has been argued that Southeast Asia is the only region in the world where *"the respect for human rights continues in a downward spiral"* (Civil Rights Defenders 2016) and, where more than six million international labor migrants are subject to political abuses on a daily basis (ILO 2015b). The purpose of this thesis is to examine this situation critically. In general terms, I attempt to deepen the understanding of the existing relationship between people, place, and citizenship in a context of international labor migration in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, due to format limitations, I have decided to limit my research area to the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) and particularly, to the two neighboring, but historically opponent, countries located on the right wing of the Mekong River Bank: Myanmar and Thailand. More specifically, I intend to elucidate the notions of everyday citizenship of Myanmar labor migrants who in their adulthood decided to move to work to the Khaysng[1] district in the Northern periphery of Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR).

1.1 RESEARCH TOPIC AND ITS ACADEMIC SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout history, issues of citizenship have been consistently and extensively addressed from two different and contested academic traditions: political science and sociology. While the political scientists have strictly focused on citizenship as a compound of legal structures and

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[1] Khaysng is a fictitious name to refer to my research district (see 2.6.3).

normative orders, the sociologists, on the other hand, have defined citizenship as – individual and collective – human experienced reality. Nevertheless, it is only in recent years that citizenship has begun to be explored through the lenses of other social science disciplines, among which geography is one of them. Endorsing an analytical approach based on key geographical tools such as notions of place and scale will undoubtedly contribute to integrate the, so far independent, two main theoretical traditions on citizenship into each other. The interest of human geographers in the *Geographies of citizenship,* i.e. the recently emerged field of study that explores issues of citizenship from a geographical point of view, has steadily become important as rates of international migration and transnational mobility increase. Moreover, this new and unified perspective on citizenship could be used for addressing social contemporary challenges which have not yet been solved by applying the traditional approaches to citizenship separately (Bauder 2014; Desforges et al. 2005; Isin & Turner 2002).

The importance of dedicating efforts to researching the geographies of citizenship is justified for two academic reasons. One, the need to fill a research gap that recent academic debate on transnationalism, immigration, and citizenship have largely ignored: migrants' perspectives on citizenship. Hence, there is a considerable need for understanding how transnational immigrants perceive their own citizenship experiences as well as how they create new symbolic and material places for citizenship, i.e. the values and the meanings they attribute to the different aspects of citizenship, within their local and transnational lives (Ehrkamp & Leitner 2006).

Furthermore, the urgent need for developing a newer and more inclusive ontology of citizenship; a more expanded conceptualization which is capable of ensuring the adequate inclusion of the set of those diverse identities which so far remain excluded, such as denizens (partially denied citizens) and stateless people (totally denied citizens), not only in terms of providing them a legal status, accompanied by subsequent rights and duties, but nevertheless, to safeguard their political agencies and thus, their access to citizenship as a resource for political life, i.e. the compound of social practices and enactments through which they can actively participate in the host civil society. Moreover, a conceptualization of citizenship, released from the notion of nationality, which in turn rescues and incorporates aspects of ethnicity and collective territorial identification but which at the same time explores how the relationships between people and place get affected in relation to notions of human mobility (or immobility) (Gieryn 2000; Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006; Lithman & Sicakkan 2005; Savage et al. 2005; Staeheli et al. 2012).

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

As seen in the previous section, delving into the notions of citizenship through a geographical lens is an innovative, prominent, and promising way of exploring the spatially-embedded complexities of power-loaded relationships between political agencies and territorial-based structures. Therefore, I consider that setting the production of a set of innovative and unique quality scientific knowledge on the geographies of citizenship as a primary aim of my study, is a fair, reasonable, and convenient goal. The major implication behind this academic achievement would be the availability of a set of empirically-based knowledge which can be used for enhancing the promotion of thick democracy levels and hence, the improvement of human rights situation in GMS.

Although I am aware that a social scientist's task is to provide the best explanation possible on the basis of all the available evidence, I strongly agree with the following statement: any *"valid knowledge of the agent's situation is simply inconceivable without the notion of the agent's view of the situation"* (Scott 2012: xxiii). Hence, I have deliberately decided to address my research topic from my research subjects' perspective, i.e. a bottom-up non-Western angle, because of the following reasons: first, I argue that in order to promote the social inclusion of transnational politically vulnerable actors into their current host Southeast Asian societies, it is crucial to learn from the knowledge of those who have experienced the hardships of the lack of citizenship in their own skin; second, I claim the importance of elaborating newer theoretical constructs about the citizen-state relationship from a critical and politicized point of view which can challenge the current mainstream policy-media rhetoric on citizenship, so the GMS' policy-makers can create more effective and inclusive citizenship policies (Manzo & Devine-Wright 2014).

A secondary and more specific academic objective I aim to reach is the integration of the notion of citizenship within the literature of human geography so the development of (new) suitable analytical tools for studying further the subfield of the geographies of citizenship can be achieved as a main imminent implication. I intend to accomplish this goal by developing a theoretical framework, based on two key geographical tools: place and scale, which allows me to elucidate the interlinkages between the term citizenship and two of the main (and contradictory) discourses of place: place as mobility and place as territory.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As seen in the previous section, the main research objective of this thesis is to acknowledge newer, eventually alternative, forms of citizenship that can contribute to the promotion of

thicker levels of democracy in the GMS of Southeast Asia through the conceptualization of a more inclusive ontology of citizenship as a contribution. More specifically, I aim to find out *how are the notions of citizenship of Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR?* Nevertheless, because I strongly believe that citizenship is something more than a *visible* set of practicalities, such as practices, flows, and frictions, I claim the importance of grasping those subtler dimensions of citizenship that lie under the surface of the existent uneven power relationships between the different political actors involved in the construction of *everyday* citizenships. Hence, I aim to focus on the sociopolitical dimensions of citizenship as well as to delve into the subconscious aspects that shape citizenship as a socially constructed reality.

Due to the complex and ambitious nature of my research question, I have considered it convenient to subdivide it into smaller queries, so I can easily explore the four different dimensions of citizenship as a lived reality: first, the mental dimension of citizenship or citizenship as an individual's unique mental construct; second, the emotional dimension of citizenship or citizenship as an individual emotional embodied reality; third, the practical dimension of citizenship or citizenship understood as an everyday physically enacted (or prevented) reality; fourth, the experimental dimension of citizenship or citizenship as an intersubjective human experience. In short, I aim to answer the following research sub-questions: how do the Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR *think (RQ1), feel (RQ2), practice (RQ3) and hence, experience (RQ4)* their everyday lived citizenships?

1.4   THESIS OUTLINE

The content of this thesis is distributed along eight chapters. Throughout the first chapter, I introduce the following aspects of my dissertation distributed in four sections: research theme and its research importance; research goals and its potential implications, research questions, and thesis outline; In the second chapter, I account for the following methodological aspects along nine different sections: the justification of my methodological choices; my experience in the field; the completion of my pilot study; the selection of my research subjects; the proceeding of the data production process according to each of the methods I have endorsed; the ethical dimensions of my research with a particular focus on safety, informed consent, confidentiality, and relational issues; the reflexive self-critique of my methodology. I end my second chapter with a summary; Next, a short chapter – number three – in which I disclose the main facets of my research context, i.e. the context of international labor migration, the geographical context of my study area, e.g. GMS and BMR, and last but not least, the sociocultural context of my analytical units – the Myanmar labor migrants in Thailand; Chapter four – made up of a total

of six sections – is entirely dedicated to disclosing my theoretical and analytical frameworks. I start by introducing two determining concepts on which the ontological foundations of my analytical tools are built upon: the notion of place and the notion of political power. Next, I devote three sections to the conceptualization of my three key analytical tools: territorialities, mobilities, and citizenship, and another section to discussing them and their intertwines. I conclude the fourth chapter with the elaboration of my analytical framework and a brief summary.

The largest part of my dissertation, encompassed by three chapters – five, six, and seven, respectively – is meant to elucidate for my analytical findings, which I expound, in order of relevance, categorized according to my main analytical themes: citizenship, mobilities, and territorialities. Along the three sections that make up chapter five, I account for the three main traits of Myanmar citizenships: attitude, awareness, and ability; In chapter six, I present both the social and the spatial mobilities of the Myanmar laborers; In chapter seven, I disclose three main aspects of Myanmar territorialities: individual affiliations, emotional belonging, and collective identities. Along with my last and eighth chapter, I discuss the findings in the light of my four thematic-based research questions. I conclude my dissertation with a section of final remarks and possible recommendations.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe and discuss the methodological choices I have made to study Myanmar citizenships in a context of international labor migration in BMR's periphery. I have employed a qualitative methodology with fieldwork as the key element in primary data production in addition to the use of secondary data. The chapter is structured like this: First, I justify the choice of my methodology. Then, I present the details of my fieldwork experience and my pilot study. Subsequently, I describe the utilization I have made of my main methods – observation, in-depth interview, and focus group – for producing empirical qualitative data. Next, I disclose the key ethical aspects of my methodology as well as a discussion of validity and critical reflexivity issues. Finally, I describe the analysis process of my empirical data and issues of writing style.

2.1. METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

This methodology is the result of more than one year of continuous intense work. I started designing my methodology in October 2015. Since then, my design has undergone two main phases: an early stage, from October 2015 to June 2016, in which my methodological choices were taken purely following academic knowledge criteria; a later stage, from July 2016 to October 2016, when the lived realities of my research subjects, directly and indirectly, shaped some aspects of the methodology I present.

The main justification for the selection of my methodology has always been linked to my need for meeting my final research goal: the production of new geographical knowledge through an adductive approach, i.e. by switching between the development of new ideas from overarching theoretical perspectives and the analysis of a set of empirical data Thagaard (2009: 169). Due to the intrinsic geographical nature of my research, I strategically decided to endorse the geographic tool par excellence, fieldwork, as a methodological choice for the adequate production of empirical qualitative data (Crang & Cook 2007). Although the element of fieldwork enjoys a strong tradition in the discipline of geography, the main reason behind my decision of conducting fieldwork was not because of the mere maintenance of the most ancient tradition in the practice of geography, but rather to become culturally competent on my research context through the experiencing of the sociocultural environment of my research subjects, and also to develop my geographical skills for future work life. In short, I was determined to conduct fieldwork because it is an irreplaceable learning tool (Goh & Gerber 2000).

Another decisive factor that has influenced the choice of my methodological approach has been the need to find an answer to my research question: *how are the notions of citizenship*

of Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR? I decided to adopt a qualitative methodological approach because of its suitability for elucidating the relationships between people and place, which in my case translates into understanding the inter-subjectivities of Myanmar everyday citizenships and their socio-spatial territorial contexts. Thus, I chose to transform the political voices of Myanmar workers in an empirical dataset by using a combination of both oral and participatory-based methods such as observation, in-depth interview, and focus group (Hay 2010).

2.2. MY FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE

My fieldwork experience is divided into three main phases: preparatory, executory, and subsequent. During the preparation phase, which took place between the beginning of March and the 25 July 2016, I was based at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. Throughout these months, I had to deal with different types of formalities and procedures such as ensuring economic support, booking transport and accommodation, applying for ethical permission to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), visa issuance, medical check-up and vaccinations, networking with potential research assistants/translators, and gift purchases. Additionally, I had to complete the methodological design as well as a fieldwork plan which I divided into three stages: first, a three-week adaptation period for establishing contact networks and conducting a pilot study; second, a seven-week period for main data production based on participant observations and in-depth interviews; third, a final two-week period for focus group discussions, coding, and preliminary analysis of data.

The executory phase of my fieldwork started on 26 July 2016 (date of my outward journey from Trondheim to Thailand) and ended on 21 October 2016 (the day I flew back to Trondheim from Thailand). My main activity during this phase consisted of executing the 12-week fieldwork plan I had designed in the earlier phase. Adapting the role of an exchange student in an Asian higher education institution was certainly of great help when accessing specialized quality research information. Additionally, I had the opportunity to take part in some informal discussions with some experts in matters of citizenship and migration in the GMS from who I learned about the current structural forces that affected my research subjects.

The subsequent phase of my fieldwork started when I arrived back to Trondheim on 22 October 2016 and it finished in November 2017, when I submitted this thesis. This last phase involved keeping myself informed about the latest updates related to my research topic, my research context, and my research subjects; to keep in touch (via digital communication) with

my research team members and the rest of my Asian network in order to ensure that my final submission is culturally consistent and accurate to the testimonies given by my participants.

Throughout all my fieldwork phases, I faced several important limitations. For instance, the financial shortage was the cause of continuous worries, particularly during the two first phases. Although I did receive economic support from NTNU in the form of a scholarship, I had to self-finance up to 90% of my fieldwork expenses. Lack of financial support has undoubtedly been the biggest limitation I faced since that has meant that many actors, without whose work the data production process would never have been possible, remained without a fair economic remuneration for their efforts. Moreover, time constraints became especially noticeable during the executory phase, bringing research team members and participants on higher levels of stress and exhaustion due to overwork. Adjustment of the participation schedule was challenging. Participants labored an average of 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, in addition to their own reproductive work. Research assistants had also other responsibilities to attend. Although finally, everything turned out satisfactorily, the execution phase was characterized by very hard work and many sacrifices made by all of us involved in the production of the empirical data set.

Last but not least, the exposure to higher levels of insecurity due to Thailand's current internal sociopolitical instability definitely affected the executory phase of my fieldwork experience. Political events like the Thai constitutional referendum held on 7 August (Ramsey 2016), followed by the coordinated bomb attacks across the country on 12 August (Olarn et al. 2016), and together with the death of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulayadej on 13 October 2016 (D.M. Jones 2016), plunged everyone living in Thai territory into deep levels of uncertainty, fear, and despair. The sensation of panic and threat was exacerbated among the community of non-Thai laborers since because of their ethnicity they were especially vulnerable to becoming arrested, accused, and prosecuted by Thai authorities (Barron 2014). The case of the two Burmese male workers sentenced to the death penalty for the murders of two British tourists in the Island of Koh Tao in September 2014 (Sherwell 2016), still terrified many of the Myanmar workers in BMR.

2.3. PILOT STUDY

One of the first things I did after arriving at my research area it was to conduct a pilot study. I spent the first stage of the second phase of my fieldwork experience getting acquainted with my sociocultural research context and testing out the operational effectiveness of my research design and my interview guide, in-situ, among a small sample of Myanmar labor migrants.

Completing my pilot study was crucial for several reasons. First, I was able to acknowledge Myanmar labor migrants' working lifestyles in BMR's periphery and thus, to find the most suitable times and venues for arranging the meetings with them. Besides, it was an excellent opportunity for me to train myself in interviewing through an interpreter, something I had never done before. I also had the chance to corroborate that my proposed questions were understood by my participants and, to ensure my own self-reflection process over some important aspects I had failed to consider in advance (Evans et al. 1997; Hoggart et al. 2002).

My pilot study lasted for two days. It was conducted on 11-12 August 2016. It consisted of a total of four in-depth interviews with two men and two women from Myanmar working in Promaid, a service company responsible for cleaning services. Participants were selected through a snowball technique. They all knew each other beforehand due to employment bonds. The interview guide used in my pilot study can be found in Appendix II. The average duration of the interviews was about 45 minutes for the male participants, who were pro-active and talkative, and about 60 minutes for the female participants, who were cautious with their responses. Following the participants' wishes, the interviews were conducted at their workplace during a low-labor demand period coinciding with a long holiday weekend due to Queen of Thailand's birthday. The atmosphere during the encounters was relaxed and friendly.

I considered two ethical aspects during the execution of my pilot study: one, to ensure the informed consent of my participants through an information letter of consent, originally written in the English language (see 1.9.1), translated into the Burmese language so my interviewees were able to read and sign by themselves (see 1.9.3); two, to balance the power relationships between researchers and participants by dividing the interviewees into pairs and conducting two double-interview sessions, so the number of participants equaled the number of researchers when interviewing.

In general, both the execution process and the outcomes of my pilot study turned out to be successful. My female research assistant and I were pleased with our interviewees' active engagement and appreciative receptiveness for the research project. The completion of a pilot study helped to refine my initial methodological design. Nevertheless, there were some weaknesses that could have been avoided. For instance, the number of interviewees was too small and there was little ethnic diversity represented in the sample unit (see table 1 in Appendix I). Moreover, we faced some linguistic limitations when translating words of ethnocultural nature from English to Burmese (eventually to Karen language) and vice versa.

2.4. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

When designing the selection criteria of my units of analysis, I employed the strategy of a purposive sampling. I established two non-negotiable requirements applicable to the selection of my research subjects: first, my participants must be individuals, born and raised in Myanmar, who, after the age of 18, migrated to Thailand; second, my participants must have lived and worked in Thailand for at least six months by the day of the interview.

By the completion of my pilot study, I had acknowledged the type of Myanmar ethnic groups settled in my study area as well as the spatial distribution of their settlements; they lived physically segregated from each other depending on their ethnicity. I had also become aware of the existence of ethnic subdivisions within the Myanmar ethnic groups due to the ethnicity of the parents of a Myanmar person in combination with the Myanmar division or state where the person was born and raised in (anonymous, personal communication, August 2016). These acquired levels of research adequacy enabled me to refine the selection criteria for my participants. I then decided to operate with a maximum heterogeneity sampling strategy based on two new requirements: ethnicity and gender. Nonetheless, I chose to focus only on the three main Myanmar ethnic groups in the Khaysng district: the Karen, the Mon, and the Burmese, to avoid any possible deviant case sampling. I decided to select eight interviewees from each ethnic group (regardless of their sub-ethnicity) to reach my theoretical saturation point. To guarantee a gender-balanced participation, I had four females and four males from each main ethnic group (Crang & Cook 2007; Krueger 1998; Patton 2002).

When accessing my research subjects, I faced serious limitations such as the lack of a previous network of contacts in Khaysng as well as my impossibility of establishing direct contact with my potential participants on my own because of the existence of a language barrier. We[2] ended up resorting to a combination of gatekeeping and snowball effect techniques. The arrangement of interviews took us several weeks. We struggled to find reliable gatekeepers and also to access Karen and Mon participants. Finally, two of our initial interviewees – a senior female Karen and a young Mon lady – helped us to gain access to the Myanmar's worker community in Khaysng.

2.5. DATA PRODUCTION PROCESS

Next, I provide a detailed account of the different qualitative methods I have used for producing my empirical dataset during the second and third stages of the executory phase of my fieldwork

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[2] The research team consisting of one research leader (me) and two Burmese research assistants.

experience. I present my selection of qualitative methods in chronological order to its use: observation, in-depth interview, and focus group.

2.5.1. Observation

Observation was the first method I used after arriving at Khaysng. Since observation does not require an exchange of verbal communication with the research subjects, it was the only qualitative method I could apply independently without the help of any translator. However, due to safety issues, I never conducted observations alone. My companions were mostly, but not always, Myanmar citizens. Neither did I hide when conducting observation nor did I observe someone observing. At any time, I have only conducted primary and overt observations (Hay 2010; Patton 2002).

Along with my executory fieldwork phase, I conducted several short observational sessions. The duration of the sessions fluctuated according to the place I was observing. For instance, sessions conducted in public spaces, such as the participants' working places, were noticeably shorter than sessions held inside participants' houses. However, the average duration of my observational sessions was about three hours each. Although I have always been an outsider at any time during my executory fieldwork phase, my degree of participation in the observational processes moved gradually from being observer-as-participant to becoming participant-as-observer as trust developed between me and the rest of my research team (Hay 2010). For example, while I was a mere spectator trying to get culturally immersed in my research context during the first days of August, by the end of October I was invited to attend the Thadingyut Festival[3] together with the Myanmar community in Khaysng. I neither asked for permission before conducting observations in open public spaces nor did I introduce myself to any researched crowd. In contrast, I made sure to always introduce myself to my research subjects before any participatory observational session in my main current role – a Spanish special master student from NTNU conducting a three-months period fieldwork in BMR.

In accordance with their purpose, my observations can be categorized into two types: descriptive and complementary. During my first weeks in Thailand, I used a slightly controlled descriptive observational approach to size, sense, and even mapping the physical environment where my research activity was taking place. I resorted to soundscapes, drawings, written field notes, and reflections on my field diary to capture *what had happened, how it happened, and to whom it happened* (Hay 2010; Patton 2002). I did not resort much to the use of the camera for

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[3] သီတင်းကျွတ်ပွဲတော် is one of the main traditional celebrations of Myanmar culture.

two reasons: first, due to safety reasons; since I had already been robbed once in early August, I did everything possible to nullify the risk of being robbed again; second, because of ethical reasons, I tended to minimize photo taking as a sign of respecting the anonymity of the workers. Furthermore, since my presence in Khaysng was not neutral because of my Western appearance, I intentionally avoided any needless photographing or video recording so I would remain less noticeable as possible. I employed a similar, however not so controlled, observational approach when visiting my participants' workplaces and residences.

During the months of September and October, I employed a complementary purposed observational approach to supplement the data produced by my translator when conducting interviews and focus groups. On the one hand, I always paid additional attention to visual elements like my participants' body language to capture their emotional reactions, when conducting interviews. Moreover, I had to keep a close eye on the actors in the vicinity to ensure my participants' right to safety and anonymity when interviewing in semi-public spaces. On the other hand, when conducting focus groups, I focused on observing participants' interactions with each other as well as the interactions between the participants and the research assistants. I supplemented the complementary observations with their respective field notes and, occasionally with some in-situ pictures, always with the corresponding permission of the photographed subjects. Exceptionally, I conducted two short sessions of uncontrolled *ongoing* observation: first, I underwent the same daily mobility routine – biking, walking and two-row seated bus riding – that a reduced group of female participants on their way back home after work; second, I underwent a two-row seated bus riding tour together with one male participant during his Myanmar students' way back home after school time.

Some of the greatest benefits I experienced after completing my observational sessions in a foreign cross-cultural context were the development of both my analytical and visual skills. Indeed, after three months of continuous observation, both controlled and uncontrolled, I became able to differentiate between the different ethnic groups either by physical appearance, clothes, and language. Likewise, I faced some limitations when conducting my observations. For instance, I was neither able to freely access all the places I had wished because of safety reasons nor able to conduct observations in very isolated areas during the nighttime. Although verbal skills were not required for observing, the language barrier limited me from obtaining access to certain places as well as being able to complement my observations with informal conversations with my research subjects. Because of time limitations, I was impeded to attend some of the sociocultural activities carried out by members of the different Myanmar ethnic groups in the locality Myanmar. Furthermore, the economic constraints experienced during my

executory fieldwork phase prevented me from visiting Myanmar and other pertinent Thai locations with high rates of Myanmar workers along the Myanmar-Thailand border.

2.5.2. In-depth Interview

Interviewing has been the qualitative method through which most of my primary data has been produced. I chose interview as my core method because of its adequacy for grasping individuals' insights and experiences, something in resonance with the (inter)subjective nature of my research question: *how are the notions of citizenship of Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR*? Moreover, I recognized the way in which interviews could involve interviewees into empowering processes of self-reflection which in turn could lead to research subjects developing new ideas on issues that they might not have thought about before. Hence, I decided to conduct individual semi-structured face-to-face, in-depth interviews as a mean to achieve a two-way verbal communication flow between me and the Myanmar laborers through a competent translator with focus on active listening (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007; Hay 2010). I also tried to delve into my participants' histories by following an interview guide divided into two sections: an opening part consisting of a list of closed questions; a second part comprising a set of thematic-based semi-open questions. Some questions in the second part of the interview guide were slightly adjusted depending on whether the ethnicity of the participants was a majority (Burmese) or a minority (Karen and Mon) one. The three different guides used for my in-depth interviews can be found in Appendices III, IV, and V, respectively.

I conducted a total of 24 in-depth interviews throughout the month of September 2016. Although the principle of an individual face-to-face verbal communication was behind each encounter, I decided to keep the idea (already applied in the pilot study) of maintaining a balance between the number of researchers and participants to reduce any possible difference of power. Hence, I conducted a total of five double in-depth interviews with 10 out of my 24 participants who shared a family bond. The rest, 14 out of 24 participants, got interviewed individually. Interviews were conducted either at participants' workplaces or at participants' homes during their daily or weekly times off. Whenever interviews were conducted at someone's home, it was common for the interviewees' family members and close neighbors to be present in the same room during the session, something inevitable considering that participants' dwellings were often single roomed. However, the presence of these external actors never altered the course of the interview; they always kept silent in the margins of the situation. Apart from one interview I conducted in English, the rest of the interviews were conducted in the Burmese language and translated into English with the assistance of a Burmese

translator. On one occasion, we resorted to a Mon translator in addition to the Burmese one for completing some interviews with some senior Mon who despite understanding the Burmese language, could not speak it fluently. The duration of the interviews varied between 55 and 120 minutes, with an average duration of about 75 minutes each. The overall of my interviewees categorized according to ethnic group can be found in Appendix I. Figure 2.1 illustrates the geographical distribution of all my interviewees by place of origin.

Figure 2.1 Geographical distribution of interviewees' home places per ethnicity.

Map Source: Google Maps

Interview preparations were somehow complex and demanding since there were many logistical factors to be considered in addition to the negotiation of the agreements. Following the Myanmar cultural tradition, we allocated between 10 and 50 minutes for a warming-up conversation with the Myanmar workers before each interview. An active listening of participants' concerns related to their international migrant experience contributed to the creation of a friendly atmosphere. The asking sequence varied from interview to interview. Although we always started with a set of fixed questions to determine the background of each participant, we adjusted the order of posing the thematic-based questions to every interview setting to fit the natural flow of the conversation. On some specific occasions, I reformulated or even created some new questions extemporaneously because of active listening practices. I also want to highlight the role that silence played during the sessions, because, undoubtedly, silence was a common feature of all my interviews. As Brun (2013) states, silences appear because of different reasons and they adopt many different forms. When conducting qualitative research, silences should be methodologically recognized and thus, analyzed. Therefore, I claim the silences of my interviews as valuable data and not as a mere lack of response.

Initially, I intended to audio record every single interview in addition to writing down notes of the participants' answers. However, audio was not recorded on some occasions because of the following reasons: excess of environmental noises when interviewing in semi-public spaces; refusal of some participants to be recorded; slow pace of information flow due to a relaxed atmosphere made audio recording superfluous. On one occasion, when conducting my only interview in English, the audio recording absolutely replaced the note-taking process because the communication flow was so quick that taking notes hindered me from following the conversation naturally. Transcribing the responses given by the participants usually occurred straight after finishing the interviews. Conversely, when interviews were conducted in late evening, I transcribed the content the next morning. In general, all transcripts were completed within the 24 hours after each interview session. However, on one or two occasions, the transcribing process had to wait up to two days due to working overload such as meetings with potential gatekeepers, potential *research deals,* or simply because of interview overlapping (Crang & Cook 2007).

The main challenges I experienced when interviewing Myanmar labor migrants were related to time limitations as well as to the intrinsic political nature of my research topic. Arranging interviews was an arduous task because of the following reasons: First, the availability of Myanmar workers to be interviewed for at least one hour was substantially

reduced because of their overworking. On average, my interviewees worked roughly over 10 hours a day, six days a week. Some of them enjoyed a weekly day off (usually Sundays). Others had none. Moreover, the laborers experience high levels of fatigue and tiredness due to the physically heavy working tasks they performed. Second, all migrant workers in Thailand experienced social marginalization and discriminatory working conditions. This situation worsened for those migrant workers who did not hold a legal documentation. Irregular migrants lived in fear of being constantly persecuted by Thai authorities. The political associations established by Myanmar migrant workers, consciously or unconsciously, with the word *citizenship* were controversial. While for some workers, often legal and politically engaged, participating in my research project represented an opportunity to express their political agencies, for others, with harsh life trajectories because of their political thoughts, my request for collaboration represented a threat.

2.5.3. Focus Group

Initially, my methodological design did not contemplate the use of focus group. I reflected on the potential benefits of applying this qualitative method in late August 2016, after having analyzed the results of my pilot study. In general, focus groups are useful for producing a type of data different than the one produced through individual interviewing processes. While interviews serve to capture how individuals think or feel about a certain matter, focus groups are appropriated for understanding why people think and feel the way they do. When combined with participant observation, focus group is an excellent tool to supplement the data produced through interviews. Focus groups are also helpful to capture those opinions that do not arise during a face-to-face individual interview but that might rather appear in the open space of a semi-public debate. One of the specific advantages of using focus groups in human geographical research is that they allow the capture of the multiplicity of meanings that people give to places, processes, and their own life experiences, through a relational approach. Additionally, focus groups enable the assessment of the existing complexities and details of peoples' relationships to place, which in my case translates into the need for understanding the complexity of the multi-scale interlinks between citizenships, mobilities, and the territories were they are embedded (Hay 2010; Hoggart et al. 2002).

At first, when planning my focus group, I designed three gender-categorized sessions per ethnic group – one for females, another for males, and a third one for bringing all of them together – because I assumed that the existing physical segregation of the housing settlements of Myanmar immigrants in the host district was a cause of dispute and enmity between the

different ethnic groups. Notwithstanding, after completing all my interviews and participatory observations, I realized that the reality on the ground diverged from what I had postulated. Indeed, Myanmar migrants maintained healthy and nurturing relationships with each other, regardless of their ethnicity, as long as they followed the cultural moral norm and used Burmese as a vehicular language (Burmese and Karen males, personal communication, September 2016). Hence, I decided to abandon the division by ethnicity but to retain the category of gender. In the end, the decision of including focus groups as part of my methodology became a natural outcome of the interviewing process. During the interviews, I detected an apparent need, among some participants, of speaking out their concerns related to their experiences of immobility practices because of their citizenship. Besides, my participants manifested their desire for being involved in collective decision-making processes but their impossibility to meet because of the lack of an available organized community space. Therefore, my focus groups were also intended to contribute to the creation of a space of resistance for Myanmar labor workers in the district. Last, my focus group sessions were aimed to be endowed with the nature of an informal social encounter, indeed, the final one of a series of previous encounters between my Myanmar collaborators – research subjects and research assistants – and me.

For determining the total of focus groups as well as the number of participants in each session, I followed the recommendations given by Hay (2010). Because of time scarcity, I limited the number of focus group discussions to three: one for women, one for men only, and one for both females and males together. On 8 October 2016, a total of nine Myanmar laborers – five women and four men – joined in the focus groups arranged in the privacy of a Karen family's home. The duration of the single-gendered discussions was 60 minutes each. The duration of the mix-gendered session was shorter. After about 40 minutes of discussion, the participants expressed having nothing more to say. The focus groups were led by Burmese translators of the same gender as the participants, i.e. a Burmese female, a Burmese male, and a female-male Burmese couple, respectively. At any time, I maintained an intermediate position between the participants and the research assistants. As during conducting the interviews, silences were important contributions that participants made throughout the focus group sessions. Therefore, I also claim these silences as essential data for my further analysis.

Some of the outcomes of conducting focus groups were these: I could acknowledge the interaction between the participants themselves and between the participants and the researchers. Additionally, I captured the existing power relationships between participants because of their gender and age, such as the fact that women were chattier than the men and junior discussants were quieter than the senior ones. Other smaller limitations I faced were my

lack of experience in conducting focus groups in a cross-cultural context in which I did not have command over the discussants' vernacular language.

The limitations I faced when conducting focus groups were similar to those I experienced when conducting interviews: since for Myanmar laborers both spare time and a sense of safety were scarce resources, the number and the duration of the focus groups had to be limited to fit workers' real needs. Moreover, although I managed to detect my participants' yearning for discussing their concerns on issues of mobility and citizenship through interviewing, I failed to foresee that this topic was indeed too sensitive for most of the Myanmar migrants so, in the end, only a minority of the congregated workers were willing to talk about their concerns openly.

2.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations have been particularly important to me because the type of research I conducted builds upon social interactions at every stage of my fieldwork experience (Hay 2010). During the preparatory phase, I notified the Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) one month prior to the start of my data production process because of two reasons: one, the sensitive nature of the personal data I was going to collect such as my participants' age, place of origin and, ethnicity (NSD n.d.); two, the computer-based system I intended to use for storing and processing my research data (NSD 2015). Two weeks before my departure for Thailand, I received NSD's approval for proceeding with my data compilation together with a series of recommendations which I took into consideration in order to improve the quality and the ethical rigor of my research. Below, a detailed explanation of those ethical aspects that have been key during my research procedure: safety, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and ethical relationships.

2.6.1. Safety

Warranting the safety and the physical, mental, and emotional integrity of all members of the research team during our collaborative encounters was accomplished but not without risk. Indeed, it was an arduous task when considering the two following factors: one, the vulnerability of the right of free speech about political matters that civilians faced in Thailand at the time of my fieldwork stay; two, the situation of inherent defenselessness which affected the safety of all my participants but especially the irregular ones. Situations such as consistently unannounced police checks at both migrant workers' homes and workplaces together with attacks performed by Thai citizens on non-Thai migrant workers in public transit, made Myanmar migrants extremely cautious and reluctant to take any unnecessary risky action

(Karen female and Mon male, personal communication, September 2016). There were several occasions when our appointments with the workers were promptly and involuntarily canceled or altered due to the unexpected Thai police inspections. When interacting with my research subjects, I stressed the importance of an ipso facto abortion of the data production process at the slightest sign of threat. Additionally, I ensured to avoid any unnecessary sensitive questions during our encounters (Hay 2010).

2.6.2. Informed Consent

To ensure that all my potential participants comprehended the nature and the objectives of my research project as well as the expected requirements, rights, and duties linked to their possible participation, I elaborated an information letter in English (see Appendix VII), which my research assistant translated into Burmese. I enclosed a consent form for my participants to sign so I could keep written track of my participants' agreed partnership. Every participant was asked to sign two copies of the consent form, that in turn I also signed, so both parts would keep a valid written copy of our agreement. Oral consent through audio record was made available to those participants who did not want to sign the written form. Occasionally, candidates refused to either sign or to give oral consent prior to an interview and therefore, the research procedure had to be aborted. No participant was forced to talk against their will. I also ensured that my assistant completely read out loud the Burmese version of the letter for those participants with reading comprehension difficulties. For some research subjects, the information letter was insufficient to gain the trust and the approval of our audience. On these few occasions, I had to use some extra time to convey the workers of my credibility by explaining them my deepest motivations and the potential implications of my research project. Happily, my research values were in tune with the Myanmar families' ones. So, Myanmar candidates expressed agreement, interest, and support in my research project which suddenly, became ours. In each encounter I had with the research subjects, I reinforced the voluntary character of the participation as well as participant's right to retract from the process at any desirable time (Hay 2010).

I always asked the workers for their permission prior to the audio recording of their oral testimonies; on some occasions, they refused to be recorded. During one particular encounter, the participant asked me to stop recording for a while because she was going to share a very sensitive information. Once she finished sharing that piece of story, she asked me to turn on again the audio recorder. A similar procedure took place whenever asking participants for their consent to use their pictures in the final publication. While some participants wanted me to use

their pictures, others chose not to do so. In the end, I decided not to publish any of my participants' pictures.

2.6.3. Confidentiality and Anonymity

I understand confidentiality as the researcher's responsibility of keeping participants' personal information in the private sphere where it is generated. In my case, I interpreted it as the need of protecting my research subjects' identities at any time (Patton 2002). To fulfill this ethical obligation, I followed these steps: first, I introduced myself to my potential participants in an open and honest way; second, I conveyed them of my intended wish of ensuring their anonymity and confidentiality in both a verbal and a written manner; third, I required explicit permission from those participants who allowed me to use their own photographs in this academic project; fourth, I refused to register my participants' names; fifth, to warrantee the privacy and confidentiality of the sensitive data, I always kept my notes and my primary data locked under key; sixth, when traveling, I took the sensitive information in my handbag to eliminate all possibility for others to access it without my consent.

I want to point out the existing cultural relativity on the conceptualization, the understanding and thus, the importance of confidentiality and anonymity. I am aware of my obligation to follow an ethical protocol that has been made in Norway, Europe. However, I argue that I have the moral obligation not to impose these ethical requirements, but to adapt them to the sociocultural context where my research occurs. In my opinion, Southeast Asian people have a slightly different approach to confidentiality than we, Europeans, have. They do acknowledge confidentiality and perform privacy but, in contrast to most Europeans, people in the GMS have closer interpersonal relations than the Europeans and thus, they share their personal issues, not only with their families but also with the members of their neighborhood community – an extended family, in their own words. Because of this existing cultural difference, I do not consider I have violated any ethical norm allowing the participants to share their personal issues in front of other actors since I assumed they are participants' trusted people. Indeed, I see it as a positive contribution towards a more balanced power relationships between the workers and the researchers. In short, I have always given the participants the freedom to choose the degree of anonymity that best fits their own needs. Moreover, I decided to protect my research subjects by endorsing a pseudonymous to refer to the real name of my research district.

2.6.4. Relationships

According to Evans et al. (1997), ethics are always relative to the sociocultural context they govern. That is why I decided to address the so-called ethics of the relationships, which in my case I have categorized into two different types: structural and individual-based. The structural ethical relationships are linked to the international relationships between countries. In my case, I was representing both Spain, my country of birth, and Norway, the country where I study. Since most of the higher-educated Myanmar people I met were thankful for the financial assistance that the Kingdom of Norway had been providing to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar through bilateral development agreements between these two nations, I got facilitated access to Myanmar migrants working at Khaysng who subsequently engaged in my data production process as a manner of giving something back to Norway. While the friendly diplomatic relationships between Spain and Thailand can be traced back in history (MAEC 2013), the existing bilateral relationship between Spain and Myanmar is only five years old (MAEC 2016). Despite the weak diplomatic ties between these two nations, I found out two cultural aspects that strongly contributed to the creation of emotional bonds between a Spaniard like me and some of the Myanmar migrants. For instance, the religious factor was important for the establishment of bonds of trust, in particular when engaging with members of the Christian community. Besides, the sport of soccer became a source for the establishment of bonds of camaraderie with those male participants who were staunch fans of the two top Spanish football clubs: FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF.

The expression of gratitude among the members of my research team it was a mutually constitutive act. I decided to buy some postcards with diverse Norwegian landscapes as a small gift for my interviewees (Phillips & Johns 2012). Later, I resolved to follow the Myanmar tradition of showing gratitude by providing the participants with some practical gifts too. When visiting Myanmar homes, we expressed our appreciation to our participants and their families by bringing them some refreshments like pastries and soft drinks. In turn, Myanmar participants expressed their hospitality by treating us with beverages, fruits, and even warm traditional meals, which we, the researchers, accepted fondly.

2.7. VALIDITY AND CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY

Self-reflection about my own research has undoubtedly been crucial for determining the way in which my research has flowed. I consider important to disseminate my reflexive means with the members of the academic community in order to endow my research transparency and validity. Next, I critically discuss the intertwines between positionality, power, and reflexivity.

Positionality can be defined as a self-acknowledgment of how our personal traits and thus, our own position in the field, influence our research means and our research goals (Castree et al. 2013: 385). Recognition of one's positionality is key to the production of situated knowledge. Although G. Rose (1997) argues about the impossibility of fully comprehending our own self in the research context, I claim the importance of exercising our own positionality context the best we can (Crang & Cook 2007; Hay 2010). In my case, during my whole research process, I paid attention to how elements not deliberately chosen by me such as my own role – Western female researcher – and my personality traits, might have shaped the data I have produced. Features such as languages I can communicate with, my religious values, and my personal cultural temperament have strongly conditioned my methodological options and choices throughout my fieldwork experience. Biological features such as my age, my racial traits, and my biological sex have undoubtedly influenced my positionality. Although my age did not cause me any privilege nor any discrimination along my research, I cannot say the same about my race and my biological sex. Being *the only white female* in the field led to me having to assume two unwanted and ambivalent phenomena so far unknown to me: the *white* privilege and the subordination to a stronger gender norm I was used to.

Although I had the original intention of establishing horizontal and reciprocal lasting relationships with my participants, the reality diverged from my expectations because of my *Westernness*[4]. My *whiteness* put me in a position of structural superiority in relation to my participants because of the fact I was offered privileges that were denied to them. Although my research team members and I notably differed in terms of ethnicity and social status, we shared one common identity aspect: the fact we all were migrants in Thailand. Therefore, I resorted to *our common identity*, in order to flatten the uneven power relationships between us. Respectively, both the participants and the Burmese translators were free to implement and adapt the methodological guides and thus, they had the major responsibility for elaborating and interpreting all verbal information.

Being woman in the field had advantages and disadvantages. While some male actors treated me with almost excessive consideration, others acted exactly in the opposite manner, hinting that I was not capable to conduct a cross-cultural research study. Meeting with females

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[4] Westernness understood as a concept with strong economic connotations. In Southeast Asia, the *white* privilege does not affect merely white Caucasian people; it is more like a *rich* privilege that applies to all citizens from richest countries regardless their race.

was slightly different. While some females did everything in their hands to serve me, others, the fewest, simply stared at me suspiciously. While I clearly felt a strong resistance when trying to establish a direct interaction with my male interviewees, my connection with female participants was, in contrast, considerably smoother and often characterized by the existence of good chemistry and complicity between us.

My critical reflexivity was enhanced by my daily routine of handwriting on both my research diary and my fieldwork diary. While I used my fieldwork diary mainly to annotate every piece of information which was essential for the progress of my research, my research diary was more like a notebook where I wrote my reflective thoughts in solitude by the end of the day. Although I was not able to write every single night in my research diary, in particular, those days when I was producing data in late evenings and subsequently transcribing it in next early morning, I admit that following a research diary has helped me to improving the quality of my research process and to see things with a certain perspective.

2.8. DATA ANALYSIS, WRITING PROCESS, AND RESEARCH RIGOR

In this section, I want to explain the conceptualization and execution of my analytical narrative and also my writing strategies, two deeply interconnected and mutually constitutive processes. I agree with the definition of data analysis proposed by Crang and Cook (2007) as a creative ongoing process compound by several minor analytical procedures which occur both during and a posteriori of a fieldwork completion. My analytical narrative is divided into two main phases: informal and formal. My informal analytical phase is constituted by the analysis I completed *exclusively* on the *field* understood as *locale*, i.e. the field as the physical place where the research team members meet to produce the data. Conversely, my formal analytical phase took place in what Crang and Cook (2007: 133) call the *expanded field*, i.e. an immaterial place of recalled memories accessed by the researcher through the revision of the material produced *in the field*. Particularly, I got access to my own expanded field first, through my workplace in Thailand and later on, at my workplace in Trondheim. In regard to my writing process, I describe the considerations I followed for the conceptualizing of my writing style as well as the executive details of the writing process itself. Although the data production process in the field was stressful in itself because of the challenges previously described, the amount and the quality of the compelled data was satisfactory enough for me to complete my analysis strategies.

2.8.1. Informal Analysis

According to Crang and Cook (2007: 133), data analysis is not an independent stage but rather *"a connected and connective process"* which starts already in the data production phase. In my

research, my informal analysis occurred during the two last stages of my executory fieldwork phase in the periphery of BMR. During this stage, I took the main analytical decisions over what type of data I wanted to produce and how I was going to produce it. Although I stand out as main responsible for the completion of this analytical stage, I highlight the fact that to me it feels more like a co-analysis, since I contrasted my analytical choices with the opinions of my research assistants and other academic experts in the field of social sciences. Moreover, the participants were free to decide the time and the place of the encounters, whether to take pictures or not during our meetings and, to include their own points into the focus group guide (see Appendix VI). After all, my informal analytical phase has been preparatory for my formal analytical phase I explain next.

2.8.2. Formal Analysis

My formal analysis is divided into four processes: preliminary, in-depth study, coding, and scrutiny. During the preliminary stage, I processed my *raw* materials into written digital files by transcribing all of my handwritten notes taken during interviews and focus groups and, supplementing them with observational field notes, audio recordings, and pictures taken by the research team members as visual references within the next 24 hours of the encounter with the participants. The second stage of my formal analysis, completed during the second week of October 2016, included the completion of an in-depth study of my primary materials, i.e. the word-processed copies of the transcribed materials.

The third stage, the coding of my data, was the most complex of all four. First, I decided that I would apply a set of thematic-based analytical codes with origin in my research question. So, I elected three main thematic categories: citizenship identity, citizenship conceptualization, and citizenship practices. In turn, these categories comprised several subcategories. For instance, Citizenship Identity comprised two subcategories: Identity Formation and Identity Politics. Citizenship Conceptualization included three subcategories: Subjective Emotional, Subjective Sensorial, and Intersubjective Mental. Finally, Citizenship Practices was subdivided into six sub-categories: Voting, Social Action, Active Citizenship, Cultural Celebrations, National Pride, and National Loyalty. Additionally, I detected three in-vivo codes which emerged during the data production process: Immobility, Fear, and Discrimination (Hay 2010).

The last formal analytical stage is subdivided into two scrutiny processes: On the one hand, I conducted my descriptive data analysis in relation to who, when, where, what and, how terms (Hay 2010), which I supplemented with a statistical analysis of my research sample. I completed this descriptive stage in the second week of October 2016. On the other hand, I

conducted an *analysis* per se, i.e. the critical process of identifying the interrelations of the themes as well as the existing similarities and the disparities in the data. I began with my final analytical process in the third week of October 2016 while I still was in Thailand and, I finished it after my arrival back in Trondheim. For the execution of this last phase, I resorted to the self-production of a manually-made colored-matrix which enabled me to scrutinize my primary data in a visual way. Through this analogic technique, which I developed myself, I managed to sort my thematic-based analytical codes together with my, already scrutinized, primary data in the form of a matrix. Subsequently, I applied a set of colored-based secondary codes to obtain a visual product which would help me to disentangle the ultimate step of my data analysis.

2.8.3. Writing Style and Writing Process

With regard to the conceptualization of my writing style, I made the deliberate decision of expressing myself in a first-person writing as a contestation against the universalist style of knowledge production which employs the so-called *God trick* as a way to erase any evidence of the *self* behind the research work (Hay 2010). I believe that any process that involves a production of knowledge is subjective. Furthermore, I assume that the production of human geographical knowledge does not happen in a vacuum but it is rather *situated* in a specific time-space context.

Regarding the execution of my writing process, I decided to apply a writing-in model based on a writing-up phase. This means that my produced knowledge has been created by a set of embodied knowers which in my case were: the Myanmar participants, the Burmese research assistants, and me, the research leader. In proportion, the time I have dedicated to my writing process is considerably superior to the time I spent analyzing my data and, notably greater than the time I used to produce the data. Altogether, I spent one month conducting a pilot study and completing its subsequent analysis, around two months producing my qualitative data and, over five months writing this publication you are reading through now.

2.9. SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, I have described the details of my research methodological approach. I started arguing for the reasons why I decided to adopt a qualitative methodology. Next, I explained the motivations behind my main methodological choices: the decision of undertaking a three months fieldwork in the geographical location of my research area and, the three qualitative methods I endorsed to produce my primary data: observation, in-depth interview, and focus group. In addition to detailing the two main research phases of my fieldwork experience in Khaysng, i.e. my initial pilot study phase and my consequent main data

production phase, I explained the criteria I followed for selecting my participants. Furthermore, I accounted for the ethical aspects of my research such as safety issues, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and relationships in the field. Besides, I discussed aspects of validity, positionality, power, and critical reflexivity. I ended by specifying the execution of my data analysis and my writing process.

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.1. INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION

In the last 20 years, the number of people living in a country different than their own country of birth has increased by more than 50% and this trend continues. These days, over 150 million people of the more than 230 million international migrants move *"from one country to another for the purpose of employment"* (IOM 2016). International labor migration is the prime type of cross-border migration these days and one of the main pistons running the global economy engine (UN DESA 2016).

The intrinsic interlinks between international labor migration and economic growth can be understood by looking at the Southeast Asian setting. According to Sugiyarto (2015), Southeast Asia is considered as one of the most dynamic regions in the world. Over 2% of its total population of more than 600 million people are officially settled temporarily outside their country of birth. International labor migration within Southeast Asian countries follows two major patterns: one, the migration stream flowing mainly from Indonesia and Philippines towards Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore as main destinations; two, the migration flow around the Mekong river basin with Thailand as primary destination attracting workers from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and Myanmar. In both cases, the predominant migration originates in rural or little-urbanized areas and it is headed towards the metropolises, which are experimenting a rapid spatial and economic expansion due to urbanization processes (Sugiyarto 2015). For this study, I focus on the second migratory pattern, i.e. the transnational migrations within the GMS.

GMS is the *"natural economic area bound together by the Mekong River"* (ADB 2016), comprising Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC, specifically Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. GMS is home to more than 300 million people, almost half of the total population of Southeast Asia. All the nations encompassing GMS, except for China, are also members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), together with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Philippines (ASEAN n.d.). Statistics show notorious socioeconomic disparities between ASEAN's GMS countries and the rest of ASEAN state members (Duval 2009). Although GMS is not an official economic unit like ASEAN, GMS has moved from being a subsistence-based economy to becoming a *modern* and diversified economy integrated into the global market thanks to a series of economic growth-

focused development programs promoted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) during the last 25 years (Guttal 2002). Nevertheless, despite the unquestionable progress of GMS as a supranational unit, an alarming socioeconomic inequality prevails among the GMS countries. Indeed, there is a conspicuous gap between the GMS nations, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam, all with a clear emigrant profile, and Thailand, the only GMS nation with an evident receiver nature (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1.Evolution of Human Development Index and HDI global rank position of GMS Countries between 1990 and 2014.

GMS COUNTRY	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (1990[5])	GLOBAL RANK POSITION (1990)	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (2015[6])	GLOBAL RANK POSITION (2015)
Cambodia	0.364 (Low)	#126	0.555 (Medium)	#143
Lao P.D.R.	0.397 (Low)	#119	0.575 (Medium)	#141
Myanmar	**0.352 (Low)**	#129	**0.536 (Low)**	#148
Thailand	**0.572 (Middle)**	#90	0.726 (High)	#93
Viet Nam	0.475 (Low)	#107	0.666 (Medium)	#116

Source: Globalis, 2016; UNDP n.d.-a, n.d.-b.

Despite the remarkable economic prosperity of GMS, its current political landscape is marked by a downward spiral of democratization characterized by the increase of a military rule. The authoritarian political regimes of the GMS countries raise the vulnerability to safeguard the basic human rights, something that has unleashed the need for a type of research that contributes to the promotion of a real thicker democracy in GMS (Human Rights Watch 2016). This dissertation intends to contribute to meet this research target. Nevertheless, due to the inherent format limitations of a master's thesis, I have no choice but to narrow my study to one particular object of analysis, i.e. a specific geographical research area. Among the several existing possibilities I could choose from, I decided to focus on the most representative one due to its magnitude and relevance: the labor migrant stock from Myanmar into Thailand; the migration flow from the poorest GMS country towards the richest GMS nation according to the Human Development Report published by UNDP (2015). Although in recent years there have been numerous studies carried out on Myanmar immigrants in Thailand, most of them were

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[5] HDI levels in 1990: High (0.800 or above), Middle (between 0.500 and 0.799) and Low (below 0.500)

[6] HDI levels in 2015: Very High (0.800 or above), High (between 0.700 and 0.799), Medium (between 0.555 and 0.699) and Low (below 0.555).

conducted on the Myanmar-Thai border area, leaving a research vacuum within the Myanmar working communities settled in the primate city of Bangkok and, in particular, in its relatively new expanded suburban area. For this reason, I decided to conduct my research in the periphery of Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR), more specifically in the northernmost suburban area, Pathumthani province.

3.2. STUDY AREA: NORTHERN PERIPHERY OF BANGKOK METROPOLITAN REGION

Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is the largest city in GMS. In the last 10 years, the city has undergone a considerable demographic and territorial expansion. Specifically, the growth of the core city has been around a 30%, whereas the suburban areas have enlarged about a 66%. Indeed, over 60% of BMR is located outside Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's (BMA) physical geographical limits (Cox 2012; World Bank 2016). Thus, the importance of choosing the suburban periphery of BMR as a geographical research area, it is not only because this is the most common settlement for Southeast Asian people today, but also because of its intrinsic ecological and sociocultural complexities as a rural-urban continuum.

The Khaysng district is one of the seven administrative divisions of the historical province of Pathumthani (14ºN, 100ºE), ironically founded by Mon exiles who ran away from Myanmar around 400 years ago. In this geographical area of about 300,000 square kilometers, there are now many higher education and research institutions and thus, a considerable number of Thai high-skilled workers. Besides, this district, Thailand's largest sales area where numerous wholesale markets are located, is also the workplace for a large number of unskilled laborers, most of them non-Thai cross-border migrants belonging to minority ethnic groups (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2016).

3.3. MYANMAR CROSS-BORDER LABOR MIGRANTS IN THAILAND

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma until 1989, is one of the most ethnically complex patchworks in the world with over 130 different ethnic groups classified in six major ethnolinguistic groups: Sinitic, Tibeto-Burman, Malay, Miao-Yao, Mon-Khmer, and Tai. The country shares an ancient, ambiguous, and multifaceted relationship with the Kingdom of Thailand. Although only one century ago, under the rule of the British Empire, Myanmar was the world's largest rice exporter and thus wealthy, today, because of political mismanagement, Myanmar is one of the most underdevelopment countries in the world (Chaturvedi 2012; Steinberg 2001). With the background scenario of the longest civil war on Earth, the country is the largest migration source country in the GMS, with up to 10% of its

total population, of almost 55 million people, migrating internationally mostly through irregular means in an uninformed, badly planned and thus, unsafe manner. The most aggravated ongoing armed conflicts occur along the Myanmar-Thailand border. Around 50% of the almost four million international migrants settled in Thailand are originally from Myanmar (Globalis 2015; IOM 2015).

The current UN Convention on Migrants' Rights (1990) refers to international labor migrants as *migrant workers*, i.e. any *"person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in remunerated activity in a state of which he or she is not a national"*. This definition, which enhances the existence of an economic bond between the individual and the host country, overlooks the real causes behind the individual (or collective) decision of becoming a cross-border migrant, similarly to its homonym term, economic migrant, used in the current debate on international migration, and often with pejorative connotations. All the terms such as migrant worker, international labor migrant, or economic migrant, encourage the quite dangerous belief that individuals' mere motivation for moving abroad is based on the obtaining of an economic revenue. This statement might be true for a percentage of the cases, especially when considering the alarming levels of economic disparity between nations which translates into precarious conditions for some and buoyant for others, but not for all.

In the case of Myanmar migrants living and working in the Northern periphery of BMR, many of them escaped Myanmar because of the following reasons: ongoing armed conflicts, economic precariousness exacerbated by environmental disasters related to climate change, and forced displacements due to land evictions. Since Myanmar's internally displaced people and asylum seekers are not entitled to special protection in Thailand because of the lack of ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention (Kahsay 2016), many of the Myanmar refugees choose to integrate into the informal sector of the Thai labor market. Although these workers make a remarkable contribution to the development of the Thai economy, their lack of a legal status increases their vulnerability to experiencing all kinds of political and labor abuses and social marginalization (ITCILO 2008).

3.4. SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have introduced both the thematic and the geographical contexts where my research is embedded: the international labor migration context in GMS, one of the most dynamic and ethnically complex regions in today's world. In particular, I focus on those individuals from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar – GMS' less developed country – who in their adulthood migrated to the Kingdom of Thailand – GMS' wealthiest country – in order

to work in the Northern periphery of its capital city, BMR. The units of analysis are laborers from three different Myanmar ethnic groups – the Karen, the Mon, and the Burmese – who have been living and working in the Khaysng district for at least six months as of October 2016.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this chapter, I expound upon the theoretical foundations constituting my analytical framework. I start by introducing the ontological basis from which my three main analytical tools – citizenship, mobility, and territory – derive: the core geographical concepts of place and scale. Further on, I disclose my theoretical tools in reverse order of their analytical importance because of rationality matters. Hence, I first conceptualize the notion of territory on which the idea of mobility, the one I subsequently present, builds on. Thereafter, I am in the theoretical position of withdrawing the concept of citizenship. Once my analytical tools are conceptualized, I discuss the way they interrelate with each other. Last, I outline my analytical framework. I close the chapter with a brief summary.

I want to point out that all the concepts I present below, due to its pluralistic nature, have more than one single correct definition. Furthermore, in spite of the European sociocultural background of most of the authors who contributed to the creation of the theoretical approaches I employ below, the purpose of my analytical framework is to be adaptable to analyze a non-Western sociocultural, political, and economic geographical context.

4.1 PUTTING PLACE FIRST

The use of the place as a geographical analytical tool goes far back in history. Place has been intrinsically linked to geography studies since the time of ancient Greece (Cresswell 2015). Place is a complex term that entails a range of diverse and contested epistemologies and their respective different theories. Below, I outline the most recent theoretical contribution to the academic debate on place, which builds upon ideas of dynamic relational processes and hence, it breaks with former conceptualizations of place understood as a fixed spatial entity. Moreover, I look at the intimately controversial relationship between notions of place and politics since both, the political power itself and the struggle for attaining it are crucial to achieving a much more comprehensive and accurate conceptualization of place.

4.1.1 Contemporary Theoretical Approach to Place

The conceptualization of place as something relational was originally presented by Doreen Massey in the early 1990s. It meant an alternative to older conceptions of place conceived as a bounded and isolated spatial unit, either featured by the dehumanizing objectivity that sees place as a physical geographical enclave (location) or, in contrast, merely constituted by the subjective emotional affections that derive from individuals' existential experience of life. Massey argued for the mutual constituency and interdependency between people and places. She also claimed that places and peoples' identities were not static nor fixed but open, dynamic,

and multiple (Anderson 2015; Jess & Massey 1995; Massey 1991). In the 2000s, Massey took further *the dynamics of place*. In her last published book, *For Space*, she advocated for the importance of overcoming contemporary challenges such as the complexities of the constitution of places, through the conceptualization of new spatial imaginaries. For Massey, place is a social *event*, i.e. *"a constellation of processes"* (Massey 2005: 141), regulated by both explicit and tacit criteria and three main components: simultaneity, interrelationality, and openness, which entails two dimensions: elusiveness and throwntogetherness.

The dimension of elusiveness refers to the idea that place is nothing but elusive and intrinsically incoherent because of its inherent conditions of openness and uniqueness. This argument promotes the notion of place as a spatial entity in perpetual mutation and constant re-definition. The dimension of throwntogetherness refers to the spatial intersection of multiple, heterogeneous, and disperse temporary life trajectories taking part in the *event of place*. It reminds us of the fact that we, human beings, do not exist in isolation but rather in co-existence with each other and other non-human living creatures like trees, animals, and inert matter. In this way, *our* living together becomes an existential need that requires a perpetual and synchronous procedure of accommodative negotiation between all the agents involved in the continuous creation of place as a collective achievement. Moreover, throwntogetherness is linked to the notion of politics since the *act* of *living together* in the same spatial unit is inevitably political (Massey 2005; SAGE 2013).

Since 2005, human geographers have developed a varied range of newer theoretical approaches to place, all of them on the basis of Massey's transgressive understanding of place (Aure et al. 2015). In the upcoming sections (4.2 and 4.3), I account for the two of these contemporary discourses which are analytically relevant for my study: place as territory and place as mobility. However, before I proceed with the theoretical conceptualization of my analytical tools, I want to introduce the notion of political power and its interlinks with the concept of place since, to my understanding, power relationships are intrinsically essential for attaining a comprehensive understanding of the relational approach to place.

4.1.2 Political Power as a Multi-Scale Place-Shaping Force

Politics, power, and place are inseparable terms. Thus, acknowledging the political dimensions of place and accounting for the political power relationships embedded in places is crucial for obtaining an accurate conceptualization of place understood as a node for multiple, simultaneous, and relational life paths. Firstly, the term politics can be defined as *"the art and the science"* of governing geographical political units (Allison 2016). Painter (2006) stated that

politics have a strong impact in our daily lives because they have the capacity to shape all the dimensions of the places we inhabit, not only the materiality of our localities but also our subjective experiences of place identity and our ability to perform public or semi-public spatially embedded social interactions. Staeheli (2003) described four ways in which politics and place interconnect. On the one side, politics is a mechanism employed in place creation; depending on the level politics occur, the formation of a place will be designated by different tints. For instance, politics are considered to construct places when they are exerted by a political elite, of a particular social identity, in order to achieve a territorial social unity through imposed top-down means. In contrast, politics are regarded as deploying places when performed, by *smaller* political actors with the aim of pursuing a conscious transgression of a particular moral spatial norm. On the other side, place is both the object and the context of political struggles. Moreover, place is the context where the formation of political identity occur (Agnew et al. 2003; M. Jones et al. 2004).

Secondly, regarding the notion of power, I have decided to resort to two opposing discourses of power: One, the dominating notion of power or the capacity to influence someone to act against their own needs and interests through manipulative oppressive means; such means have traditionally been used for indoctrination purposes by authoritative political elites who through the imposition of ideological systems such as habits, beliefs, and attitudes over the places they exerted command over, they shaped places' cultural and moral standards and thus, people's identifications with places. This type of power, which determines what is allowed to be done and where, is particularly linked to the notion of *politics of identity*, a term used to refer to people's place identities as the aftermath of macro-scaled structural political strategies; Two, the notion of power as agency or individuals' political ability to protect their own interests while acting towards the achievement of their own needs. This type of power, which equals Mouffee's notion of radical citizenship (see 4.4.1), is essential for shaping the places of resistance where people's enactments oppose the dominant political traces (Anderson 2015; Rigg 2007).

Likewise, political powers are multi-scale and hence, they shape places on different geographical scales simultaneously. In human geography, scale is a socially constructed and politically contested concept defined as *"the middle term between place and space"* (Castree et al. 2004: 11). Traditionally, scales have been used to explain the spatial processes that transcend bounded territories (see 4.2) (Castree et al. 2013; McMaster & Sheppard 2004). There are two co-existing types of scales: one, a vertical notion of scale (scale per se) that refers to a slow-paced dynamic hierarchy of territorial units in which the smaller units are necessarily

nested in the larger ones like an opened Matryoshka-shaped doll; two, a horizontal notion of scale (level) that refers to a set of flat networked relationships which enables the pinpointing of those inter-scale social processes that transgress established political borders (McMaster & Sheppard 2004). For the purpose of this particular thesis, I have decided to deploy a system of scales which is compatible with both Myanmar and Thai administrative (governmental) structures (see 4.2.1) (MIMU 2015; OECD 2016). Due to the univocal equivalence between the scalar systems I pose and the idea of territory, I shall describe the scope of those scales/levels which are relevant for my analysis in the territorial typologies subsection (see 4.2.1).

4.2 CONCEPTUALIZING TERRITORIALITIES

In this section, I want to specify a set of inherently interrelated terms – territory, territoriality, and deterritorializations – all etymologically rooted in the Latin word *terrēre*, which besides of being essential for discerning the indissoluble interrelation between political power, sovereignty, and place in a precise way, they are crucial for the completion of my analysis (Agnew et al. 2003). I deliberately start by introducing the idea of territory, a word with many connotations that can be used indistinctly in formal and informal contexts and, which underlies the basis for the conceptualization of my next pair of terms: territoriality and deterritorializations.

When used in the geographical academic context, territory is both a polysemic concept and a discourse. As a geographical concept, territory's most significant meaning refers to any geographical area which is claimed by those political actors who exert their controlling authority over the people, the resources, and the relationships embedded within that particular geographical area (Mayhew 2015: 490). Moreover, the word territory, often linked to constitutive insights on national identities and nationalism, is widely endorsed as a synonym of the term scale (see 4.1.2) (Agnew et al. 2003). All these semantic overlaps prevent the achievement of a single conceptualization of territory as a political geographical concept. In turn, territory as a discourse refers to one of the contemporary discourses on place which poses the limitations of the paradigmatic relational approach to place (Aure et al. 2015). Indeed, the discourse of place as territory argues for the idea of place as a politically bounded and thus, relatively fixed and static multidimensional spatial entity (M. Jones et al. 2008). Although territory epitomizes the existing political relationships ensuing within and between places, it is, by itself, a deficient analytical tool for revealing the relational insights within a given territorial unit. That is why ideas of territoriality and deterritorializations must be brought into the picture.

The term territoriality is a dual meaning concept used to designate either the set of social practices adopted by the dominant political actors to produce and control territories, as well as the whole of social relationships between those individuals who inhabit a particularly given territory. Furthermore, the term *deterritorializations* refers to the manners in which territorial-based social relationships develop and also, to the ways in which territories are called into question and thus, contested by those relatively powerless political actors like civil society's resistance groups (Agnew et al. 2003; M. Jones 2010; M. Jones et al. 2004).

4.2.1 Types of Territory

In order to make notions of territoriality and deterritorializations suitable analytical tools, I have to specify the ranges of existent territories which are relevant to my study. Therefore, I present a system of vertical scales, equivalent to the hierarchical territorial system conceived in section 4.1, which is fundamental for the completion of my analysis in an increasing order from minor to larger politically administrated areas: first, the *constituency* scale formed by both Myanmar wards/village-tracts and Thai sub-districts; second, the *municipality* or locally administrated realms, encompassed by Myanmar townships and Thai districts; third, the *regional* scale which refers to both Myanmar districts and Thai provinces such as Pathumthani; fourth, the *sub-national* scale which corresponds exclusively to Myanmar's states, divisions, self-administrated zones (SAZ), self-administrated divisions (SAD) as well as the Naypyitaw Union Territory; fifth, the *national* scale which applies to both The Republic of the Union of Myanmar and to the Kingdom of Thailand; sixth and last, the *supra-national* scale with which I make reference to GMS.

4.3 CONCEPTUALIZING MOBILITY

Research on mobility has a long tradition in social sciences in general, and in particular within the discipline of human geography as the term itself refers to those fundamental spatial processes that interconnect people and places (Castree et al. 2013: 319). Nevertheless, it has only been in recent years that the concept mobility – etymologically from Latin *mōbilitās"* which literally means *"the ability to move or to be moved"* (OED 2002) – has acquired an overwhelming recognition as an analytical tool. Indeed, the interdisciplinary field of mobility studies has become a trend after Sheller and Urry (2006) published the so-called *new mobilities paradigm*, one of the recent contributions to the expansion of the mobility turn within the social sciences. This paradigm intends to confront traditional notions of sedentary place-dwelling as the hegemonic norm for authentic place-making. Moreover, the new mobilities paradigm builds

upon the fluid notion of modernity and the relational notion of place (4.3.1) (Faist 2013; Hui 2016).

4.3.1 Contemporary Geographical Theoretical Approach to Mobility

In recent years, human geographers, due to their increasing concern with issues of place fluidity and spatial unfixity, have been developing a way to connect to all existing forms of multi-scale movements so far independent from each other (Cresswell 2010). The result of this academic effort is a new discourse on place that dilutes classical perceptions of distance and scale: place as mobility (Aure et al. 2015). The understanding of mobility as a dynamic version of place is based on the epistemological difference between mobility and movement. While movement is conceived as an abstract mobility, i.e. a particular type of mobility that has been removed from the contexts of power, mobility is rather conceptualized as any meaningful spatially embedded and context-based movement which in turn produces mobile identities and fluid micro-geographies of everyday life around existing power constellations (Cattan 2008; Cresswell 2006a). The approach builds upon the philosophical basis established by French Philosopher Henri Bergson who, after exploring the relationship between mobility, perception, and thought in early 20th century, reached the following conclusion: mobility is ontologically absolute and immobility is nothing but an illusion of human perception (Massey 2005). In this way, the conceptualization of mobility depends on peoples' own capability to perceive this reality (Adey 2010). Moreover, immobilities, or what Hannam et al. (2006) call moorings, are simply regarded as unwanted or unexpected relative mobilities.

I want to set forth what I consider to be the two main criticisms against the discourse on mobility presented so far. On the one hand, just like the theoretical approaches to citizenship presented in 4.1.1, the current dominant line of thought in mobility studies has been developed mainly by European scholars in consonance with the Western society model. Although people in the Global South have become increasingly mobile in the last decades, the theoretical model developed by Western scholars is not particularly representative of the current mobility reality taking place in Southeast Asia (Rigg 2007). As an alternative to the dominant Northern paradigm, I want to make a record of those key aspects that are exclusively intrinsic to the GMS context: first, the relevant role that household units and neighboring communities play in determining individuals' patterns of mobility and hence, the subsequent increase of geographically decentralized (mobile) livelihoods; second, the importance of acknowledging the accelerated blurring of the rural-urban divide in the GMS due to the rapid pace of urbanization processes; third, the need for endorsing a place-oriented approach that allows an

in-depth understanding of how the multiple and steady increasingly complex mosaic of mobile social relationships is re-constituting places across spaces (Rigg 2007). On the other hand, today's mainstream mobility discourse denies the epistemological existence of any notion of immobility by reducing it to become a *relative mobility*. I think that overlooking immobility is dangerous because it denies the theoretical conceptualization of a set of factors which are inevitably real, such as the ethics of establishedness and the structural moorings, among others. In fact, I dare to say like Faist (2013), that ignoring the *unwanted side* of the *mobility* coin is only detrimental since it hinders the attainment of an exhaustive comprehension of the issue.

4.3.2 Types of Mobility

The use of mobility as an analytical tool in human geography requires a comprehensive understanding of the existing types of mobility and its consequent relational complexities. For Adey (2010), the importance of the interrelationship between the existing types of mobility is such that he even suggests endorsing the term *mobilities* instead of the singular word mobility. Next, I present three modes of categorizing mobilities according to the following factors: the geographical scale where mobilities take place, the social-spatial dichotomy, and the actual-potential duality.

First, the categorization of mobilities according to the geographical scale where they elapse establishes a division between the so-called *little mobilities,* i.e. the movements, essential for human life, occurring on a biological level, e.g. the flow of blood through our veins, and the *big mobilities*, i.e. those movements, happening on a larger scale, that lead to an increase of society's complexity, connectivity, and interdependency, e.g. today's global market supply chain. These two types of mobilities respectively symbolize people's internal and external mobility systems which are bonded together through individuals' sensorial systems (N. Rose 1996). Hereinafter, as I use the word mobilities, I shall be referring exclusively to the notion of *big mobilities*, since *little mobilities* are out of the scope of this dissertation.

Second, the way of classifying mobilities on the basis of the social-spatial dichotomy distinguishes between social and spatial mobility. On the one hand, social mobility refers to the act of moving through the social ladder, either upwards, e.g. high-skilled workers moving abroad because of better career opportunities, or downwards – often associated with has pejorative connotations – e.g. unskilled migrants who are forced to move abroad because of the precarious living and working conditions they experience in their home communities. On the other hand, spatial mobility refers to those geographical displacements that distribute people, goods, and ideas across space at any geographical scale (see 4.3.2). Four subtypes of spatial

mobilities can be acknowledged when combining the duration and distance involved in a mobility act: daily mobility, residential mobility, travel, and migration. Daily mobility refers to the set of short-termed movements that take place in the vicinity of one's place of residence on a daily/weekly basis such as commuting from/to home to work. Residential mobility comprises those moves occurring within one's living area that imply a change of postal address for at least one year such as the change of abode within one's township of origin. Travel comprises those spatial displacements of relatively temporary nature that involve relatively long distances from one's habitual residence. In modern society, traveling is linked to the idea of freedom (Hjortol 2008). Migration is the type of mobility that causes a long distance displacement outside of one's habitual living area, e.g. Myanmar laborers (Kaufmann et al. 2004). Traditionally, the geographical approach to mobility has prioritized the study of social mobility while assuming that the spatial mobility of individuals occurs regardless their levels of social mobility (Adey 2010).

Last, the categorization distinguishing between *actual* and *potential mobilities* is crucial to determine processes of social inclusion or marginalization. Kaufmann et al. (2004) pointed out the difference between these two mobilities subtypes by arguing that people's capabilities to be spatially mobile are ultimately determined by sociocultural and economic factors since spatial mobility is a dimension of social life. Moreover, although currently mobility is regarded as a basic right, not everybody has access to equal levels of mobility because mobility has an economic cost. Indeed, some privileged individuals are hypermobile at the expenses of other individuals who are prevented from moving at their own free will, e.g. the mobility of the rich vs. the immobility of the poor (Adey 2010; Hannam et al. 2006; Kaufmann et al. 2004; Kenyon et al. 2002).

4.4 CONCEPTUALIZING CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is an inherently political ancient concept which can be used in both formal and informal contexts. When used in everyday conversations, most people equate citizenship to nationality. Academically, citizenship is an ontologically complex and Eurocentric-based analytical tool with multiple and contested meanings. Etymologically, citizenship comes from the conjunction of the noun *citizen*, i.e. *"inhabitant of a city or town who possesses civic rights or privileges",* and the suffix *–ship*, i.e. *"condition of being"* (OED 2014). The term was originally formulated by ancient Greek thinkers around 400 B.C. Traditionally, notions of citizenship have been theorized by political philosophers. Nevertheless, throughout this last century, newer conceptualizations of citizenship have been developed by an increasingly

interdisciplinary group of social scientists such as sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and also human geographers, amongst others (Castles & Davidson 2000; Isin & Turner 2002). The contribution of human geographers to the field of citizenship studies started in the 1990s with the conceptualization of the so-called *spaces of citizenship,* i.e. a theoretical framework used for understanding the spatiality of differentiated citizenships, e.g. the us-vs-others dichotomy, in terms of individuals' perceptions, rights, and duties. Nonetheless, during the last decade, human geographers have gradually moved towards the contemporary sub-field of the *geographies of citizenship*, a more complex conceptual lens which endorses terms such as scale, landscape, and mobility in addition to notions of space and place for exploring geographical notions of citizenship (Desforges et al. 2005).

4.4.1 Theoretical Approaches to Citizenship

In this section, I disclose the three major theoretical models of citizenship developed by Northern scholars in a historical chronological order. The first approach I want to account for is the Classical-Republican model of citizenship, a normative understanding of citizenship based on classical philosophers' political theories. Ontologically, it is a politically collectivist approach that endorses a holistic view of individuals. The Classical-Republican citizenship has three formal elements: a masculine legal status, a set of duties and privileges, and a set of practices. Historically, Classical-Republican citizenships were granted exclusively to male individuals who had an objective relationship of belonging to a specific nation. Classical-Republican citizens were expected to be collectively engaged and thus, to take an active part in the political affairs of the public domain. Additionally, they ought to identify themselves with the nation they inhabited so they would develop intense senses of symbolic national identity, both individual and collective. Some of the criticism against the Classical-Republican model is that it is not universalistic. In fact, it entails a structural discrimination that leads to the subsequent alienation of those individuals who are objectively ineligible citizens. Besides, since this model encourages the formal exaltation of its citizens' intense feelings of pride towards their own nations, it promotes the sociocultural segregation between a nation's citizens (nationals) and a nation's aliens (foreigners) that might degenerate into social marginalization and xenophobia (Dickinson et al. 2008; Isin & Turner 2002; Reitner 2013; Steenbergen 1994; Strauss & Cropsey 1987).

The second approach I want to present is the Modern model of citizenship. This model was formulated in consonance with the welfare appraisals of well-off Europeans after the post-war Keynesian pact. Modern citizenship was built upon the negative-positive dichotomy of

freedom. It comprises two antagonistic understandings of citizenship: one individualistic and another one collective. The individualistic notion of citizenship, i.e. Marshall's liberal idea of citizenship, is conceptualized as a legal status as well as a set of rights, both provided by nation-states. Liberal citizens are not required to identify themselves, either subjectively or collectively, with their own national territories, nor are they required to display strong senses of national pride. Therefore, modern citizenship is often seen as a commodity, with its own market-value, that reports material and symbolic benefits to their owners. The collective or communitarian notion of citizenship was developed by philosopher Taylor as a critique against Marshall's citizenship ideal. The communitarian model of citizenship is conceptualized as a set of formal responsibilities, a set of committed practices plus, a sense of belonging to a political community. Communitarian citizens are expected to fulfill the obligations their respective nation-states mark for them. Additionally, they are expected to build up a sense of collective identity through their respective subjective senses of belonging. In brief, modern citizens are merely passive recipients of a multidimensional – social, political, civil, and economic – set of rights and duties provided by the nation-state they are legally attached to. The modern model of citizenship, just like the Classical-Republican model, is structurally discriminatory and hence, it does contribute to increasing the inequality between nationals and foreigners (Dickinson et al. 2008; Isin & Turner 2002).

The last approach I want to introduce is the Radical-Feminist model of citizenship. This model was developed by radical scholars after the rise of neoliberal globalization processes as a critique of former structural-based formal notions of citizenship over the ontological basis of the Classical-Republican model of citizenship. The Radical-Feminist citizenship, that builds upon the idea of agency as a political power, it is based on two complementary understandings of citizenship: one, the radical notion of citizenship, i.e. any act that involves a temporary and context-based struggle for hegemony and egalitarianism. Radical citizenships are not limited to the performance of informal acts of citizenship; they do also entail individual and collective expressions of human identity such as clothing, hairstyle, food, language, and those articulations of political identity that create and recreate one's membership in a favorite territory like flags and costumes. Two, the feminist notion of citizenship, which emerged as a critique against the historical imprisonment of women in the private realm and hence, females' deprivation from accessing the resources required to enjoy full citizenship experiences and practices in an autonomous way. Feminist citizenship can be conceptualized as an embodied act against the system of patriarchy. In short, Radical-Feminist citizenships are the core of embodied political subjectivity or body politics. Radical-Feminist citizens are expected to

perform an informal political lifestyle, in both private and public realms, based on micro-practices that challenge the existing uneven gendered power relationships (Harcourt 2009; Isin & Turner 2002; Lister & Campling 1997; Panelli 2004).

In summary, citizenship is an analytical tool with multiple, co-existing, and contrasting meanings. First, citizenship is the legal status of which an individual is officially perceived as a member of a national political unit and therefore, eligible to enjoy the rights and to abide the obligations prevailing in that particular nation. Legal citizenships are either granted or denied by nation-states' authorities. Second, citizenship is the set of sociocultural practices performed by individuals as an expression of their own human political agencies regardless their own legal citizenship status. These practices can be either formal and structure-framed activities like paying taxes or informal acts within the scope of civil society like engaging in social actions. Furthermore, these enactments of citizenship occur in the public realm, e.g. voting or marching in a National Day's parade, as well as in the private sphere, e.g. exhibiting a national flag at home or dressing up in the national costume. Last, citizenship is a series of embodied experiences, either individual or collective, people *move through* in their everyday lives. Nevertheless and above all, citizenship is *the* resource for any political life (Merrifield 2002; Staeheli et al. 2012).

4.5 DETERRITORIALIZED CITIZENSHIPS IN A MOBILE WORLD

Nowadays, modern citizenship is the type of citizenship with strongest political weight on a global scale. However, this does not mean that modern citizenship dominates the international political landscape. Indeed, this is far from the case, since the granting of modern citizenship today, together with the rights and duties that it entails and hence, its influence in shaping our everyday lived realities, varies tremendously from one national territory to another. In fact, some nation-states grant their citizens more privileges than others and subsequently, these nations' citizenships are politically more valuable than others. This hierarchical nature, intrinsic to the notion of modern citizenship, contradicts the universalistic essence of citizenship itself. Nevertheless, although more than half of today's world population holds any type of citizenship status these days, only a selected minority of individuals are favored with full citizenships on a daily basis. One of the most relevant issues connected to the modern notion of citizenship is the citizens' mobilities – or their lack of it – within and between the contours of a given national territory. Although the current popular debate insists on reducing citizens' mobility issues to the individual or collective act of spatial cross-border mobility, the complexities that lie behind this uneven and often contradictory nation-focused macro-structure known as *citizenship* go

beyond merely visual elements. Indeed, the most representative aspects of the so-called politics of mobility are the symbolic dimensions of citizenship like the passport, the symbolic element of a mobile citizenship par excellence which, undoubtedly, it monopolizes citizens' legal mobilities within and across national territories. After all, people's access to the political spaces that enable their individual political voices is a matter of mobility. Moreover, citizenship influences the negotiation of territorial mobility policies which subsequently define who is worthy to reside in a particular national territory or who represents a threat to that territory's national security. Finally, mobilities also contribute to the creation of virtual political spheres that transgress nation-states' multi-scale territorialities (Adey 2010; Cresswell 2006b; Cresswell & Merriman 2011; Torpey 2000).

One of the fundamental criteria over which the modern notion of citizenship is built upon is strongly linked to notions of territory and immobility. The principle of establishedness, inspired by Enlightenment scholars, bestow the political rights and the moral property over a given territory to the community of individuals who first settled into that particular piece of land on a permanent basis. Furthermore, this principle, based on ideas of spatial immobility, penalizes those individuals whose prevalent mobility practices transgress the boundaries of a particular national territory. Hence, individuals who are not born in that national territory but who inhabit it, they are expected to perform long-termed sedentary lifestyles in order to become *naturalized* members of the national political community they live in. In addition to an uninterrupted permanent stay within the national confines, individuals eligible for a citizenship status must show they have an established place of residence. This requirement makes the economically poorest members of those societal communities, e.g. homeless people, fall outside the formal political realms. Needless to say, the requirements of a territorial permanence in order to naturalize as a formal member of a national territory vary enormously from nation to nation. Nonetheless, the bureaucratic exigencies deployed to determine an individual's eligibility for accessing citizenship through territorial naturalization means are always determined by a minority of well-established and politically powerful citizens in control of the citizenship apparatus who additionally, exert the moral superiority of their political ideologies over those with an indeterminate citizenship status (Adey 2010; Lithman & Sicakkan 2005).

4.6 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical background presented so far is the result of the intellectual work of academics living and working in and for very specific socioeconomic and political contexts, i.e. considerably wealthy and geopolitically dominant nations with a long tradition of relatively

democratic regimes. Thus, they are not particularly representative of the everyday realities embedded in military-ruled territories with not-so-thriving economies such as the GMS nations. Therefore, throughout this subsection, I aim to specify the dimensions of my analytical tools adapted to the Southeast Asian reality. Additionally, I also intend to free my three main theoretical concepts from the dominant connotations they have traditionally been endowed with.

First, I want to unlock the notion of citizenship from its simplistic legal-based focus, i.e. citizenship understood merely as a set of rights and duties, in order to promote the idea of *relational citizenship*, i.e. citizenship as a set of co-existing interrelated cultural practices, political processes, and social relationships (Clarke 2014). By doing this, I consider that I am nearing the achievement of my ultimate research objective: the production of alternative notions of citizenship in tune with the lived realities of Myanmar deterritorialized subjects in a context of multi-scale mobility in GMS. Second, I want to augment the political aspects, often hidden inside our everyday power-laden sociocultural encounters, underlying the notion of multi-scale territorial mobility in order to acknowledge the invisible features that shape the mobility practices and subjective experiences of deterritorialized Myanmar citizens. Lastly, I aim to release the notion of territory of its strong physical connotations in order to focus on the view of territories as a social construct from below, in addition to territorialities' relational aspects and the social dimensions of deterritorialization processes.

In summary, I claim a more inclusive ontology of citizenship or in other words, a context-based conceptualization of citizenship that welcomes those single individuals and social groups who are today's outsiders to be, feel, and act as legitimate members of the political communities in which they dwell. I argue that this new modality of citizenship is located at the margins where the two opposing discourses of place – place as mobility and place as territory – intersect.

4.6.1 Dimensions of GMS's Everyday Citizenships

Despite the fact that during the last century, most Southeast Asian nations have strived to mirror the Western standards of political governance, few of them have succeeded in doing so. In fact, GMS states are amongst those still failing to ratify the Rule of Law, to achieve political stability and also to ensure human rights to its people (World Justice Project 2016). Because GMS' national authorities fail to exert control over their own national territories due to its inherent ethnic complexities, GMS nations are more likely to get involved in internal armed conflicts

due to the existence of complex patterns of coercive violence between the state's military authorities and the ethnic and tribal resisting groups (M. Jones et al. 2004).

Next, I describe the three most significant features of citizenship: attitude, awareness, and ability. First, citizenship attitude refers to people's disposition for having and speaking about their own criteria of political values. On the one hand, individuals learn these political mindsets unconsciously by socializing with the members of their cultural communities. Additionally, people become politically conscious through exposure to the media and through participating in political campaigns. On the other hand, people's capacity to express their personal political views is influenced in great extent by the type of sociopolitical context they inhabit, e.g. the more the political repression, the less likely that people will dare to speak out their political meanings; Second, citizenship awareness refers to the acknowledgment of one's membership to a nation-state, not only as an intellectual reality but also as an emotional fact. Subsequently, it encompasses people's mental knowledge about the set of rights and duties entailed by their own legal citizenship statuses; Third, citizenship ability refers to the capacity people have to enact, either deliberately or unconsciously, their own individual and collective political agencies in formal or informal settings of the public and private spheres. Citizens' practices are complex, dynamic, and diverse. Nevertheless, they can be classified into three categories: electoral voting, empowering acts of citizenship such as voluntary works for the community, and social actions, i.e. the right to free expression and the right to protest. Moreover, practices of citizenship may be passive-associative, active-managerial, or interactive-empowering, depending if the type of participation involved is either nominal, instrumental, or transformative (M. Jones et al. 2004; Merrifield 2002; Rigg 2007; Staeheli et al. 2012).

4.6.2 Dimensions of GMS' Mobilities

The production of mobilities is a symbolic process embedded in a dynamic sociocultural context. It is primarily featured in two co-existing dimensions: mobilities' practice or the embodied exercise of individuals' context-based movements, and mobilities' meaning or the immaterial significance of the exercise of mobilities. The practices of mobilities focus on how individuals' mobility enactments are being carried out in the material world through mobility means, e.g. walking, bike, or public transit; how often these mobility acts are happening, e.g. once a day, once a year, or several times a day/week/month; under which internal conditions are people's mobility practices being performed, e.g. safe or deadly conditions; under which external conditions are mobilities being undertaken, i.e. together with whom. Hjortol (2008)

stated that people execute mobilities because they *can*, they *want*, or they *must*. I am aware that most of the recent literature upholds, in the last instance, that individuals are free to choose their own mobility practices. Although arguing that everyone is entitled to a certain degree of agency has become a trend these days, I argue that the majority of people in GMS perform mobilities because they are subject to imposed coercive forces (Cresswell 2001; Larsen 2003).

The meanings ascribed to mobility are sociocultural-based and thus, multiple, dynamic, and closely related to notions of ideology (Lund et al. 2013). Mobilities' meanings may have pejorative connotations, e.g. mobility as a synonym for failed development due to a sociopolitical system in crisis which can eventually lead to the disruption of sociocultural values and bonds. In contrast, mobilities' meanings may also imply positive connotations, e.g. mobility as a synonym for freedom, progress, and modernity that leads to the extension of the sociocultural values of a particular group in a new geographical location, i.e. diaspora-making (Adey 2010; Larsen 2003).

4.6.3 Dimensions of Territorial Identifications in the GMS

Any territory is constituted by at least three dimensions: One, a material dimension integrated by those elements of physical nature like land and waters. Second, a functional dimension encompassed by those elements of spatial control such as exacted ideological systems and enacted physical powers; Third, a symbolic dimension which entails notions of social identity and people's identification with those political units they inhabit (Agnew et al. 2003). This last dimension is undoubtedly the most relevant for my analysis because it connects directly with notions of individual and collective territorial identification like individual territorial affiliation, emotional attachment to territories (and non-territories), and collective territorial identities. Territorial identifications are complex issues because they build upon human psycho-emotional factors and heterogeneous matters of personal and collective memory. For instance, a group's identity towards a particular political community is the emotional expression of some individuals' collective memory developed over years of common territorial coexistence and thus, their shared territorial history. Nonetheless, the actors who have the last political say within a territory are usually those with the political power to determine which embodied social interactions embedded within their domains are acceptable or on the contrary, banned. Indeed, due to the fact that territorial institutions own the power to control how people associate with each other within their politicized realms, they have the capacity to shaping the personal identities of their territorial affiliates. Since the insight of people's identification with the political communities they live in is at the core of the existential notion of citizenship, I believe

that by focusing on the symbolic dimension of territory I would grasp the subtlest ins and outs of the Myanmar citizenships from a slightly different perspective (Benhabib et al. 2007; M. Jones et al. 2004; Migdal 2004).

4.7 SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, I have conceptualized and discussed the key theoretical tools needed to carry out the further analysis of my empirical data set. In summary, I have elaborated an eclectic analytical approach, based on contrasting discourses of place, that enables me to address relational issues of citizenship while relying upon multi-scale ideas of mobility and territoriality. In the next three chapters, I expound the findings of my thematic-based analysis categorized in order of its analytical importance: citizenship, mobilities, and territorialities.

5. MYANMAR CITIZENSHIPS

In this chapter, I present my findings related to the dimensions of citizenship obtained through an analysis of the primary data produced during in-depth interviews with Myanmar workers. I disclose my results around a triple ethnic axis comprised of my interviewees' ethnic origins: Karen, Mon, and Burmese. Likewise, I account for detected patterns of gender inequality.

5.1 CITIZENSHIP ATTITUDE
5.1.1 Expression

Participants' citizenship attitudes ranged between total disinterest, e.g. *"I am not interested in politics, I am here just for work"* (Male Mon, 40), and the most fervent political commitment, e.g. *"Politics are vital for me"* (Female Karen, 45). Despite the current situation of strong political repression experienced by Myanmar participants in both home and host countries, most of them were able to speak out about their personal political inclinations. Indeed, a total of 15 participants out of 24 – seven Karen, three Mon, and five Burmese – stated verbally the importance of having a sense for critical political thinking and a citizenship attitude: *"It is important for me to raise my voice against injustice so we can attain our collective rights"* (male Karen, 45); *"I know it is important to raise my voice against political abuse"* (female Mon, 22). Nevertheless, some of them expressed feeling challenged when trying to share their political dispositions: *"I know it is important but I work every day. I have no time to think about this"* (female Mon, 28). Moreover, four participants – three Mon and one Karen – explicitly manifested having no inclination for politics; *"I do not know whether politics are important"* (female Mon, 40); *"I am not interested in politics"* (female Karen, 40). Finally, five workers – two Burmese and three Mon – refrained from expressing their opinion about the importance of having an own political disposition because of fear: *"I even fear thinking about the possibility of raising my voice against injustice"* (male Mon, 30). Findings reveal that Karen workers are the most likely to express their citizenship attitudes in public because they are less fearful and more interested in politics. In contrast, Burmese and Mon workers are the less likely to express their political opinions due to their apparent low interest in political issues.

5.1.2 Formation

Human political mindsets flourish through socialization processes occurring in political-cultural settings. Political-cultural contexts are multiple and dynamic. They are based on ethnic, cultural, and religious values and thus, they tend to be in conflict with each other. Political cultures play a key role in shaping people's expectations of their political systems. Moreover, individuals develop a political attitude through two different but coexisting learning processes:

an unconscious individual learning process which takes place during daily interaction of a person with his/her family members and neighboring communities (ethnic, religious, and cultural); a more conscious learning process which occurs when participating in any sociopolitical life event, whether it is spatially embedded or through the digital media.

Next, I present the findings relating to the development of my participants' political mindsets, moving gradually from the most unconscious processes towards those involving highest levels of consciousness. For the Myanmar participants, the family was the main source of social interaction on a daily basis. All the interviewees, except for one male Karen, lived together with relatives. With the exception of the sub-ethnically Burmese-Mon families, which represent the mixture of Burmese and Mon ethnicities, the rest of my participants' families were all sub-ethnically homogenous. Moreover, all the workers, except for one female Burmese, maintained social ties with their family members back in Myanmar. The communication between the Myanmar migrants and their *left behind* occurred in two major ways. One, through telecommunication, e.g. phone and internet and, through face-to-face interactions whenever the workers visited Myanmar. The frequency of the digital meetings ranged between once a day and once a year. Half of the workers – six Karen, four Burmese, and two Mon – paid for a phone call to their Myanmar relatives every month to ensure they were all fine and that they had correctly received the economic remittances the workers had sent. There were only two Burmese workers who called their families barely four times per year. The rest of the workers relied on Internet-based services for communicating with their families back in Myanmar. Seven of them, mostly the ethnically Mon, talked to their relatives through social media services either on a weekly or a fortnightly basis. Just one interviewee from each ethnic group used the Internet daily to get in touch with Myanmar. The frequency with which my interviewees visited Myanmar shall be covered in the next chapter under the topic of spatial mobility issues. For now, I can reveal that the frequency with which participants visited their places of origin was unevenly distributed between those who traveled to Myanmar several times a year and those who had never had the opportunity to visit the Union since they had moved to Thailand.

Outside the family circle, my interviewees socialized mostly through working and neighboring communities. Given the excessive number of weekly hours they worked, colleagues were determinant in understanding the dynamics of my interviewees' political attitudes. One-third of the participants – three Karen, three Burmese, and two Mon – attested to working exclusively with other Myanmar migrants. Another third – two Karen, two Burmese, and four Mon – had both Thai and Myanmar colleagues. The rest of the participants worked

exclusively with and for Thai people. In general, the relationship that the employees had with their bosses, all Thai with one exception, was merely formal. However, some participants stated having very good relationships with their Thai bosses. When it comes to interviewees' neighboring relationships, just one female Mon lived in a neighborhood for Mon migrants. In contrast, the clear majority of the workers (20) – seven Burmese, six Mon, and seven Karen – were settled in ethnically mixed neighborhoods together with other Myanmar workers. However, four Karen workers clearly stated that they avoided any social contact with their neighbors because of safety issues. Moreover, families from the same ethnic group tended to live in the same building. Only one worker of each ethnicity reported having Thai neighbors. In the next section, I shall elaborate on how the Myanmar-Thai social relationships worked out.

Most of my interviewees also expressed a preference to keep up with the political situation in Myanmar through the media. Half of them used TV, particularly, Myanmar TV, since they had access to satellite TV. Additionally, three Karen participants resorted to TV broadcasts from other countries: two of the longest-settled ones in the district followed Thai TV; the one with the highest level of formal education resorted to British broadcast TV to get politically updated. Moreover, 60% of the workers, including all the ethnically Burmese ones, used electronic media such as Facebook or YouTube as a source of political information. Even so, four Karen workers – two males and two females, both over 40 years old – admitted to relying on face-to-face interaction with their community network to get politically informed. *"I do not use the Internet, I learn from younger people who use the Internet. They will inform me about what is going on"* (female Karen, 42). This makes evident the existence of a generational digital gap between those accessing media and those who did not. Note that the majority of my Burmese interviewees were under the age of 30, while most of my Karen research subjects were over the age of 40 (see Appendix I). Regarding my interviewees' participation in real-life political events, only two workers – one male and one female Karen, both over 40 years old – had participated in political social actions while they were living in Myanmar. Furthermore, none of the workers had ever attended a political event organized in Thailand because, *"you cannot do that, you know, right? The Thai government has rules against freedom of expression. The same applies to Myanmar"* (Karen participant).

In summary, most of my interviewees lived with their Myanmar families in their host district. At the same time, they had other relatives back in Myanmar. Mon workers were among those who communicated more often with their *left behind*. They used Internet-based services on a weekly basis. In contrast, Karen and Burmese interviewees relied on a monthly phone call to keep in touch with their relatives in Myanmar. In terms of media exposure, the majority of

my participants had access to Myanmar TV channels. Karen workers, due to their proficient foreign language skills, were the only workers able to resort to international media channels. Burmese interviewees stood clearly out above the other ethnicities when resorting to digital media for political updating purposes. Finally, the absolute majority of the participants, regardless ethnicity, had never taken part in a social action neither in Myanmar nor in Thailand, mostly due to the higher levels of political repression exerted in GMS.

5.2 CITIZENSHIP AWARENESS
5.2.1 Acknowledgment

Most of the workers I interviewed had documents to prove they were members of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (see Appendix I). Nevertheless, my data revealed a legal status gap between those laborers who left their home country before 2012 and those who left later. *"When I left Myanmar (2011), I faced many difficulties before arriving here. Today, it is easier for migrants to come and work in Thailand"* (female Mon, 36). On the one hand, those interviewees who had moved to Thailand before 2012, did mainly through irregular means, e.g. *"First time I came here (2002) I came without a passport. Everything was difficult for me because I did not speak any Thai"* (Karen man, 44). Although some of them still remained as irregular immigrants, most of them had gradually got their official Myanmar documents, mainly thanks to their Thai employers who played a key role in helping them attaining a legal citizenship status, e.g. *"First time I came to Thailand, I had no passport. My boss taught me everything I needed to know. Now I have a passport and my situation is much better"* (male Mon, 30). However, not all Thai bosses were so helpful towards their employees when it comes to assisting them to obtain their legal statuses; *"I asked my Thai employer for permission to make a trip to renew my passport. My boss did not think that renewing my passport was important so he denied me the permission. I know the importance of renewing my passport. I lost my job because I went to renew my passport anyway. Now I have a renewed passport and I am looking for a new job"* (male Karen, 45). On the other hand, those arriving in Thailand after 2012, had got their valid documentation in their places of origin before entering the host country; they had already migrated through legal means.

My findings reveal that most of my interviewees, a total of 18 workers – five Karen, five Mon, and all the ethnically Burmese – acknowledged themselves as citizens of the Union of Myanmar regardless of their legal status; *"I am a Myanmar citizen. I have Karen nationality"* (female Karen, irregular worker); *"I am a Myanmar citizen. I have Mon nationality"* (male Mon, regular worker); *"Membership to Myanmar nation-state is important for me, I cannot*

explain why" (female Burmese, irregular worker). Nevertheless, five interviewees – three Karen and two Mon – hesitated when acknowledging their own memberships to the Union of Myanmar; they showed bewilderment and confusion because they inferred that a Myanmar membership was the same as a Burmese nationality. *"Myanmar citizenship? This question makes no sense. [Smile and skeptical facial expression] Everyone knows that Burmese and Myanmar are the same"* (female Karen, regular worker). Moreover, their answers pointed out a sense of otherness; *"I do not know what is Myanmar citizenship. [Facial expression of wonder and doubt]. What I know is that Myanmar (referring to Burmese) and Mon live in the same country"* (female Mon, regular worker). Only one female Mon interviewee did not acknowledge her membership to the Union of Myanmar; *"I do not know what is to be a Myanmar citizen. I am a member of Kyalk Ywea (a village in Mon State)"* (female Mon, irregular worker). Finally, absolutely none of my participants acknowledged their memberships to the Kingdom of Thailand; rather, many stood for the opposite: *"We are here only for work. We are visitors. None of us wants to become Thai citizen"* (male Mon, 40).

5.2.2   Mental Conceptions

In regard to the formulation of a mental notion of citizenship, most of my interviewees, 18 to be exact, found a way to describe an intellectual conceptualization of citizenship. Only six participants – three Mon, two Karen, and one Burmese – manifested *"I do not know how to define citizenship"*. I have classified the responses of those who managed to define citizenship into five categories listed in accordance with its popularity. First, citizenship as birthright was the definition given by a total of five interviewees – three Karen, one Burmese and, one Mon – who stated: *"I was born in Myanmar. I have lived in Myanmar. I am a Myanmar citizen"*. Second, citizenship as the unity of those living in the same nation-state regardless of their ethnicity and nationality. This definition was given by a total of five participants – three Mon and two Burmese. Third, citizenship as a set of legally valid documents, i.e. *"A Myanmar citizen has Myanmar National ID card and Myanmar passport"*. This idea was shared by a total of three participants – one from each ethnic group. Fourth, citizenship understood as a compound of moral and cultural values that must be performed; *"A Myanmar citizen is someone polite who has good manners and follows the rules"*. This conception was also stated by three workers, particularly all Burmese irregular immigrants. Fifth and last, citizenship as nationality. This conceptualization was given by two Karen workers who inferred that Myanmar citizenship equals Burmese nationality. I want to point out that the fact that none of the participants contemplated a commodified conceptualization citizenship, i.e. citizenship understood as a set of rights. In contrast, some of them inferred how citizenship related to a set of individually

committed obligations towards their nation of origin. *"I was born in Burma. I have the responsibility of protecting my country from the enemy"* (female Burmese, 25). *"I do what I can for my country"* (female Karen, 41).

5.2.3   Emotional Responses

The recognition of one's bond to a nation-state may involve emotional dimensions. The emotional reality of citizenship can be grasped through the interpretation of those subjective feelings of pride and loyalty that individuals cherish for a national territory as well as the lack of them. Thus, I have categorized the emotional responses of Myanmar interviewees according to the feelings they expressed towards both their country of origin and their current host country, Thailand.

Regarding individual loyalty to the homeland, a total of 15 interviewees – five from each ethnic group – expressed their loyalty to the Union of Myanmar by manifesting their love for Myanmar and their wish to return to settle back in their home country. *"I love Myanmar; I want to live in Myanmar but I cannot do it now. My children also want to go back to Myanmar"* (female Karen); *"I love Myanmar; I want to go back when I have enough money"* (male Burmese, 29)*; "Myanmar is important to me; I would like to go back if there were any job opportunities there"* (male Mon, 40). In contrast, three workers from each ethnicity did not reject the idea of remaining in Thailand since they were unsure about whether they wanted to return for good to Myanmar or not; *"I feel happy living in Thailand. The Thai working system is more efficient than the Myanmar one"* (male Karen, 34). Nonetheless, none of my participants felt either a patriotic pride or a loyalty for the Kingdom of Thailand.

The matter of feelings of patriotic pride in Myanmar is a *tricky* one. Administratively, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is divided into seven regions (where the Burmese are the ethnic majority), seven states (one for each ethnic minority group), and one union territory (the new capital city, Nay Pyi Taw) (CIA 2017). Due to this complex ethnic and political patchwork, Myanmar people struggle to harbor feelings of pride for their own nation-state. In fact, half of the participants – four Mon, two Karen, and six Burmese – expressed they only felt proud of their localities of origin, either villages or townships. Thus, just ten participants admitted feeling proud of the Union of Myanmar – three Mon, two Burmese, and four Karen. Curiously, the national pride of four of them – one Mon and three Karen – co-existed besides interviewees' local and regional feelings of pride. Nonetheless, two male Karen workers attested to feeling no pride for any country at all; as one of them stated: *"Nations are not important. People are more important than any nation"* (male Karen, 44).

5.3 CITIZENSHIP ABILITY

Next, I want to present the results of my analysis that deal with Myanmar workers' capacity of enacting their citizenships. I think it is important to highlight the fact that citizenship is much more than an abstract matter of legality and territorial units; citizenship is also a specific set of practices, processes, and relationships integrated into people's everyday lives (Clarke 2014). Since citizenship has a dual relational nature, i.e. citizenship is both the relationship between a person and a nation-state as well as the relationship between the members of a territorial unit, I have categorized my findings on citizenship practices into two subsections: individual and collective-based, subsequently organized into two sub-categories: formal and informal. Under the formal umbrella, I include those practices enacted around the institutional structure, i.e. citizenship practices within the politics of identity (Lithman & Sicakkan 2005). By informal practices, I refer to the enactments of the agencies or the performance of my participants' identity politics. Due to the format requirements applying to this dissertation, I had to limit the number of the citizenship practices included in this analysis. Thus, I have chosen to present those practices which have been given more importance in the recent literature within the field of citizenship studies and political geography (M. Jones et al. 2004).

5.3.1 Individual-based

Next, I account for the practices that my interviewees enacted due to the individual relationship they maintain with the nation-state of Myanmar. The findings cover three major areas: one, the passive-based formal citizenship practice of voting behavior; two, the formal processes of active citizenship, e.g. volunteering activities for the local community and participation in decision-making processes on the local level; three, the informal enactments of citizenship, i.e. the performance of identity politics.

Regarding the voting behavior of my interviewees, the findings reveal that only seven – five Karen, one Mon, and one Burmese – of the 24 interviewees had ever voted for Myanmar elections in the past, coincidentally while living there. In contrast, none of my participants had ever voted for Myanmar elections from Thailand. Furthermore, most of the workers, a total of 17 participants had never exercised their right to vote at all. The main reason behind the electoral abstention was Myanmar workers' lack of knowledge about the functioning of the electoral process itself. However, two female Karen – both experienced voters – had slightly different reasons for why they did not vote in Myanmar 2015 elections. One of them, who had been living in Thailand for over 22 years declared: *"I know how to vote. However, I am not longer interested in Myanmar politics"*. The other, who had been living in Thailand for five

years stated: *"I am aware of the voting processes but they are time and money consuming. I must go to Myanmar embassy in Bangkok many times, at least three or four. I do not have either the time or money to vote from here."*

With regard to formal practices of active citizenship, most of the workers I interviewed stood in favor of participating in local-based decision-making processes. In contrast, one interviewee expressed disagreement with the idea of getting involved in these types of democratic processes; *"This is not important for me. I do not have time for this. I am here only for earning money"* (male Mon, 36). The rest, a total of ten interviewees – including three Burmese, five Mon, and two Karen – expressed being unsure about the importance of being civically engaged in their local communities. On the other hand, over half of the workers – four Burmese, six Mon, and four Karen – declared they had never volunteered for their local communities. However, nine of them – three Burmese, two Mon, and four Karen – stated they were active contributors in their neighboring communities. For instance, the Burmese and the Karen workers visited Buddhist monasteries up to several times a year to offer donations to the Buddhist monks. Additionally, while one of the two female Mon participants cooked for her community during the cultural festivals, the other one hosted a Mon cultural gathering every Sunday in her house.

Regarding the informal acts of active citizenship, I have focused on those five elements that symbolize my interviewees' human and political identities. First, workers' predilection for the national flag (see Appendix VIII). Data reveals that only two workers – one Mon and one Burmese – liked the (new) Myanmar national flag. Most of the interviewees – three Karen, six Mon, and seven Burmese – preferred the former flag of Burma as their favorite one. Just five Karen and one Mon expressed their preference for their own ethnic flags, respectively. Second, participants' preference of ethnic symbols (see Appendix VIII). My results show that one-third of the workers– six Mon and two Burmese – had no favorite ethnic symbol. In contrast, most Karen liked the Karen ethnic symbol (the buffalo horn). Only one Mon participant liked the Mon ethnic symbol (the Mon bird). The rest – one Karen, one Mon, and five Burmese – expressed that they liked best the symbol from the former Burmese flag. Third, participants' choice for national anthems. One-fourth of the workers – four Burmese and two Mon – liked the Myanmar national anthem best. Another fourth had no favorite anthem. Four Karen and one Mon said their favorite anthem was their ethnic national song. Last, two participants expressed their favorite patriotic song was Bo Aung San, an old song from the time of the Myanmar Independence. Fourth, Myanmar workers' traditional costumes. Most of my interviewees, a total of 17 workers, had Burmese traditional clothes. Apart from all the Burmese ones, five

Mon and four Karen had the Burmese costume in addition to their own ethnic traditional garments. Just one Karen and one Mon expressed not owning an ethnic traditional dress at all. Participants stated that they were not able to wear any of their Myanmar traditional clothes publicly in Khaysng because of the fear of being persecuted or attacked; *It is not safe to wear the Burmese costume on the street. Whenever I go to the Buddhist monastery I take my traditional costume in a bag and I put it on once I am in the monastery. I change again to "western" clothes before leaving the monastery"* (male Burmese, 25); *"I wear Karen skirt every day at home, outside it is not safe"* (male Karen, 45). Last but not least, participants' beloved traditional meals. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees expressed a predilection for Myanmar traditional foods such as fish soup, pickled tea leaf salad, and fish paste, meals that are prepared across the national territory regardless of people's ethnic background and religious faith. Nevertheless, five participants – three Burmese, one Karen, and one Mon – stated they appreciated most their own ethnic cuisines.

Summarizing, my analysis reveals an alarming finding of participants' voting behavior since most of them, regardless ethnicity and place of origin, lacked the necessary information for exercising their right to vote in Myanmar elections from Thailand. Moreover, although most of the workers agreed with the idea that active citizenship was something very important, only over half of the workers performed services to their local communities on a regular basis. Most of those who volunteered for their neighboring communities did so through donation festivals at their local Buddhist monasteries. Finally, interviewees' political identities showed that Karen were among those who feel more attached to their ethnic symbolic values, i.e. Karen flag, Karen National Song, Karen Cuisine, and Karen festivities.

5.3.2 Collective-based

In the following, I account for the type of sociocultural group events and the frequency with which Myanmar workers settled in BMR's periphery extolled the political territories they felt connected to throughout a calendar year. I have established a categorical division between those celebrations that are inherently political and those which entail a perpetuation of a historical cultural tradition.

Regarding celebrations that enhance the greatness of the nation, my analysis shows that most of my participants did celebrate Myanmar National Festivities when living in Myanmar. However, the type of commemoration they performed clearly depended on my interviewees' ethnicity as well as the geographical location where they did reside. For instance, all the Burmese workers but one declared celebrating the Myanmar National Day annually.

Additionally, one of them also commemorated the Myanmar Independence Day. Both Karen and Mon interviewees extolled Myanmar National Festivities too. To be precise, five Mon and five Karen commemorated the Myanmar National Day. Additionally, one male Mon and a total of four Karen workers celebrated both Myanmar Independence Day and Myanmar Union Day. The rest extolled either their own ethnic affairs day, i.e. the Mon National Day (celebrated exclusively by two participants), and the Karen New Year Day (equivalent to Karen State Day) marked solely by two Karen. One female Karen expressed *"I could never really celebrate Karen festivities as an adult because I lived in Yangon city and those festivities are mainly celebrated in the villages of Karen State"*. Last, only one male Mon had not joined any national festivity at all. My findings also reveal that my participants stopped commemorating collectively Myanmar national festivities once they moved to Thailand. At most, only one Karen participant stated he celebrated the Karen New Year Day annually in the privacy of his home. Likewise, none of the interviewees had joined any national celebration of Thailand so far. This was mainly because labor migrants had no right to enjoy any Thai official public holiday.

When it comes to the commemoration of cultural-based festivals amongst Myanmar workers settled in Khaysng, my analysis reveals two main findings. On the one side, the types of practices my participants performed depended mainly on the religion they professed rather than in the ethnic group they belonged. Most of my informants had practiced annual Buddhist rituals according to the Burmese calendar such as the Full Moon Day of Waso (aka. Waso Festival) that marks the beginning of the Buddhist Lent; the Full Moon Day of Thadingyut (aka. Lightning Festival) that commemorates the end of the Buddhist Lent; the Thingyan Festival (aka. Water Festival) coinciding with the Myanmar New Year festivities (see the exact dates of all these celebrations for 2016 in Appendix IX). Three of my Buddhist workers – one Burmese and two Mon – stated they commemorated the Twelve Months' festival, which is a set of monthly rituals throughout the Buddhist calendar year. All my three Christian interviewees – one Burmese and two Karen – celebrated Christmastide every year regardless of the country they were at. Besides, one Christian Karen declared: *"although the Water Festival is not a Christian tradition I enjoy celebrating it because, for me, it is about Myanmar culture"*. On the other side, the degree and frequency with which the workers engaged in religious rituals were strongly influenced by the geographical location where they resided. That way, most of the interviewees, i.e. practicing Buddhists, had seen drastically reduced their levels of participation in cultural festivities after moving to Thailand. In fact, 12 of the 21 Buddhist workers manifested having seen decreased, some partially, others completely, the number and the

frequency of their sociocultural practices due to the overworking conditions in Thailand; *"When I lived in Myanmar, I celebrated Waso, Lightning, and Water festivals every year. Here, I do not take part in any cultural event* (female Burmese, 24); *"In Myanmar, I celebrated Water and Lightning festival as well as Waso. Here, I do not celebrate any cultural festivity at all"* (male Mon, 40). Only seven of the 21 Buddhist workers – three Burmese, three Mon, and one Karen – stated being able to perform equally in both countries. Nevertheless, *"here, our festivities are not so fun as back in Myanmar because there are fewer people celebrating"* (male Burmese, 29).

In short, the performance of my participants' collective practices of citizenship was basically determined by three factors: workers' ethnicity, religion, and country of residence. In this way, the workers' ethnic background influenced the type of patriotic festivities they commemorated; so, while the Burmese were more likely to extol Myanmar national festivities, the Karen and the Mon rather commemorated their own ethnic national festivities. Besides, participants' religion determined interviewees' attendance in cultural-based practices. My interviewees' ability to carry out collective-based practices of citizenship was steadily persuaded by the geographical location they resided at. Indeed, while living in Khaysng, Myanmar workers' chances to take part in collective performances of citizenship were heavily restricted due to the discriminatory and abusive working conditions to which they were subject in the Thai labor market.

5.4 SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, I have presented the most relevant findings of my thematic analysis on issues of Myanmar citizenship. I have disposed of the results according to the three main dimensions of citizenship: attitude, awareness, and ability (all defined in 4.6.1). My main results show that Myanmar labor migrants in the Northern periphery of BMR are mostly aware of their relationship with their home nation-state rather than recognizing a citizenship link to Thailand. Moreover, most of them possess a mental conceptualization of the notion of citizenship as well as some emotional linkage – mostly loyalty – towards their homeland. Furthermore, two of my findings reveal that Myanmar workers are severely hindered from practicing their own citizenships, both individually and collectively, because of living in Thailand: one, the alarming zero participation rate of Myanmar emigrants in Myanmar elections because they lack access to the resources required to do so; two, none of the Myanmar laborers I interviewed were able to perform their own political identities in Thai public spaces due to the constant fear of

persecution they lived with. Finally, my results on citizenship were gender-balanced and thus, no relevant gender gaps were revealed.

6. MYANMAR MOBILITIES

In this chapter, I account for the results of my thematic analysis on issues of mobility based on primary data produced mainly during focus group sessions and secondary data obtained from my personal field observations and conversations – formal and informal – with 29 Myanmar research subjects: 24 interviewees and five discussants. Unlike in the previous chapter, I do not give prominence to my participants' ethnicity as a differentiating element; rather, I prioritize matters of class and gender as determining shaping factors of Myanmar migrant workers' mobility motivations and patterns.

6.1. SOCIAL MOBILITIES

The human experience of social mobility entails two dimensions: a material one that refers to a set of mobility practices; an immaterial one that relates to a compound of mobility significances. On the one hand, practices of social mobility, also known as vertical mobility practices, can be defined as people's movements up and down the hierarchical social ladder. These practices are intrinsically determined by the individuals' formal educational backgrounds in combination with their current working positions. In the case of the patterns of social mobility amongst my research subjects, my descriptive analysis reveals that over 80% of my Myanmar interviewees – six Burmese, six Karen, and the eight ethnically Mon – have a level of formal education between primary and high school independent of their ethnicity and their biological sex. To be specific, nine of the participants – mostly male – had finished primary school, five workers – two males and three females – had completed secondary education, and six of the participants – mostly women – had a high school degree. Of the four workers remaining, two of them – one female and one male, both ethnically Burmese – were illiterate; the other two – one female and one male, both ethnically Karen – had studied at university in Myanmar. Although most of the participants had fixed working roles, they had not been hired a particular job position. Whereas more than half of the participants – two female Karen plus all the ethnically Burmese and Mon – worked as unskilled laborers in the tertiary sector, only four workers – three male and one female, all ethnically Karen – worked in the secondary sector. Additionally, two participants – one female and one male, both ethnically Karen – worked as full-time volunteers in the charity sector.

The further analysis of my descriptive results revealed that while a half of the participants had moved on the social ladder, the other half had not. Those Myanmar workers who had remained socially immobile were mainly the workers with primary and middle education – seven Mon and three Burmese – who had been hired to perform unskilled jobs.

Additionally, three of the participants with high school education – one Karen man and two Burmese women – performed jobs that allowed them to use some skills they had acquired during their high school studies. For instance, one of the two Burmese females had been hired as a food seller in a restaurant frequented by international clientele where she was able to use her English language skills. The other Burmese woman, who had also completed high school in Myanmar, ran her own street vending company. Indeed, the English language skills of these women also made it possible for them to communicate directly with me during some moments of our encounters. Nevertheless, they were all relatively poorly paid concerning the total of weekly hours they worked.

Among those of my research subjects who had moved on the social ladder, most of them – four Karen, one Mon, and two Burmese – had climbed. Thanks to their self-discipline and through training programs arranged by their Thai employers, these seven Myanmar laborers had managed to increase their human capital by learning new skills like Thai language or driving skills during their stay in Thailand. In contrast, five of the workers – three Karen, one Mon, and one Burmese – had experienced a relative descent in their social statuses concerning their former social positions in Myanmar. Among this group, I have included those Myanmar high school graduates who labored in low-wage unskilled jobs and the two Karen who worked as full-time volunteers on a zero-wage basis.

On the other hand, when accounting for my participants' opinions about their social mobility practices, I have classified my results into three categories: opinions with relatively positive connotations, opinions with somewhat negative connotations, and neutral views. My findings reveal that the Myanmar migrants who tended to impregnate their own social mobilities with positive connotations, e.g. happiness or enthusiasm were those participants whose practices of social mobility in Thailand had been ascendant. This was also apparent with some immobile newcomers – young low-educated migrant workers under the age of 30 who had lived in Thailand for less than five years by October 2016.

Furthermore, those Myanmar workers whose social mobilities were characterized by not-so-positive connotations were primarily mothers and fathers over 35 years old who, because of the ongoing armed conflicts that had taken place in their home localities in the early 2000s, had to sacrifice their lifestyles in Myanmar in order to look for a safer future for their children. In fact, most of these grown-ups had prioritized the potential of the next generation's social mobility to the detriment of their own. Moreover, my participants' social mobilities were strongly constrained by their current economic precariousness. Indeed, since most of the participants had resorted to the help of a broker to access their current waged positions, the

Myanmar workers were bonded to their broker's fee which represented a percentage of the participants' monthly salary: *"My agents retain 10% of my full monthly salary of 10,000 Bath"* (Myanmar irregular male worker); *"I could try to get a better job, but I cannot afford it due to the agents' fees"* (senior Myanmar male worker). My analysis also revealed that labor migrants' social immobility was hereditary, particularly for those irregular immigrants who had stateless children. While the irregular working parents facing this situation expressed a tremendous concern for their children's future social mobility, they also claimed they lacked the resources (knowledge, time and money) required to carry out the bureaucratic efforts to challenge their children's imminent social exclusion.

Two single and childless female newcomers – both with completed high school education – expressed disappointment about their social mobilities. Only one of these women made the specific claim that she had renounced her former social status in Myanmar because of her political idealism of doing her best for the development of her homeland, Myanmar. In her particular case, this meant providing Myanmar migrants' children in the host district with an education in tune with Myanmar sociocultural values. Those participants who refrained from assigning a particular significance to their social mobility experiences were mainly those socially immobile workers as well as those Myanmar migrants who were somehow satisfied with the living standards they had in Thailand but who, nevertheless, strongly missed their homes in Myanmar.

In summary, social mobilities of Myanmar migrant workers are defined by two co-existing and complementary dimensions: one, the visible physical practice of workers' social mobilities; two, the imponderable unique significance that individuals associate to their experiences of social mobility. My results show that while half of the participants remained socially immobile, the other half had managed to move through the social ladder – mostly upwards thanks to the tutelage received from their reliable employers. Nevertheless, a minority of my participants had seen their social statuses lowered after settling in Thailand. The attitudes that Myanmar workers attributed to their social mobility experiences were either optimistic, sad, or neutral depending on whether they had moved socially upwards, downwards, or unchanged.

6.2. SPATIAL MOBILITIES

Next, I want to show evidence of Khaysng's Myanmar labor migrants' issues of mobility, with a focus on the typology described in 4.2.2. Thus, I account for my participants' practices and meanings of their spatial mobility processes in the following order: first, I evidence my research

subjects' international migration process between two nation-states, i.e. their experience of moving from Myanmar to Thailand; secondly, I track the changes of residence some interviewees had within Thailand and within the host district; thirdly, I account for the participants' daily/weekly commuting processes on the local level; fourthly, I record for their sporadic displacements outside the host district.

6.2.1. Migration

I start by accounting for the material conditions under which my Myanmar research subjects performed their international migratory practices between Myanmar and Thailand. I aim to emphasize those relational aspects like with whom, through whom, and through which means the migratory experiences of the participants occurred. First, most of the participants had migrated together with at least one of their relatives, e.g. a sibling, a spouse, or their children. Those Myanmar workers who had moved to Thailand before the 2008 Global Economic Crisis (GEC) had no one waiting to receive them at their arrival at Thailand and hence, they could be considered as migrant pioneers. In contrast, a considerable proportion of those Myanmar workers who had migrated after the GEC did so through network migration to get reunited with their Myanmar relatives already settled in Thailand (Castles et al. 2014). Secondly, the majority of my participants had moved to Thailand through irregular means, i.e. undocumented and smuggled. Because of the hardships of their migratory experiences, most of the workers preferred to refrain from providing the details of their migratory practices. Nevertheless, one young female dared to describe her migratory practice in the following way: *"My elder brother and I had to cross a small river. We slept in the forest. We starved. It was difficult for us to come here"* (young Myanmar female). Just a small number of participants had come to Thailand through regular means, i.e. with their legal citizenship documents in order. Finally, none of my research subjects stated the duration of their migratory displacements nor the exact transport means they employed in their move.

Regarding the significance my participants attached to their migratory experiences, most of them expressed that the reason why they left their homeland was related to the downward spiral development in which Myanmar had been immersed due to political instability during recent decades. Escaping from ongoing armed conflicts and chronic poverty as well as fleeing because of the expropriation of their ancestral lands at the hands of the military, were the main reasons why they had left their home villages. In contrast, the younger Myanmar participants and especially those born in urban areas of Myanmar had performed their transnational migration mainly as an investment to improve their levels of economic income. Nonetheless,

all of the participants described their migration processes as hard, painful, and even traumatic, because of the struggle they had to go through. The main difficulties the participants faced when settling in the new country was related to the cultural shock, the language barrier, and not least, their lack of legal identification: *"We had many difficulties because we lacked legal documentation"; "I struggled because I did not know any Thai language when I moved here"; "I faced eating problems because Thai food is so different from Myanmar food"* (Testimonies of Myanmar female immigrants during women's group discussion). *"In the beginning, I could not find a job because I had neither a passport nor a pink card, so I had to resort to an agent to get a casual job"* (Myanmar male irregular immigrant).

In summary, although most of my research subjects performed illegal migratory practices with the assistance of professional smugglers, some of them did migrate in compliance with the law. Besides, those workers who left Myanmar after the GEC did so mainly through network migration because of family reunification, in contrast to those who migrated before the GEC and had no contact network in Thailand. In any case, the clear majority of the Myanmar workers migrated accompanied by someone they trusted, and rarely alone. My participants had practiced migration mobility for two main reasons: to seek refuge and to find employment.

6.2.2. Residential Mobility

My findings on Myanmar workers' residential mobility practices and significations are not very prolix because of the time limitations my participants and I were subject to during our encounters. Besides, not all my research subjects had changed their residences in Thailand. Indeed, just a minority of my participants stated having lived in other Thai locations than Khaysng because, as some of them expressed: *"I am kept from changing my current place of residence because I am somehow bonded to my current job because of the agents"* (Myanmar irregular male labor immigrant). *"Changing residence is impossible when you lack a legal working permit and valid documentation"* (Myanmar irregular female worker immigrant).

Next, I describe the practices of residential mobility of four of my participants: a young Burmese couple and two senior women from Yangon city. The married couple of Burmese migrants had arrived seven years ago at Southern Thailand where they got to work in the Thai fish industry under conditions of slavery. They were kept on a fishing boat on a zero-wage basis for three years. After escaping the ship, they decided to move to Khaysng, where they have been living and working since then; *"We came to Thailand without any legal documentation because at that time these documents were very hard to obtain. A broker took us to work in the fishery industry without any payment. A brother helped us to escape from that situation. We are*

very happy with the working and living conditions we have today" (Burmese migrant couple under the age of 30). One of the two senior migrant women had spent some years studying at Chiang Mai University in Northern Thailand before she decided to move to Khaysng together with her children. The other senior female carried behind her a complex set of residential mobility practices; in less than five years of permanence in Thailand, she had led a quite nomadic lifestyle to escape from harsh working conditions. Here is her testimony:

"I first arrived in Lop Buri province where I worked 12 hours per day on an egg farm. I earned 220 Bath/day. My employer provided me with both food and housing. Then, I moved near the Thai-Laos border to work in the construction sector. There, I worked from 8 am to 5 pm for 270 Bath/day. My employer did not provide me food, only accommodation. After that, I have moved to so many different places that I do not even remember their names. This place I live now in, it is the sixth location I have lived in Thailand" (Burmese irregular migrant over 40 years old).

The attitudes my participants attributed to their experiences of change of residence across Thailand were mostly negative since most of them had moved to Thailand to escape from exploitative working conditions. However, due to their lack of resources, the Myanmar workers were deprived of changing residence and thus, they referred pejoratively to their residential mooring practices. Only the female student reported a positive attitude about her residential mobilities.

In short, only a minority of my participants had exercised practices of residential mobility in Thailand, mainly due to changes in their workplaces. My research subjects' attitudes towards their residential mobilities were related to situations of occupational vulnerability that they had experienced during their first years of stay in the host country.

6.2.3. Daily Mobility

Two physical elements firmly determined the experiences of everyday mobility amongst Myanmar workers living and working in Khaysng: one, a highway that axially cut the zone in two halves; two, the dominating flow of oil-based transport systems and hence, the indispensability of motorized means for mainstream transportation. Below, I present the results related to both the type, the frequency, and the means of transportation that my participants used to practice their mobilities on a daily/weekly basis.

The leading daily mobility practices of the participants were related to the compliance of financial obligations like labor performance and consumption. Both female and male Myanmar workers commuted from home to work and vice versa on a daily basis. Myanmar

women were responsible for doing the marketing once a week. The most popular transport means amongst my research subjects, independent of their biological sex, were: biking, walking, and public transportation such as motorbike taxi and two-row seated bus. The male participants expressed their impediments to obtaining a driving license because they lacked legal citizenship status: *"we cannot get a driving license because we have no passport"* (Myanmar irregular male workers). My participants' patterns of spatial mobility because of social obligations, e.g. visiting friends and relatives in neighboring settlements or attending cultural festivities, were relegated to a secondary plane. Indeed, these types of practices were performed only on a monthly or even quarterly basis. Participants refrained from using any transport for this purpose. Lastly, Myanmar workers' mobility practices for attending their own legal bureaucratic issues was said to be even less frequent, ranging between non-existent to annual or semi-annual, due to the participants' lack of resources like time and money: *"we do not have enough money or time to get our passport"* (Myanmar irregular immigrants during our male group discussion). Thus, Myanmar irregular workers were prevented from obtaining a valid legal citizenship status because of their bureaucratic immobility: *"I am free only on Sundays and on that day, the Myanmar embassy in Bangkok is closed to the public"; "I have the same problem; the embassy also closes on Saturdays which is the only day I am free from work"* (Myanmar irregular immigrants during the male group discussion).

Regarding my participants' attitudes towards their daily mobilities, my analysis revealed two contrasting results: one, both men and women experienced their daily commuting from their home in their workplace and back as safe to perform; two, any other type of day-to-day spatial mobilities at local level felt like a threat to them – *"we cannot move freely"* stated a group of Myanmar male discussants during our encounter. Myanmar females revealed that although they went to the local market together, their sense of threat was constant: *"we live in constant fear, going to the market is not safe"*. While biking and motorbiking felt safe for the male participants, the females stated that using public transit felt dangerous due to the high risk of being checked by Thai police. *"If you do not have your Myanmar passport with you, Thai police may arrest you". "Getting out of arrest is very expensive. Usually, you are expected to pay a fee. We have to borrow money from others to pay that fee because we do not have the money ourselves"* (Myanmar female discussants). Since Myanmar workers could not afford the costs related to police arrests, they avoided, as much as they could, going out of their homes more than the strictly necessary for their survival.

In few words, my research subjects' daily mobility routines were strictly limited to the performance of survival economic activities. Besides, my participants resorted mostly to public

transit-based means for their everyday local transportations. Myanmar workers' access to privately-owned motorized transport means was highly restricted; only those workers whose work demanded driving skills had access to (a company-owned) car that eventually they were allowed to use for their own purposes. While daily home-work-home commuting felt safe for all my participants regardless of their biological sex, the female research subjects reported that doing the marketing, even they went together in groups, seemed like a dangerous act.

6.2.4. Travel

In this last subsection, I want to reveal my findings on the traveling practices of my research subjects together with the significances they imbued with their traveling experiences. Because of my participants' overwork conditions, they were able to afford just one type of traveling practice: the return trip from Khaysng to their respective home locations in Myanmar. Unfortunately, the workers refrained from providing details about both the transportation means they used for these occasional traveling practice as well as the length of their stays in Myanmar. About the frequency with which my participants traveled to Myanmar, I have categorized my findings into three categories: one, the annual trip – only three (privileged) senior settlers fit into this category; two, the biennial or triennial travel – a quite popular trend, since almost half of the participants fit under this traveling frequency pattern; three, the travel immobility – the most common trend amongst the relative newcomers. Approximately half of the participants expressed not having visited Myanmar since they had migrated to Thailand. Anecdotally, I want to acknowledge the exceptional traveling practice of one of my male Mon interviewee who, in 2016, visited his home village for the first time after more than 18 years of remaining in Thailand. The extraordinary reason behind his trip was related to the fact that the male worker had planned to start building his own house in Myanmar, financed with his savings, so he had to travel to ensure the workers who would manage to accomplish the construction.

So far, I have accounted for three different significances connected to my research subjects' experiences of travel mobility. First, the main reason why Myanmar workers go *home* is that they wish to spend their time together with their loved ones whom they have *left behind*, e.g. parents, children, and political relatives. Second, the secondary signification concerning their travel to Myanmar is related to the workers' active participation in religious celebrations like donation festivals at Myanmar's Buddhist Pagodas. Last, the recreational significance of the travel experience, i.e. Myanmar as a touristic holiday destination. In fact, only a small minority of laborers who travel Thailand-Myanmar-Thailand ever attributed this meaning.

In summary, not all the Myanmar labor migrants in Khaysng have any traveling practices. Indeed, half of the workers are immobile. The other half performs only one type of traveling practice: the return trip from Khaysng to their homeland, primarily every two or three years. The primary motives behind Myanmar workers' traveling experiences are related to spending time with their relatives *left behind* or to engage in religious-based cultural festivities like Buddhist donation ceremonies.

6.3. SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, I have presented the results of my thematic analysis on both social and spatial mobilities. Regarding issues of vertical mobility amongst Myanmar migrant workers in Khaysng, my findings reveal that only half of the participants have moved socially. Although most of those moving do it upwards on the social ladder, some workers resigned their social positions in Myanmar after settling in Thailand. Additionally, most of the participants attributed connotations of resignation to their social mobility processes. Regarding Myanmar workers' patterns of spatial mobility, I have categorized my findings according to the different durations and the distance implied in the participants' geographical displacements. These comprise migration, residential mobility, daily mobility, and traveling. My findings reveal that apart from the one-time (international) migratory mobility experience which all the participants had in common, in day-to-day the Myanmar workers were subject to severe levels of spatial immobility such as mobility through motorized means (auto-mobility) and leisure-related mobility within short and long distances. In fact, aside from their relatively safe home-to-work commuting, the rest of the spatial mobilities, e.g. going to the market, changing their residence in Thailand, and even traveling out of the local district, represented an excessive cost of both economic and human capital for the migrants.

7. MYANMAR TERRITORIAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Throughout this chapter, I present the findings from my thematic analysis on issues of territorial identification-based primary data produced through in-depth interviews with 24 Myanmar workers – 12 females and 12 males. Human identification with the territory is a complex issue full of subtleties that cannot be reduced to a single expression. A primary reason is that both territory and territorial identifications are multi-scale concepts. Moreover, people can identify with territories both individually and collectively. Individual and collective territorial identities are also multi-scale and do not rival with each other. Thus, these types of identities can develop in coexistence.

7.1 INDIVIDUAL TERRITORIAL AFFILIATIONS

For most of my Myanmar participants – a total of 18 workers, i.e. six Karen, eight Mon, and four Burmese – political territories are of importance either because of peacebuilding, e.g. *"political territories are important to have political stability so one can live and work free and peaceful"* (female Karen, 40), because of citizenship issuances, e.g. *"the political territories are necessary to get a passport"* (male Mon, 30), or because of personal reasons, e.g. *"Myanmar nation is important to me because my relatives live there"* (male Burmese, 29). In contrast, only three interviewees – one Karen and two Burmese – expressed that political territories were not important for them: *"I am not interested in politics, I just want to live and work in peace"* (male Burmese, 30); *"In Myanmar, military is fighting in Karen communities because they think they own those places. There is no need for a war in order to be united"* (male Karen, 44).

All my participants but one, a young Burmese female, expressed being attached to one or more political territories. Half of my interviewees – three Karen, four Mon, and five Burmese – declared having an attachment towards a single political territory: Five of them – one Karen, one Mon, and three Burmese – asserted having territorial attachments towards their respective municipalities of birth, i.e. their home township. A couple of participants – one Karen and one Mon – expressed their attachment towards their respective regional territories, i.e. Karen and Mon state respectively. Three of them – one Karen and two Burmese – claimed individual attachments towards the national territory of their country of origin, i.e. the Union of Myanmar. Lastly, a couple of irregular Mon workers considered themselves politically attached to their local villages.

Moreover, a total of ten interviewees – five Karen, four Mon, and one Burmese – expressed having multi-scale territorial attachments. All the Karen plus three Mon claimed to

have a binary attachment towards two different territorial levels. While all the three Mon workers and one Karen felt attached to both home regional and municipal scales, i.e. to the Mon State and their respective townships of birth, the Karen workers' territorial attachments did not follow a homogenous pattern. On the one hand, a couple of senior Karen – one female and one male – expressed being attached to both the Kingdom of Thailand and their home townships. *"My body is in Thailand; my mind is in Hpa-An"* (male Karen, 45). On the other hand, the other three Karen expressed being attached to both the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Karen State; *"I am a member of Karen State and a citizen of Myanmar Union"* (male Karen, 45). Only one Mon worker declared having a three-fold territorial attachment towards both his township, the Mon State, and the Union of Myanmar. Finally, one Burmese interviewee stated being attached to four Myanmar territorial scales: the national, the regional, the municipal, and the constituency. Only two participants, both Mon and informally settled in Khaysng, expressed feeling attached to the non-territorialized realm of their home villages in Myanmar.

Lastly, I want to account for the relevance that territorial attachments have for Myanmar workers living and working in Khaysng. While four of my participants, two Mon and two Karen, expressed disregard for the importance of being attached to a political territory, e.g. *"I do know that being a member of a political territory is important but I am not sure why or how important this is"* (female Mon, 22), the rest of my interviewees (18 out of 24), regardless their ethnicity, affirmed that being attached to a political territory was of importance for them. However, the reasons behind their assessments are diverse. A total of ten interviewees – four Karen, six Mon, and four Burmese – stated that their territorial attachments had been fundamental for them because of citizenship issues and, subsequently, for safeguarding their physical integrity. However, participants showed disagreement on the type of territorial scale that was decisive in obtaining their symbolic and functional citizenships: *"the Myanmar Union and Mon State are critical for having a Myanmar passport and a Myanmar national ID card"* (male Mon, 40); *"Pyu Township has been necessary for me in order to get a Myanmar national ID card and for voting"* (male Burmese, 25); *"Me, together with the other members of my (Karen) political community, we are responsible for having a peaceful territory"* (female Karen, 40). For four other workers – one Karen, one Mon, and two Burmese – attachments to Myanmar territories were relevant because of sentimental reasons such as emotional bonds towards their relatives *left behind* or feelings of nostalgia for their home geographical roots, e.g. *"Myanmar territory is important to me because my parents live there"* (male Burmese, 29). Finally, a total of seven participants – three Karen, two Mon, and two Burmese – were unable to formulate the reason why their territorial attachments were of importance to them.

In summary, my findings show that for most of the Myanmar workers political territories are of importance because of structural development issues as well as for interviewees' private reasons. Furthermore, all but two of my participants expressed being affiliated with a territorialized unit, half of them in a single manner, the other in multiple ways. Finally, most of the Myanmar workers considered their territorial affiliations of importance, either because of personal reasons or due to matters of citizenship.

7.2 INDIVIDUAL TERRITORIAL EMOTIONAL BELONGING

As individuals, we have the capacity to establish emotional bonds with the realities that surround us. The development of territorial emotional ties relies heavily on our continuous and consistent sensorial exposure to the political domains we inhabit most (Anderson 2015). When it comes to specifying the sentiments that Myanmar workers in Khaysng have towards their existential territories, my analysis shows two main findings. One of the findings, related to my participants' emotional sample displayed following the different range of territorial scales, reveals that my research subjects cherished, simultaneously, both conflicting and ambivalent territorial feelings. Indeed, the three top dichotomous emotions that my interviewees referred the most to were: happiness/sadness, love/indifference, and freedom/unsafety. A more detailed categorization of my results shows how on a municipal scale more than half of the participants – five Burmese, half of the Karen, plus all the Mon – held positive feelings like happiness, love, and a sense of freedom when living in their respective Myanmar localities; *"I felt happy and free when I lived in my village"* (female Mon). In contrast, four Karen and three Burmese felt either nostalgic or indifferent towards their Myanmar home municipalities; at a regional scale, most of the Myanmar workers – six Karen, five Burmese, and all the Mon - felt both love and happiness towards their home regional territories. Conversely, two Karen and three Burmese expressed emotions of sadness or indifference for their Myanmar states/divisions of origin; on a national scale, I have distinguished participants' sentiments towards the Union of Myanmar and those they have for the Kingdom of Thailand. On the one hand, while seven out of eight Karen, and two Mon workers felt happy about Thailand, e.g. *"I feel happy in Thailand because there are many job opportunities here"* (male Karen), and one of the Burmese workers felt thankful towards the Thai national territory, the rest of the participants – one Karen, seven Burmese, and six Mon – revealed they felt unsafe, sad, or indifferent when thinking about their host nation-state; *"I am not happy here in Thailand, I feel discriminated"* (male Burmese). On the other hand, the majority of the interviewees – seven Karen, six Mon, and all the Burmese – declared they had positive sentiments like happiness or love towards their home national

territory*: "I love Myanmar. I hope that with this new government Myanmar becomes one of the top countries in Southeast Asia again"* (female Karen). However, a minority of the participants, i.e. one Karen and two Mon, manifested feelings of nostalgia, indifference, or sadness towards the Union of Myanmar, e.g. *"Before I was happy about Myanmar but now I have no longer a feeling"* (male Burmese).

The other relevant finding regarding Myanmar laborers' territorial emotional belonging is the territorial scale they felt they belonged. My analysis shows that an outstanding majority of the workers (21 out of 24) cherished a personal emotional bond towards some political territory. Most of the interviewees (19 out of 24) expressed an emotional connection towards a single territory. Eight of them – two Karen, three Mon, and three Burmese – claimed feelings towards their respective home localities, i.e. territorial belonging on a *constituency* scale. Another six workers – two Karen, one Mon, and three Burmese – cherished feelings of belonging on the *municipality* scale, i.e. towards their home townships. The last five workers with a single territorial connection – one Karen, two Mon, and two Burmese – declared having an emotional connection with the Union of Myanmar, i.e. territorial belonging on a *national* scale. Furthermore, the remaining two interviewees embodied multiple senses of territorial belonging. The both ethnically Mon held a dual and a three-fold territorial proclivity respectively: *"I belong to the Union of Myanmar and to Thanbyuzayat Township,"* declared a 36-year-old female Burmese-Mon; *"I feel I belong to Myanmar, to the Mon State, and to Mawlamyine city,"* stated a 40-year-old male Mon. In turn, three Karen interviewees stated not feeling like belonging to any territory at all. The main reason they did not feel emotionally bonded towards a particular territory was linked to the fact they did not own any territorially-embedded material patrimony: *"I sold the properties I had in Myanmar before moving here. I do not have any belongings now, that is why I do not belong to any place now."* (female Karen, 45); *"My family has never had any property. My father worked for the Burmese army and we lived in a government-owned house. When my dad died, we lost our home. I do not have feelings for any particular place"* (male Karen, 34).

In short, most of my participants cherished sentiments of happiness towards all the territories of Myanmar, from the lowest (constituency) to the highest (national) scale. Likewise, the majority of Myanmar workers also expressed having feelings of discomfort towards the Thai national territory. Finally, whereas most of the interviewees declared feeling they belonged only to one of the territorial scales of Myanmar, e.g. home townships or home country, none of the informants felt like belonging exclusively to their home state/division (the regional scale).

7.3 COLLECTIVE TERRITORIAL IDENTITIES

I have organized my findings regarding notions of group territorial identities amongst the Myanmar labor migrants based in Khaysng into two categories. In one category, I have included the constitutive factors and elements that determine participants' collective territorial identities. My results show that my research subjects accounted only for those elements which were essential for the formation of their own ethnically-based regional collective identities. In this way, Karen participants stated that in order to have a genuine Karen identity a person must meet the following requirements: a Karen must perform Karen culture (5), a real Karen is always born of Karen parents (4), and thus, a Karen must speak the Karen language (4). One interviewee added that Karen must know about Karen history. When it comes to making clear the factors involved in the constitution of a real Mon collective identity, my analysis reveals a lack of true consensus amongst the Mon participants. Indeed, a total of three Mon interviewees admitted they did not know what to answer. Nevertheless, those five able to respond came up with contradictory statements such as *"Mon people have many religions. They can be Buddhist, but also Christians and even Muslims"* (female Mon, 36) and *"Mon must follow Buddhist religion"* (female Mon, 41). Indeed, only one Mon interviewee stated that to be entitled to a Mon identity, a person must be born from Mon parents, must be able to speak the Mon language, and must have knowledge about Mon history. Interestingly, one Mon worker pointed out: *"I know Mon people have a historical mind and they write about their independent nation-state without considering the territorial unity of Myanmar."* Concerning the elements that make up a Burmese collective identity, most of my Burmese participants stated that Burmese are those who perform Burmese culture, those who are born from Burmese parents, and those who support the unity of Myanmar. Moreover, the Burmese must be Buddhist. Finally, although the majority of Karen and Mon interviewees did not know which factors identified the Burmese collective identity, those who came up with a statement about the Burmese collective identity, perceived the Burmese as the other, often richer and stronger than those belonging to an ethnic minority.

In the other category, I have accounted for my participants' main features of their collective identities towards those regional and national territories they have a particular connection with based on relevant factors such as ethnicity, state/division of birth, and their home/host country of residence. Hence, for the Karen interviewees, traits such as warmth, faithfulness, purity, and simplicity/naivety, were the primary personality attributes that identified the ethnically Karen, chiefly from the Karen State. Moreover, my participants with Burmese ethnicity considered features such as courage, kindness, cleverness, strength, and

helpfulness, as those that described best the personality of the ethnically Burmese – which demographically dominate the territorial divisions in Myanmar. The Mon participants were not able to state the characteristic features of the Mon collective identity. When it comes to the conceptualization of the collective territorial identities on the national scale, i.e. both Myanmar and Thai national identities respectively, I considered all the interviewees alike, regardless the ethnic group they belonged to. While most of them did not know which attributes characterized the Myanmar collective identity, some of them stated that Myanmar people are hopeful, friendly, helpful, and polite. Additionally, seven workers – one Karen, two Mon, and four Burmese – declared that Myanmar people support the unity of the national territory of the Union of Myanmar. Moreover, three interviewees – one Karen and two Mon – stated that Myanmar people are Buddhists. Finally, three participants, one from each ethnic group, claimed that Myanmar people are no different from the Karen and the Burmese. Myanmar workers described the Thai collective identity in a polarized manner. While a total of 11 laborers (two Karen, three Burmese, and all the Mon except one) expressed not knowing the characteristics that a Thai (collective) identity implied, the 13 interviewees who did have a view on the issue showed opposing testimonies. Five of the workers – one Mon, one Karen, and three Burmese – described the Thai personality as characterized by features of superiority, rudeness, faithless, disrespectfulness, and money-grabbing. In contrast, the rest of the interviewees – a total of six Karen and two Burmese – declared that although Thai people spoke the Thai language, they were both generous, caring, goodhearted, fearless and thus, not so different from the people from Myanmar.

In short, Myanmar workers in Khaysng were able to specify the elements that exclusively determined their collective territorial identity depending on their ethnicity. Factors such as the mastering of their respective ethnic language and being born of parents from the same ethnic group were paramount for being entitled to a particular regional group identity. Moreover, my findings also show that the Karen identity is much more consistent than the Mon and the Burmese ones. Although a considerable number of participants struggled to define the traits of the Myanmar national identity, those who did manage to do so did not hesitate to characterize it by several positive connotations. My interviewees elucidated the main attributes of the Thai national identity in a dichotomous way according to their personal experiences in Thailand. Those who have had unfortunate encounters with the Thai nationals, defined the Thai people in a slightly pejorative manner, whereas those Myanmar workers who have been empowered by their Thai acquaintances used positive adjectives to refer to the nature of Thai people's character.

7.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have presented the results of my thematic analysis on issues of Myanmar laborers' territorial identifications. More specifically, I have accounted for both Myanmar individual territorial affiliations, Myanmar individual territorial emotional belonging, and Myanmar collective territorial identities. In broad outlines, my interviewees' territorial affiliations differed from my participants' individual territorial belongings in the following manner: in general trends, while my participants felt emotionally connected to single territories, either towards low-scaled territories (home localities and townships) or on the national scale (Union of Myanmar and Kingdom of Thailand), they thought themselves affiliated to several territorial scales simultaneously. Although the workers shared similar motivations for being territorially affiliated, independent of their ethnicity, my findings show that the importance that my interviewees give to their territorial affiliations does not follow a homogenous flair, indeed it reveals an intrinsic complex and heterogeneous nature. Furthermore, when it comes to identifying the features of Myanmar's range of collective identities within their existential multi-scale territories, the participants easily defined the attributes related to those regional identities which were in tune with their ethnic belonging. Moreover, the research subjects struggled to acknowledge with accuracy those factors that determined collective identities at the national scale (Myanmar and Thai). Although not all the workers were able to come up with the crucial aspects that make up their own Myanmar national identity, those who did, they stated that features like hope and the desire for national unity were defining characteristics of the Myanmar people.

8. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Throughout this last chapter, I aim to respond my research question: *how are the notions of citizenship of Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR?* I operationalized the analysis into four thematic sub-questions which correlate with the following query: *how do unskilled labor migrants from Myanmar living and working in the Northern periphery of BMR* ***think (RQ1), feel (RQ2), practice (RQ3), and experience (RQ4)*** *their everyday citizenships?* Along the next four sections, I reveal the answers to these sub-questions in the form of preliminary conclusions. In the last section of my dissertation, I disclose my final remarks and some possible recommendations.

8.1. THINKING OF MYANMAR CITIZENSHIP

When trying to understand how Myanmar laborers in Khaysng think of citizenship, it is crucial to take into consideration the determining sociocultural contextual factors that have contributed to the creation of their intellectual understandings of citizenship. Hence, besides acknowledging my participants' set of mental conceptualizations on Myanmar citizenship, I have put emphasis on understanding how those mental images of Myanmar citizenship have been elaborated, developed and thus, expressed.

8.1.1. The Gestation of Myanmar Thoughts on Citizenship

The gestation of thoughts on the notion of citizenship builds upon the two principles of political mindset formation: the absorption of abstract ideas through communicative means and the participation in political actions (see 4.6.1). In the case Myanmar laborers in Khaysng, I argue that their thoughts on citizenship have been gestated in two distinct but complementary phases: an initial gestational period in which the participants, as relatively immobile tender-aged actors fully embedded in the sociocultural context of multiscale Myanmar territories, learned about Myanmar politics mainly through face-to-face interpersonal communication at their local home communities; a later gestational period in which the participants, as relatively mobile reterritorialized Myanmar adults with a permanent residence in Thailand, have developed the tendency to keep updated about the political situation in Myanmar mainly through severely limited access to mass media communication means (TV and the Internet), but also via face-to-face interaction with other Myanmar diaspora members, particularly from those of their same ethnicity. Regarding the participation of Myanmar laborers in the formal political sphere, this has been severely restricted, even non-existent, due to the authoritarian nature of the political regimes in force in both home and host countries.

8.1.2. Myanmar Citizenship as Mindset

To verbally express a mental conception of *something* for which you have no word in your native language it is intrinsically complicated. Such is the case of the Burmese language, in which there is no word for citizenship but rather for the notion of nationality. Furthermore, the Burmese word for nationality is used to refer to the territorial memberships of the non-Burmese people of Myanmar towards their respective independent states, which ultimately are the *regional units* of the national territory of the Union of the Republic of Myanmar. Although the initial confusion experienced by the participants when having to capture the new linguistic dimensions attributed to the words Myanmar and Citizenship, thanks to endorsing a relational notion of citizenship, most of the workers managed to effectively understand that citizenship is nothing more than the relationship they have towards the national political territory they are linked to.

Although during the initial stages of my research design I had deliberately decided to promote a more inclusive ontology of citizenship by avoiding referring to any legal connotations linked to the idea of citizenship, interestingly enough, there were the workers themselves who brought to the light the issue of citizenship's legal dimensions, since most of them, regardless of ethnicity or legal status, thought of Myanmar citizenship as a set of legal documents with which they could prove they were from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In the case of those workers who were not in possession of any legal documents, they thought of Myanmar citizenship exclusively as a cultural duty to be performed. None of the participants thought of Myanmar citizenship neither as a feminist embodiment nor as a radical act.

In my attempt to be consistent with my main research objective (see 1.2), I decided to take advantage of the complex sociocultural complex background of my analysis units so I would be able to produce a notion of citizenship detached from nationalistic connotations. Thus, I have resolved to account for the multi-scale mental conceptions of citizenship as well as for the self-defined territorial affiliations of the Myanmar workers. Interestingly enough, only three of the participants thought of themselves as uniquely attached to the national territory of Myanmar; four research subjects (three Karen and one Mon) thought themselves as attached both to their home nation-state and to lower Myanmar territorial scales (constituency, municipality, sub-national) – between two and four – simultaneously. The rest of the workers thought themselves as merely attached to lower territorial scales like home municipalities and home regions. Nevertheless, those Myanmar without a valid legal citizenship status – coincidentally the pioneer ones – thought themselves affiliated above all to (politically) deterritorialized units out of Myanmar's formal political apparatus like their home villages.

8.1.3. A Silenced Freedom of Thought?

Despite the current higher levels of political repression that causes the mute of Myanmar labor migrants' political voices in the public spheres of both Myanmar and Thai societies, a considerably large number of participants demonstrated having own critical political thoughts. Even so, few of them dared to use their right to freedom of speech due to fear. Those who chose to remain silent were the young Mon and Burmese. I have interpreted their silences as a symptom of the strong political repression experienced by younger generations of Myanmar labor migrants living and working in the Northern periphery of BMR.

Among those who did explicitly expressed their political voices, I found out they shared some commonalities. For instance, in terms of ethnicity, those Myanmar workers more likely to speak out their political mindsets were the Karen ones. Coincidentally, all the Karen participants were senior migrants (35+) with a considerable experience of living out of their home national boundaries. I wonder whether this *fearless freedom of speech* is a trait of the Karen group or a generational feature due to age. Or is it perhaps due to the combination of the two factors together? Moreover, Myanmar females with higher levels of completed education (above secondary school) were more politically engaged and clearly braver to speak up their political mindsets than their countrywomen with lower formal educational levels (below secondary school).

8.2. FEELING THE MYANMAR CITIZENSHIP

Capturing how Myanmar labor migrants in Thailand perceive their Myanmar citizenships is another complex matter. This is partly because every emotional display around the fact of being a Myanmar citizen is unique and non-transferable to each individual since its conception is entirely dependent on the workers' ability to think themselves as Myanmar citizens (see 8.1). Moreover, the versatile set of sentiments of the Myanmar on citizenship is shaped by two factors: one, the amount of indirect knowledge they have acquired through collective thinking, i.e. what actors outside beyond their own social circle have perceived and processed with their own senses; two, the significances that the workers ascribe to their own social and spatial mobilities (or immobilities) determined whether they cherished positive, negative, or neutral emotions towards certain political territories. Moreover, Myanmar individuals' emotions of citizenship have a dual two-fold nature, i.e. they are independently but simultaneously harbored towards both the Myanmar political territories and the inhabitants of those political units. On top of that, the feelings of Myanmar citizenship embrace a heterogeneous, eventually overlapping, multi-scale nature. For instance, when harbored towards territories, the feelings

on citizenship can be simultaneously (but not necessarily) recreated towards concrete territorial scales like home villages or municipalities as well as towards more abstract scales such as regional and national territories. Likewise, when cherished towards people, they can refer to either personally known actors, e.g. participants' relatives and neighboring community members, or personally unknown actors, e.g. representatives of the regional or the national political elites.

8.2.1 Feelings of territorial affiliation

The emotions that Myanmar laborers in Khaysng harbored towards their Myanmar multi-scale territorial memberships are somehow, but not exclusively, connected to feelings traditionally associated with the nationalist sentiment like pride and loyalty to the *nation*[7]. On the one hand, most workers agreed on their feeling of allegiance for one or several of Myanmar's political territories and so, their wish to return to Myanmar for good. While some participants, independently of their ethnicity, stated feeling loyal towards the Union of Myanmar, others, particularly those who had with relatives in small villages of rural Myanmar, manifested their loyalty towards Myanmar's lower territorial scales.

On the other hand, Myanmar workers exhibited an ambivalent sense of pride for Myanmar territories depending on their level of studies. For instance, the territorial feelings of pride of those with lower levels of studies (below high-school) were based merely on positive feelings like happiness and love for their respective Myanmar territorial affiliations. In contrast, those with higher levels of studies (above high-school) demonstrated a much more critical and elaborated approach to Myanmar territorial pride; they manifested love and hope for their homeland and its newly elected councilor, Aung San Suu Kyi, but at the same time they manifested their sadness and disappointment due to the state of poverty and underdevelopment in which Myanmar as nation is plunged into, and also because of the existence of military governors in some regions of Myanmar. Some of the workers even manifested no feeling of territorial pride at all. Lastly, those who manifested a sense of pride towards several territorial scales simultaneously were all ethnically Mon and Karen.

8.2.2 Feelings of territorial belonging

Myanmar laborers in Khaysng manifested having an emotional link towards those territories (or counter-territories) they had experienced with their individual sensorial means and were, therefore, tangible, e.g. lower territorial scales like village-tracts or townships and counter-

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[7] Nation understood either way as a strictly political or an ethno-cultural-based entity.

territories like villages or neighborhoods. The nature of the feelings of the Myanmar in Khaysng was determined by two factors: one, the degree of social inclusion of the workers in their territories of residence; two, workers' ability to move spatially within and across these territories of residence. For instance, participants attributed positive feelings to those territories they felt they belonged to, e.g. their home villages, their home townships, their home regional divisions and yet, their homeland. Nevertheless, some participants expressed feelings of sadness and nostalgia towards their Myanmar territories of belonging because of the processes of international reterritorialization in which they were involved. In other words, they felt deterritorialized from their Myanmar territories, mostly because they harbored feelings of fear, sadness, and alienation towards their current host Thai territories.

The feelings of territorial belonging (or marginalization) of Myanmar laborers in suburban Bangkok were amplified by the workers' practices of mobilities. In this way, workers' inability to freely move within their host district together with the severe limitations they experienced to travel to visit Myanmar, reinforced workers' feeling of fear and moreover, their feeling of being deterritorialized actors. Additionally, participants' feeling of alienation due to being outsiders in Thailand reminded the Myanmar workers they belonged somewhere else. The process of international migration was decisive in influencing how participants perceived their own relationship with their territories of origin, with their countrymen, and with their host territories.

8.3. PRACTICING ELUSIVE MYANMAR CITIZENSHIPS

As any human political activity, practices of citizenship are inevitably embedded within territorial political structures which in the case of my research context are defined by a political elite of authoritarian nature that governs according to a military rule. Although my focus is the practices of citizenship of Myanmar agencies in Thailand, I believe it is important to emphasize the fact that the political agencies of Myanmar workers in Khaysng are severely demarcated by this politically repressive and restrictive model and thus, somehow elusive. In other words, Myanmar practices of citizenship are structurally deficient, not only due to the politically non-democratic framework in which they are embedded, but also because of work-related challenges the Myanmar immigrants encounter in their daily lives in Thai territory – laborally overworked, economically underpaid, and socially overlooked. Next, I shall discuss the practices of deterritorialized Myanmar citizenships and its interlinkages with agencies' mobilities along two sections: one, dedicated to elucidating the formal practices of citizenship

of a merely bureaucratic nature; another one dedicated to deepening into the informal practices of citizenship implying sociocultural and community engagement.

8.3.1. Formal Citizenship Practices

In their day to day, the Myanmar laborers in Khaysng encounter severe limitations to performing their formal practices of citizenships. On the one hand, when intending to practice their active-based forms of citizenship, the Myanmar workers encounter serious obstacles that prevent them from doing so satisfactorily. For instance, their practices of civil society engagement, e.g. communitarian voluntary work are strictly restricted. Although the workers' intentions of engaging as volunteers in their local communities are rather high, the rates of participation are extremely low. Since they are subject to higher levels of labor discrimination and social marginalization, the Myanmar laborers in Khaysng struggle to access the resources (time, forcefulness, and safety) needed to perform these type of citizenship practices. Anyhow, the Myanmar workers manage to pursue their *donation* practices with a certain regularity in both home and host countries, but mainly in Thai monasteries since not, all of them can afford to travel to Myanmar for performing this practice. Nevertheless, whenever Myanmar workers get the chance to visit their homeland, they always carry out this citizenship practice in their home locations. Last, I want to point out that most of the Myanmar laborers, regardless their personal territorial attachments, enjoyed practices of extolling their Myanmar territories, especially when they lived in Myanmar. However, since they settled permanently in Thailand, they barely celebrate such occasions because of the following reasons: first, they lack access to using Thai public spaces while wearing their Myanmar traditional ethnic clothes; second, their limited and unsafe local mobilities prevent them from visiting other Myanmar countrymen in BMR; third, they work too many hours and in such heavy works, that they lack the surplus of physical energy needed to conduct big celebrations.

On the other hand, when it comes to practicing more passive-based forms of citizenship like electoral voting and expedition or renewal of citizenship documents, the Myanmar laborers in Khaysng faced severe restrictions that prevented them from an appropriate access to the resources they required to do so. For example, when attempting to participate in Myanmar poll elections from Thailand, most of the migrants lacked the knowledge about how to proceed to vote from abroad. Nonetheless, there were also two other key resources missing due to the exploitative labor conditions the Myanmar workers experienced within the Thai labor market: time and money to go to Embassy of Myanmar located in Bangkok city center. Furthermore, when trying to accomplish bureaucratic tasks related to issuing of citizenship-related

documentations, the laborers were equally spatially and socially inhibited to do so. The aftermath of the obstruction of Myanmar workers' channels to perform their formal practice of citizenship was not only affecting the workers themselves, but also the second generation of Myanmar migrants and their future social and spatial mobilities in Thailand.

8.3.2. Informal Citizenship Practices

The informal practices of Myanmar citizenship encompass those activities performed by the Myanmar workers in Khaysng – both on an individual basis and collectively – which are linked to matters of sociocultural engagement and Myanmar identity politics. On the one hand, the daily practice of radical or feminist Myanmar citizenships is severely disabled because the current political apparatus in Thailand criminalizes this type of political activities. The most serious consequence of this political repression is the undermining of Myanmar political agencies' interest in practicing informal acts of citizenship. This loss of political concern is steadily increasing in proportion to the duration of the workers' deterritorialization process, i.e. the longer time they have spent in Thailand, the less they tend to care about politics in general and Myanmar politics in particular.

On the other hand, the practices of Myanmar identity politics are a complex issue since they are both territorially multi-scaled and ethnically diverse, simultaneously. Ethnic identity traits have more weight than the Myanmar political identity per se, which is also intimately intertwined with notions of Burmese ethnicity. Nevertheless, although the Myanmar laborers have a clear preference for highlighting their own ethnic identity politics, particularly for music and clothing, they do also enjoy the *Myanmar* style when it comes to visual and taste matters like their cherished flag or their beloved meal, both representative of the Myanmar national territory and hence, symbols of the unity of Myanmar nationals abroad.

8.4. EXPERIENCING DETERRITORIALIZED MYANMAR CITIZENSHIPS

The way in which Myanmar laborers in Khaysng experience their everyday citizenships is influenced to a great extent by their own territorial mobility patterns. Through this penultimate section of my dissertation, I attempt to explore the experience of deterritorialized Myanmar citizenships from two differentiated and complementary angles: one, the experience of Myanmar citizenship as a seemly divergent dichotomy transgressing any political territorial limits; two, the experience of Myanmar citizenship as a homogeneous reality of territorial alienation.

8.4.1. Citizenship beyond Territory: Myanmar Trans-Territorial Citizenships

Experiencing notions of citizenship expanded beyond territorial borders is possible. However, not all migrants have access to this experience nor do they live the experience equally. In the case of the Myanmar in Khaysng, their access to experiencing trans-territorial citizenships is quite restricted. Moreover, depending on generational (age), spatial mobility (travel), and technological (access to the Internet) factors, they experience Myanmar trans-territorial citizenship in two major ways: as a trans-national or as a trans-local experience. For instance, some of the pioneering and most experienced laborers led the experience of a transnational citizenship merely based on real[8] daily life experiences between Myanmar and Thailand. Although these Myanmar seniors are physically (eventually mentally) more attached to the Thai territory than to the Myanmar one, from an emotional point of view, they are strongly connected to Myanmar territories through feelings of nostalgia and a fervid wish of going *home* for good. Due to their relatively well-off living standards in Khaysng, these migrants can easily afford traveling to Myanmar with relative frequency.

In contrast, the younger generation of Myanmar international labor migrants led a trans-local experience of Myanmar citizenship because they felt and acted as active citizens spite they were physically disembodied from Myanmar territories. Although most of the newcomers had never visited their homeland after settling in Thailand, mainly due to their precarious working conditions, they enjoy keeping updated about Myanmar politics; Since they do not have strong links with the Thai civil society nor with the Myanmar diaspora in Thailand yet, they rely heavily on Internet-based technologies to communicate with their relatives in their home localities on a daily basis, something that makes them virtually Myanmar territorialized actors on a local scale.

8.4.2. Citizenship outside Territory: Myanmar Refutable Citizenships

Whereas the experience of Myanmar trans-citizenships is affecting exclusively to a minority of the Myanmar laborers, the idea of the experience of citizenship as a refutable lived reality, applies without distinction nor exception to all the participants equally. This type of citizenship experience is closely connected with notions of sociopolitical marginalization and the muting of labor migrant's political voices in the receiving country. Neither can the workers become full Myanmar citizens nor full Thai citizens and thus, they are destined to remain in a kind of grey-zone of citizenship which I label as *refutable*, because although the workers are Myanmar

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[8] Real in opposition to virtual, since senior workers' use of social media is nonexistent.

citizens *on paper*, they stay well away from exercising all the requirements of a Myanmar citizenship; not only in the merely political sense but also in a sociocultural sense. In other words, all Myanmar laborers in Khaysng experience higher levels of social marginalization precisely because of their Myanmar citizenships, which are preventing them from experiencing their full political agencies; deterritorialization becomes a source of structural alienation due to political repression. Patterns of spatial and social immobility explained previously are also very influential when it comes to making the Myanmar laborers in Khaysng experience the dark sides of their denizenships.

8.5. FINAL REMARKS AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this dissertation that I am now concluding, I have tried to delve into alternative notions of everyday citizenship resorting to the use of a human geographical lens in order to develop a newer empirically-based theoretical construct on the relationship between people and territory which can challenge the current Western rhetoric on citizenship. More specifically, I have paid attention to non-Western notions of citizenships within a context of international labor migration in one of the most dynamic regions in the world today, the GMS in Southeast Asia. With fieldwork as the main methodological element in combination with a set of qualitative methods, I have been paying attention at *how do the Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR think, feel, practice, and experience their everyday lived citizenships.*

Conceptualizing notions of citizenship is not an easy task, mainly because citizenship is a concept with multiple and even contradictory connotations. Moreover, the task gets even more complicated when researching an ethnically complex geographical context like the GMS, and especially with the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as the object of analysis. In Myanmar's official language there is no word for citizenship, only for nationality, which besides being associated with ideas of nationalistic patriotism, is also used to denote notions of regional identity subsequently intertwined with notions of tribal ethnicity. That is why, I have chosen to focus only on three of the major Myanmar ethnic groups – the Burmese, the Karen, and the Mon – as the units of analysis. In order to solve my main research question – *how are the notions of citizenship of Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR?* – I needed to elucidate the complex terminological plot behind my main analytical tool. Hence, I decided to endorse a dual relational approach to citizenship in which I defined citizenship as the relationship between an individual and a multiscale political territory as well as a relational relationship between people living in the same political territorial unit.

I can conclude by saying that although all Myanmar laborers in Khaysng are able to think themselves as members of at least one (eventually several) territorial scales of the Union of Myanmar, they struggle to verbally formulate what citizenship means to them. While regular workers associate the notion of citizenship with the set of legally valid documents with which they can demonstrate their individual memberships to their home country, irregular laborers think of citizenship rather as a personal sociocultural commitment towards lower territorial scales. Moreover, the Myanmar workers' emotional displays about their home territories and its people are undoubtedly the most robust and resilient dimension of their notions of citizenship since all them manifested feelings towards one or several territorial scales of their home nation-state and towards their relatives left behind in their localities of origin. Besides, most of the workers, regardless ethnicity, manifested they felt like belonging to the Union of Myanmar. In contrast, workers' practices of Myanmar citizenship are alarmingly deprived mainly due to structural reasons such the restrictive political apparatus in which the laborers are embedded but also due to the deficient mobility patterns the migrants are subject to; Workers' lack of safe access to Thai public spaces prevents them from taking part in any informal practices of citizenship in the host district. Moreover, Myanmar workers are also prevented from pursuing formal practices of citizenship due to their lack of money, time, and knowledge required to do so. I believe that the sense of social marginalization and political alienation that dominates the experiences of deterritorialized Myanmar laborers in the Northern periphery of BMR could be eradicated through the promotion of active citizenship and responsive governance. Hence, I appeal to those actors with the necessary capacity to carry out the implementation of action plans to advise and fund the parlous number of migrant working families experiencing this type of social and spatial mooring snare.

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APPENDIX I. INTERVIEWEES OVERVIEW

Table A1. Pilot study interviewees.

No.		Age	Ethnic group	Religion	Civil Status	State/Division of origin	Years in Myanmar	Years in Thailand	No. of children	Level of studies	Legal status
1[1]	♂	30	Karen	Christian	Single	Mon State	24	3	0	Illiterate	Irregular
2	♂	28	Burmese	Christian	Married	Tanintharyi div.	20	8	0	Primary	Regular
7	♀	33	Karen	Christian	Married	Karen State	23	10[2]	2	Secondary	-
8	♀	29	Karen	Christian	Single	Karen State	22	7	0	High School	-

Table A2. Burmese interviewees overview.

No.		Age	Religion	Civil Status	State/Region of origin	Years in Myanmar	Years in Thailand	No. of children	Level of studies	Working sector	Legal status
1	♀	42	Christian	Married	Yangon region	38	2	2	High school	Food shop	Irregular
2	♂	30	Buddhist	Married	Ayeyarwady reg.	26	4	0	Illiterate	Cleaning	Irregular
7	♀	24	Buddhist	Single	Yangon region	18	6	0	High school	Betel shop	Regular
8	♀	25	Buddhist	Married	Bago region	18	7	1	Illiterate	Cleaning	Regular
9	♂	29	Buddhist	Married	Bago region	19	10	1	Primary	Cleaning	Regular
13	♀	24	Buddhist	Married	Bago region	23	1	0	High school	Cleaning	Regular
14	♂	25	Buddhist	Married	Ayeyarwady reg.	24	1	0	Primary	Cleaning	Regular
21	♂	35	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	26	9	1	Secondary	Market	Irregular

[1] Participant no. 1 lived 3 years in Malaysia before moving to Thailand.
[2] Participant no. 3 spent 9 years living in Mae Sot area.

Table A3. Karen interviewees overview.

No.		Age	Religion	Civil Status	State/Division of Origin	Sub-ethnicity	Years in Myanmar	Years in Thailand	No. of children	Level of studies	Working sector	Legal status
3	♀	45	Christian	Married	Yangon region	–	40	5	3	Graduate	Education	Regular
4	♀	40	Buddhist	Widow	Karen state	Sa-Kaw	18	22	3	Primary	Shop	Regular
5	♂	45	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	Sa-Kaw	21	24	1	Primary	Transport	Irregular
15	♀	42	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	Pwo-Karen	28	14	1	High school	Cleaning	Irregular
16	♂	44	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	Pwo-Karen	30	14	1	High school	Factory	Irregular
17	♀	45	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	Pwo-Karen	35	10	2	Primary	Factory	–
18	♂	45	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	Pwo-Karen	35	10	2	Primary	Factory	Regular
19	♂	34	Christian	Single	Yangon region	Pwo-Karen	22	12	0	Secondary	Education	Regular

Table A4. Mon interviewees overview

No.		Age	Religion	Civil Status	State/Division of Origin	Sub-ethnicity	Years in Myanmar	Years in Thailand	No. of children	Level of studies	Working sector	Legal status
6	♀	41	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	–	31	10	4	Primary	Market	Irregular
10	♀	22	Buddhist	Single	Mon state	Burmese-Mon	20	2	0	Secondary	Cleaning	Regular
11	♂	40	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	Burmese-Mon	30	11	2	Secondary	Store	Regular
12	♀	36	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	Burmese-Mon	32	4	2	Secondary	Cleaning	Regular
20	♂	40	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	–	37	3	2	Primary	Market	Regular
22	♂	40	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	–	18	12	1	High school	Market	Regular
23	♀	38	Buddhist	Married	Karen state	–	18	10	1	Secondary	Cleaning	Regular
24	♂	34	Buddhist	Married	Mon state	–	18	18	1	Primary	Market	Regular

APPENDIX II. INTERVIEW GUIDE (PILOT STUDY)

REGISTRATION PAGE:
01_SEX: MAN [ ] OR WOMAN [ ]
02_CIVIL STATUS:
03_NUMBER OF CHILDREN:
04_LOCALITY AND YEAR OF BIRTH:
05_ETHNICITY:
06_MOTHER TONGUE:
07_LANGUAGES IN WHICH YOU CAN COMMUNICATE (ORALLY & WRITTEN):
08_LEVEL OF STUDIES COMPLETED:
09_HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN BURMA/MYANMAR?
10_HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED AND WORKED IN THAILAND (YEARS & MONTHS?
11_NAME OF CURRENT COMPANY:
12_SECTOR:
13_DO YOU HAVE A VALID WORKING CONTRACT? YES [ ] OR NO [ ]
14_CURRENT POSITION?
15_FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT YOUR CURRENT POSITION?
16_ PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR WORKING DAY IN TERMS OF

- WHEN DO YOU START

- WHEN DO YOU FINISH

- WORKING TASKS

- WORKING HOURS PER DAY/PER WEEK

- TIME FOR LEISURE, DAYS OFF, HOLIDAYS

- ANY OTHER INFORMATION YOU CONSIDER RELEVANT:

17_CURRENT RESIDENCE/WHERE DO YOU LIVE HERE IN XXXXXXXX?

A. GRASPING INDIVIDUAL CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY

A1) SOCIAL NETWORK IN XXXXXX

- **On a daily basis, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE YOU INTERACT MOST WITH?**

  Co-Workers / Relatives / Friends / Neighbors / Other

- **WHERE ARE THEY ORIGINALLY FROM?**

  Ethnic group / Language community / Region / Country

- **WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH THESE PEOPLE?**

A2) SOCIAL NETWORK AT HOME

- **DO YOU KEEP ANY TIES WITH PEOPLE AT HOME COMMUNITY?**
  - o   No [ ] WHY?
  - o   Yes [ ] With WHO?
    - Friends
    - Family
    - Old Colleagues
    - Other

    HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THESE PEOPLE AT HOME?
    - Face to face
    - Telecommunications
    - Letters
    - Through people
    - Other

- **DO YOU DO ANY ACTIVITIES WITH PEOPLE AT YOUR HOME COMMUNITY THROUGH THE YEAR?**
  - No [ ]
  - Yes [ ]
    - WHICH ONE?
      - Gatherings
      - (Religious) Festivities
      - Communal work
      - Political action
      - Other

B. <u>INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP</u>

B1) EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

- **WHERE DO YOU FEEL HOME IS?**
- **DO YOU FEEL PROUD ABOUT YOUR PLACE OF ORIGIN?** Yes / No / Maybe
  - No [ ] WHY?
  - Maybe [ ] Please explain.
  - Yes? [ ] WHY?
    - WHERE IS THIS PLACE LOCATED?
    - WHAT TYPE OF PLACE IS THAT?
      - A locality
      - A region
      - A state
      - Other
- **DO YOU FEEL PROUD OF YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN?**
  - Yes? [ ] WHY?
  - No? [ ] WHY?

- **DO YOU FEEL A CITIZEN YOURSELF?**
  - No? [ ]
  - Yes? HOW DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

B2) SENSORIAL PERCEPTION

- **DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE TRADITIONAL FOOD/MEAL?**
  - No? [ ]
  - Yes? [ ] WHICH?
    - WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU WEAR ANY FAVORITE TRADITIONAL CLOTHING?**
  - No? [ ]
  - Yes? [ ] WHICH?
    - HOW OFTEN?
    - WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU WEAR ANY FAVORITE TRIBAL/ ETHNIC MARK** SUCH AS MAKE UP/HAIRCUT/HAIRSTYLE/PERFUME/ETC

    - o No? [ ] WHY?
    - o Yes? [ ] WHICH?

        HOW OFTEN?

        WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE TRADITIONAL FOLK ANTHEM**

    - o No? [ ]
    - o Yes? [ ] WHICH?

        WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE FLAG?**

    - ▪ WHICH?
    - ▪ WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU HAVE ANY FAVORITE TRADITIONAL SPORT, DANCE OR GAME?**

    - o No? [ ]
    - o Yes? [ ] WHICH?

        WHERE IS IT TRADITIONALLY FROM?

- **DO YOU ANY FAVORITE TRIBAL/ETHNIC PLANT, FLOWER OR ANIMAL?**

    - o No? [ ]
    - o Yes? [ ] WHICH? Is it an ethnic or tribal symbol?

B3) MENTAL CONCEPTION

- **WHAT DOES THE WORD "CITIZENSHIP" MEAN TO YOU?**
- **WHAT DOES THE WORD "CITIZEN" INSPIRE YOU?**
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU TO BE A CITIZEN?**

C. **ACKNOWLEDGING CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES**

C1) POLITICAL & LOYALTY PRACTICES (LOCAL-NATIONAL LEVEL)

- **When you lived AT HOME, WERE YOU A POLITICALLY ENGAGED PERSON?**
    - o No? [ ]
    - o Yes? [ ] WHY?

        HOW?

- **Now you live HERE, DO YOU FEEL THE SAME (IF ANY) POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT THAN BEFORE?**
    - o No? [ ] WHY?
    - o Yes? [ ] WHY?

- **Do you feel ANY POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THAILAND AS NATION?**
    - o No? [ ] WHY?
    - o Yes? [ ] WHY?

- **Do you feel ANY POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE REGION OR DISTRICT IN WHERE YOU LIVE NOW?**
    - No? [ ] WHY?
    - Yes? [ ] WHY?

- **DO YOU HAVE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR GENERAL AND ELECTIONS?**
    - No? [ ] WHY?
    - Yes? [ ] WHERE
            HOW OFTEN?

- **Have you done (or are you expected to do) ANY MILITARY SERVICE?**
    - No? [ ] WHY?
    - Yes? [ ] WHEN
            FOR WHICH COUNTRY
            FOR HOW LONG?

- **Do you wish to return to your Myanmar/home country?**
    - No? [ ] WHY?
    - Yes? [ ] WHY?
            WHEN?
            WHERE WOULD YOU MOVE?
            CAN YOU RETURN? Enough (economic, social & political) resources to do so?

C2) CULTURAL PRACTICES (LOCAL-NATIONAL LEVEL)

- **Have you celebrated ANY PATRIOTIC FESTIVITY WHILE LIVING IN THAILAND?**
    - No [ ]
    - Yes? [ ] WHICH?
            WHEN?
            HOW OFTEN?
            WHERE?
            WITH WHO?
            HOW/WHAT DID YOU DO?

- **Have you taken part in ANY NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION?**
    - Yes [ ] WHICH?
            WHEN?
            WHERE?
            HOW/WHAT DID YOU DO?
    - No [ ] WHEN is Myanmar's national day?
            WHEN is Thailand's national day?

APPENDIX III. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KAREN PARTICIPANTS

<u>REGISTRATION PAGE:</u>

LOCALITY AND YEAR OF BIRTH:

SEX: CIVIL   STATUS: NO. OF CHILDREN:

SUB-   ETHNICITY: RELIGION:

MOTHER TONGUE/S:

LEVEL OF COMPLETED STUDIES COMPLETED:

LANGUAGES IN WHICH YOU CAN COMMUNICATE (ORALLY & WRITTEN):

YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN MYANMAR:

YEARS YOU HAVE LIVED AND WORKED IN THAILAND:

WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW? (type of housing)

CURRENT WORKING SECTOR:

FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT YOUR CURRENT JOB?

DO YOU HAVE A VALID WORKING CONTRACT/PERMIT?

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR NORMAL WORKING DAY:

START   TIME: END TIME:
HOURS PER   DAY: HOURS PER WEEK:
MAIN WORKING TASKS:
TIME FOR LEISURE, DAYS OFF, HOLIDAYS:
OTHER INFORMATION:
N.B NEXT IS AN OPTIONAL QUESTION ONLY APPLICABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THEY HAVE CERTAIN LEGAL STATUS

VALID LEGAL DOCUMENTATION:

A.   <u>INDIVIDUAL CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY</u>

A1) FORMATION

- On a daily basis, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE YOU INTERACT MOST WITH AND WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

- WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH THESE PEOPLE?

- WHO ARE THE PEOPLE AT YOUR PLACE OF ORIGIN YOU STILL KEEP CONTACT WITH AND HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM?

- Throughout the year, WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH YOUR PEOPLE BACK IN MYANMAR?

- HOW DO YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MYANMAR?

- HOW DO YOU LEARN ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS YOU HAVE HERE IN THAILAND?

A2) PERFORMATIVITY

- WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TRADITIONAL MEAL?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE PATRIOTIC ANTHEM?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE TRIBAL OR ETHNIC SYMBOL?

- WHICH FLAG REPRESENTS BEST THE PLACE YOU BELONG?

- WHICH ARE THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHES YOU USE MOST?

- WHAT ARE THE TRIBAL/ ETHNIC MARKS YOU WEAR MOST OFTEN?

- WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONAL DANCES YOU PERFORM MOST?

B. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE (POLITICAL) TERRITORY

B1) SENSES OF TERRITORIAL BELONGING

- DESCRIBE THE FEELINGS YOU HAVE FOR YOUR LOCALITY OF ORIGIN.

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR YOUR ETHNIC STATE/DIVISION OF ORIGIN?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR MYANMAR?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THAILAND?

- TO WHICH OF THE PLACES MENTIONED SO FAR YOU THINK YOU BELONG?

B2) SENSES OF (POLITICAL) TERRITORY ATTACHMENT

- HOW IMPORTANT ARE POLITICAL TERRITORIES FOR YOU?

- TELL ME THE POLITICAL TERRITORIES TO WHICH YOU ARE ATTACHED.

- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE A MEMBER OF THESE POLITICAL TERRITORIES?

C. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE COLLECTIVE CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY

C1) MEANING

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE KAREN?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BURMESE?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FROM MYANMAR?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THAI?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A KAREN IN MYANMAR?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MYANMAR PERSON IN THAILAND?

C2) EXPRESSION

- HOW IS TO BE A KAREN?

- HOW IS TO BE A BURMESE?

- HOW IS TO BE A MYANMAR CITIZEN?

- HOW IS TO BE A THAI?

- HOW IS TO BE A KAREN IN MYANMAR?

- HOW IS TO BE A MYANMAR CITIZEN IN THAILAND?

D. ACKNOWLEDGING CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

D1) VOTING: INTENTION AND PRACTICE

- WHAT DO YOU DO FOR VOTING IN ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (Here I want to know whether

  they vote or not and how are their voting practices performed)

- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO VOTE I ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (I want to understand their attitude towards voting practices)

D2) ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO FOR THE MEMBERS OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING? HOW OFTEN?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES WITHIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY?

D3) SOCIAL ACTION FOR CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS PROTECTION

- WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL ACTIONS SUCH AS COLLECTIVE PROTEST, DEMONSTRATIONS OR MORE RADICAL ACTIVITIES YOU ENGAGE ON REGULAR BASIS?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO RAISE YOUR VOICE OR THE VOICE OF YOUR COMMUNITY AGAINST SOCIAL INJUSTICE OR POLITICAL ABUSE?

D4) FESTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

- PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CULTURAL AND/OR PATRIOTIC FESTIVITIES YOU CELEBRATE BOTH HERE AND IN MYANMAR. WHEN AND WHERE ARE THESE CELEBRATIONS TAKING PLACE?
- WHAT IS THE NATIONAL FESTIVITY YOU CELEBRATE MOST? WHEN AND WHERE?

D5) NATIONAL PRIDE AND LOYALTY TO THE NATION-STATE

- WHAT IS THE POLITICAL TERRITORY YOU FEEL PROUD OF?
- HOW DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BELONG TO THAILAND?
- WHEN WILL YOU MOVE BACK TO LIVE AND WORK IN MYANMAR?

APPENDIX IV. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MON PARTICIPANTS

<u>REGISTRATION PAGE:</u>

LOCALITY AND YEAR OF BIRTH:

SEX: CIVIL   STATUS: NO. OF CHILDREN:

SUB-   ETHNICITY: RELIGION:

MOTHER TONGUE/S:

LEVEL OF COMPLETED STUDIES COMPLETED:

LANGUAGES IN WHICH YOU CAN COMMUNICATE (ORALLY & WRITTEN):
_____

YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN MYANMAR:

YEARS YOU HAVE LIVED AND WORKED IN THAILAND:

WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW? (type of housing)

CURRENT WORKING SECTOR:

FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT YOUR CURRENT JOB?

DO YOU HAVE A VALID WORKING CONTRACT/PERMIT?

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR NORMAL WORKING DAY:

START   TIME: END TIME:
HOURS PER   DAY: HOURS PER WEEK:
MAIN WORKING TASKS:
TIME FOR LEISURE, DAYS OFF, HOLIDAYS:
OTHER INFORMATION:
N.B NEXT IS AN OPTIONAL QUESTION ONLY APPLICABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THEY HAVE CERTAIN LEGAL STATUS

VALID LEGAL DOCUMENTATION:

A.   <u>INDIVIDUAL CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY</u>

A1) FORMATION

- On a daily basis, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE YOU INTERACT MOST WITH AND WHERE ARE THEY FROM?
- WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH THESE PEOPLE?
- WHO ARE THE PEOPLE AT YOUR PLACE OF ORIGIN YOU STILL KEEP CONTACT WITH AND HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM?
- Throughout the year, WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH YOUR PEOPLE BACK IN MYANMAR?
- HOW DO YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MYANMAR?
- HOW DO YOU LEARN ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS YOU HAVE HERE IN THAILAND?

A2) PERFORMATIVITY

- WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TRADITIONAL MEAL?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE PATRIOTIC ANTHEM?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE TRIBAL OR ETHNIC SYMBOL?

- WHICH FLAG REPRESENTS BEST THE PLACE YOU BELONG?

- WHICH ARE THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHES YOU USE MOST?

- WHAT ARE THE TRIBAL/ ETHNIC MARKS YOU WEAR MOST OFTEN?

- WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONAL DANCES YOU PERFORM MOST?

B. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE (POLITICAL) TERRITORY

B1) SENSES OF TERRITORIAL BELONGING

- DESCRIBE THE FEELINGS YOU HAVE FOR YOUR LOCALITY OF ORIGIN.

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR YOUR ETHNIC STATE/DIVISION OF ORIGIN?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR MYANMAR?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THAILAND?

- TO WHICH OF THE PLACES MENTIONED SO FAR YOU THINK YOU BELONG?

B2) SENSES OF (POLITICAL) TERRITORY ATTACHMENT

- HOW IMPORTANT ARE POLITICAL TERRITORIES FOR YOU?

- TELL ME THE POLITICAL TERRITORIES TO WHICH YOU ARE ATTACHED.

- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE A MEMBER OF THESE POLITICAL TERRITORIES?

C. INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE COLLECTIVE CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY

C1) MEANING

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE MON?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BURMESE?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FROM MYANMAR?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THAI?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MON IN MYANMAR?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MYANMAR PERSON IN THAILAND?

C2) EXPRESSION

- HOW IS TO BE A MON?

- HOW IS TO BE A BURMESE?

- HOW IS TO BE A MYANMAR CITIZEN?

- HOW IS TO BE A THAI?

- HOW IS TO BE A MON IN MYANMAR?

- HOW IS TO BE A MYANMAR CITIZEN IN THAILAND?

D. ACKNOWLEDGING CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

D1) VOTING: INTENTION AND PRACTICE

- WHAT DO YOU DO FOR VOTING IN ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (Here I want to know whether they vote or not and how are their voting practices performed)
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO VOTE I ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (I want to understand their attitude towards voting practices)

D2) ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO FOR THE MEMBERS OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING? HOW OFTEN?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES WITHIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY?

D3) SOCIAL ACTION FOR CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS PROTECTION

- WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL ACTIONS SUCH AS COLLECTIVE PROTEST, DEMONSTRATIONS OR MORE RADICAL ACTIVITIES YOU ENGAGE ON REGULAR BASIS?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO RAISE YOUR VOICE OR THE VOICE OF YOUR COMMUNITY AGAINST SOCIAL INJUSTICE OR POLITICAL ABUSE?

D4) FESTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

- PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CULTURAL AND/OR PATRIOTIC FESTIVITIES YOU CELEBRATE BOTH HERE AND IN MYANMAR. WHEN AND WHERE ARE THESE CELEBRATIONS TAKING PLACE?
- WHAT IS THE NATIONAL FESTIVITY YOU CELEBRATE MOST? WHEN AND WHERE?

D5) NATIONAL PRIDE AND LOYALTY TO THE NATION-STATE

- WHAT IS THE POLITICAL TERRITORY YOU FEEL PROUD OF?
- HOW DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BELONG TO THAILAND?
- WHEN WILL YOU MOVE BACK TO LIVE AND WORK IN MYANMAR?

APPENDIX V. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BURMESE PARTICIPANTS

REGISTRATION PAGE:

LOCALITY AND YEAR OF BIRTH:

SEX: CIVIL   STATUS: NO. OF CHILDREN:

SUB-   ETHNICITY: RELIGION:

MOTHER TONGUE/S:

LEVEL OF COMPLETED STUDIES COMPLETED:

LANGUAGES IN WHICH YOU CAN COMMUNICATE (ORALLY & WRITTEN):
_____

YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN MYANMAR:

YEARS YOU HAVE LIVED AND WORKED IN THAILAND:

WHERE DO YOU LIVE NOW? (type of housing)

CURRENT WORKING SECTOR:

FOR HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT YOUR CURRENT JOB?

DO YOU HAVE A VALID WORKING CONTRACT/PERMIT?

PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR NORMAL WORKING DAY:

START   TIME: END TIME:
HOURS PER   DAY: HOURS PER WEEK:
MAIN WORKING TASKS:
TIME FOR LEISURE, DAYS OFF, HOLIDAYS:
OTHER INFORMATION:
N.B NEXT IS AN OPTIONAL QUESTION ONLY APPLICABLE FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO HAVE ALREADY MENTIONED THEY HAVE CERTAIN LEGAL STATUS

VALID LEGAL DOCUMENTATION:

E.   INDIVIDUAL CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY

A1) FORMATION

- On a daily basis, WHO ARE THE PEOPLE YOU INTERACT MOST WITH AND WHERE ARE THEY FROM?
- WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH THESE PEOPLE?
- WHO ARE THE PEOPLE AT YOUR PLACE OF ORIGIN YOU STILL KEEP CONTACT WITH AND HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH THEM?
- Throughout the year, WHAT ACTIVITIES YOU DO TOGETHER WITH YOUR PEOPLE BACK IN MYANMAR?
- HOW DO YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MYANMAR?
- HOW DO YOU LEARN ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS YOU HAVE HERE IN THAILAND?

A2) PERFORMATIVITY

- WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TRADITIONAL MEAL?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE PATRIOTIC ANTHEM?

- WHICH IS YOUR FAVORITE TRIBAL OR ETHNIC SYMBOL?

- WHICH FLAG REPRESENTS BEST THE PLACE YOU BELONG?

- WHICH ARE THE TRADITIONAL CLOTHES YOU USE MOST?

- WHAT ARE THE TRIBAL/ ETHNIC MARKS YOU WEAR MOST OFTEN?

- WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONAL DANCES YOU PERFORM MOST?

F.   INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE (POLITICAL) TERRITORY

B1) SENSES OF TERRITORIAL BELONGING

- DESCRIBE THE FEELINGS YOU HAVE FOR YOUR LOCALITY OF ORIGIN.

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR YOUR ETHNIC STATE/DIVISION OF ORIGIN?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL FOR MYANMAR?

- WHAT DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THAILAND?

- TO WHICH OF THE PLACES MENTIONED SO FAR YOU THINK YOU BELONG?

B2) SENSES OF (POLITICAL) TERRITORY ATTACHMENT

- HOW IMPORTANT ARE POLITICAL TERRITORIES FOR YOU?

- TELL ME THE POLITICAL TERRITORIES TO WHICH YOU ARE ATTACHED.

- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE A MEMBER OF THESE POLITICAL TERRITORIES?

G.   INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE COLLECTIVE CITIZENSHIP IDENTITY

C1) MEANING

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BURMESE?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FROM MYANMAR?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE THAI?

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A BURMESE IN THAILAND?

C2) EXPRESSION

- HOW IS TO BE A BURMESE?

- HOW IS TO BE A MYANMAR CITIZEN?

- HOW IS TO BE A THAI?

- HOW IS TO BE A BURMESE IN MYANMAR?

- HOW IS TO BE A BURMESE IN THAILAND?

H.   ACKNOWLEDGING CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

D1) VOTING: INTENTION AND PRACTICE

- WHAT DO YOU DO FOR VOTING IN ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (Here I want to know whether

  they vote or not and how are their voting practices performed)

- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO VOTE I ELECTIONS OF YOUR COUNTRY? (I want to understand
  their attitude towards voting practices)

D2) ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO FOR THE MEMBERS OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY WHEN YOU ARE NOT WORKING? HOW OFTEN?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES WITHIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY?

D3) SOCIAL ACTION FOR CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS PROTECTION

- WHAT KIND OF SOCIAL ACTIONS SUCH AS COLLECTIVE PROTEST, DEMONSTRATIONS OR MORE RADICAL ACTIVITIES YOU ENGAGE ON REGULAR BASIS?
- HOW IMPORTANT IS FOR YOU TO RAISE YOUR VOICE OR THE VOICE OF YOUR COMMUNITY AGAINST SOCIAL INJUSTICE OR POLITICAL ABUSE?

D4) FESTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS

- PLEASE DESCRIBE THE CULTURAL AND/OR PATRIOTIC FESTIVITIES YOU CELEBRATE BOTH HERE AND IN MYANMAR. WHEN AND WHERE ARE THESE CELEBRATIONS TAKING PLACE?
- WHAT IS THE NATIONAL FESTIVITY YOU CELEBRATE MOST? WHEN AND WHERE?

D5) NATIONAL PRIDE AND LOYALTY TO THE NATION-STATE

- WHAT IS THE POLITICAL TERRITORY YOU FEEL PROUD OF?
- HOW DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BELONG TO THAILAND?
- WHEN WILL YOU MOVE BACK TO LIVE AND WORK IN MYANMAR?

APPENDIX VI. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Topic: Understanding the Relationship between Citizenship and Mobility

1) Mobility understood as
   a. The Act of Moving
   b. A Physical Movement
   c. Social mobility (can you work anywhere? Can you live anywhere?)
   d. Transportation (taxi, public transport, walking)
      i. Is it safe?
      ii. Do you have money and time to do so?
2) Freedom of movement (can you drive, ride or walk freely without any constraints?)
3) Resources available for mobility (any limitations regarding money and time?)
4) Safety and Mobility (is it safe to move?)
5) Visiting Myanmar (safety / resources / opportunity to do so
6) Citizenship Practices and Mobility
7) Other links between Citizenship and Mobility

Main question:

How do you experience mobility as a Myanmar citizen living and working in XXXXXX?

Secondary question:

Please, compare the experience of being a worker in Myanmar and here in XXXXXX. Talk about the easiest and the most difficult aspects and where.

APPENDIX VII. REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

SENSES OF CITIZENSHIP AMONGST BURMESE IN PERI-URBAN BANGKOK

Background and purpose

The research project presented below corresponds to a master thesis project for the award of Master of Philosophy in development studies – specializing in geography issued by the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The theme for this study is *mobility, belonging and citizenship in the Global South*, encompassed within the field of geographies of citizenship. The research project is partially funded by NTNU. The research objective of this project is to acknowledge new forms of citizenship experienced by the Burmese labor community living and working in the Northern peri-urban area of Bangkok, Thailand. The primary data set is going to be produced between August and October 2016 in XXXXXX district, in collaboration with research assistants from the School of Environment, Resources and Development (SERD) at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) located in Thailand.

Participants for this research study will be selected through a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria; Participants must be individuals born and raised in Myanmar/Burma who in age of majority have moved to Thailand because of work. Participants must have lived and worked in XXXXXX on a permanent basis for at least a six-months. If you meet those two mandatory requirements, you are welcome to take part in the project.

What does participation in the project imply?

Primary data will be produced mainly through individual in-depth interviews and observation. The information will be collected in the form of written notes, audio/video recordings and pictures. In-depth interviews will not exceed duration of two hours. Main data will be related to participants' sociocultural and ethnic background as well as participants' current sociopolitical affiliation/belonging. In order to avoid harming any of the individuals involved in my research project, I shall attempt to establish trust-based relationships within safe environments at any time. Also, I shall definitely avoid posing any question that might harm my participants' wellbeing when interacting with them. Regarding the production of audio data, I shall not record any interview without the previous verbal consent of the research subjects involved in the conversation. The same imperative rule shall apply for the production of any visual (video or photography) data.

What will happen to the information about you?

As participant, you will have the right to correct any information that concerns you at any time. Your personal data will be stored and treated confidentially in private cloud storage services attached to official educational institutions (NTNU & AIT). People with access to your personal data will be: the project supervisor, the project leader and the research assistants.

Participants will be anonymized in the final publication. No picture in which the faces of my participants can be identified will be published unless they give me their explicit permission. The project is scheduled for completion by May 2017. After this date, any audio and video recording will be destroyed and any personal data will be anonymously stored and eventually destroyed. All the pictures will be removed from the cloud storage service.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact Andrea Menendez, project leader, via email (andrmene@stud.ntnu.no) or Ragnhild Lund, Andrea's supervisor, via email (ragnhild.lund@svt.ntnu.no) or via telephone (+4773591923).

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

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(Signed by participant, date)

APPENDIX VIII. NATIONAL FLAGS AND ETHNIC SYMBOLS

Karen Flag with Karen ethnic symbol (buffalo horn). Source: https://karenstate.blogspot.no/2009/11/karen-flag.html (accessed 28 February 2017)

Myanmar Flag. Source: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html (accessed 28 February 2017)

Mon Flag with Mon symbol (Mon bird). Picture by Andrea Menendez (2016).

Burma Flag with Burmese Symbol. Source: http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/burma/mmflags.htm (accessed 28 February 2017).

APPENDIX IX. MYANMAR PUBLIC HOLIDAYS IN 2016

No.	Date	Public Holiday
1.	January 04	Independence Day
2.	January 09	Karen New Year Day
3.	February 12	Union Day
4.	March 02	Peasants' Day
5.	March 23	Full Moon Day of Tabaung
6.	March 27	Armed Forces Day
7.	April 11	Myanmar New Year
8.	April 12, 13, 14, 15, 16	Thingyan Festival
9.	April 17, 18, 19, 20	Myanmar New Year
10.	May 01	May Day
11.	May 21	Full Moon Day of Kasong
12.	July 19	Full Moon Day of Waso (Beginning of Buddhist Lent)
13.	July 19	Martyr's Day
14.	October 16	Full Moon Day of Thadingyut (End of Buddhist Lent)
15.	November 14	Full Moon of Tazaungmone
16.	November 24	National's Day
17.	December 25	Christmas Day
18.	December 29	Kaiyin New Year

Source: Ministry of Inmigration and Population of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (2017).