THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

Backpacking Identities

An auto-ethnographic exploration of how contemporary backpacking negotiates its sense of identity amidst the everchanging effect of globalisation and technological development

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Abstract

This dissertation implements an Auto-ethnographic method to illuminate the ways in which the process of globalisation and evolution of technological development have changed aspects of backpacking culture and its mode of mobility. Positing that in the face of these rapidly modernising changes, those participating in tourism as backpacking individuals are now tasked with finding ways to navigate through and around the issues that globalisation generates for the backpacking sphere, e.g Homogenisation and westernisation of the developing world. This navigation is implemented in order to preserve the resistance of countercultural movements whose beliefs against the globalised neo-liberal market agenda have fed into the ideological notions contemporary backpacking is loaded with. This dissertation will focus on the notions of authenticity and traditionality through how countries present themselves through the tourism industry and how backpackers subsequently relate to these modernising developments. There will also be a focus on how backpackers escape the ever present and demanding nature of hypermodern capitalist markets so they can conserve a space exclusively for the intimate human connection between individuals outside of this market. This dissertation will then go onto to show in this navigation of the issues generated by globalisation that virtual spaces have been cultivated which serve to connect and re-present the notions and ideology of contemporary backpacking.

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1 Introduction

Contemporary hypermodern industrial, social, and cultural life has been marked by rapid globalisation and development transforming the nature of human interaction, through the development and accessibility of modern communication and information technologies (Sengupta 2001). Which in their disembedding notions of time and space, have generated a global capitalist market economy facilitating the massified mobility of people around the world (Caserta 2020). This connection and development is now arguably arriving at its final limits connecting the most remote locations globally, transforming the relationships and stability between the individual and this new globalised society (Bauman 2001).

The rapidly changing nature of global life and the access to information granted by technology has enabled a mass individualisation through the freedom in identity making processes becoming transformed into fluid states (Rattanasi 2017), distinct from the concrete social institutions; Religion, Community, Nation State, Class, Work, Education which previously provided readymade " identity packages" (Eriksen 2001; p140). Destabilising the traditional pillars of society has generated a market focused around cultivating opportunities aiding the sense of identity, providing avenues leading to individualised and pluralistic notion of identity. Bauman (2001) noted "identity" has now become a prism through which other topical aspects of contemporary life are spotted, grasped and examined' (140). Considering the vast ever-increasing options for selfhood, predestination is replaced by 'a compulsive and obligatory self-determination' (Bauman 2001; 140-152) based around individual action and freedom.

Backpacking culture provides a nuanced perspective of this self-determination (Chen 2019). Characterised by a sense of fluidity, autonomy, and individualism Backpacking attempts to resist the constraints of the contemporary consumer culture(Persson 2019). As individuals participating in this consumer culture are constrained by dependency upon the market economy and labour market (Beck 2001: 203) to supply the demands of identity making. Embedding the individual within a market mindset which expects responsibility, predictability, and stability from consuming members of society (Eriksen 2001, Bauman 2001). Backpacking's ideological resistance to this characterises and subsequently mythologises the culture as an ideal for those frustrated with the state of modern social life (Burkitt 2019), becoming disdainful of dogmatic ideologies, un-patriotic, hedonistic, and anarchistic (Cohen 1972). Shunning any kind of connection to corporate and conglomerate establishments; whose interests are based around a market mindset of profit and consumption (Cohen 1973). Rooting itself in counterculture (Richards 2015) concerned with intense emotional connection, authentic experiences (Urry 1992), and self-development within the context of a less modernised setting and more natural environment than hyper-modern post-industrial societies

This more natural setting leads backpacking communities to less developed countries (Hampton 2015), as they are perceived to contain higher levels of adventure and risk, resulting from their lack of development. This perception of traditional societies enables backpacker's fulfilment in their quest for identity based on their desires to experience that which is meaningful i.e. human connection, which is pursued through a lifestyle of unstructured mobility, fluidity, and lack of expectations (Collero 2003). Which this lack of development

makes easy, as living costs are far cheaper in comparison to the more developed nations most backpackers come from (Pearce 1990)

However, the effect of this hyper-modernised globally connected society is that it is increasingly encompassing developing these countries into the standardising effects of capitalism (Tolkach and Pratt 2019). Making these places look more like their developed counterparts. Arguably, this better infrastructure and process creates more opportunity helping progress (Hampton 2015). Yet, through this modernisation, local cultures become eroded, homogenising and increasingly making the globe conform to a standardised image of a globalised neo-capitalism (Pieterse 1994).

The reach of global capitalism places the contemporary backpacker, which is so ideologically loaded, in a seeming dichotomy between their desires and them playing a key role in McDonaldisation of the places they visit (Ritzer 1993), by bringing with them consumer demands that these countries have to accommodate. Speeding up the modernisation of these places away from traditional roots (ritzer 1993). Leaving the backpacker, the task of negotiating this dichotomy in order to maintain the ideologies of backpacking (Murphy 2001).

Having backpacked for 7 months, To explore the effects of globalisation and modernisation on the way backpacking culture negotiates behaviours and practices, this dissertation will combine first- hand experiences of backpacking, via auto-ethnography; *the use of first-hand cultural experiences that are retro-actively analysed using self-reflection (Ellis et al 2011)*, alongside a secondary analysis of academic research in backpacker and tourist studies. In order to explore how backpackers, negotiate the want to maintain the ideology of Cohens (1972) drifter backpacker, within the constantly shifting, expanding, and ever- present global economy.

Currently the existing Accademia around backpacker studies provides insight into the historical influences on backpacking culture and backpacking's effect on developing. Research in this field has also illuminated commonalities between backpackers (Pearce 1990). Providing an understanding of the backpacker's central role in consuming and promoting an idealised image of rootlessness and global mobility (Chen 2019).

In using Autoethnography I will extend knowledge relating to how ideals are conceived and how those ideals are negotiated and assimilated within the backdrop of global development. With the use of first person accounts Allowing a greater expression and exploration of issues and how they are encountered directly rather than other methods that have been used to explore backpackers in the past.

My data collection, which will form my vignettes, are made from reflections made on entries made to my Travel journal and my social media account. From these accounts I will explore three interrelated aspects of my backpacking experience making possible the exploration of how backpackers navigate between the ideology of the backpacker and its mythology of adventure, within the effects of global standardisation, comparing my results to existing contemporary backpacker studies.

My first chapter will explore the backpackers desire for authentic experiences and natural environments, untouched by modernity. Examining how this quest is becoming impossible as a result of the modernisation and globalisation transforming traditional settings (Mbiawa 2019). Illuminating how backpackers, unphased by this modernisation, maintain their quest for the uncultivated experience (Hampton 2015). Going on to examine the issues for countries in maintaining a traditional and unmodernised presentation, resulting from a reliance on tourism market (Katherin 2019). Using the scope of post-colonialism. I will show how this Extends and transforms colonial domination over host countries by staging authentic experiences, to attract backpackers economy (MacCannel 1973). Concluding that these desires are accommodated through presentations that stage experiences and increasingly as these countries have become more modernised, they continue to commodify these aspects, so the finances generated by the mass tourism industry are preserved.

The second chapter explores how backpackers negotiate the commodified aspects of authentic tourism through using the hostel space as a form of escape. Enabling a preservation of an ideology which desires a rootless existence free from the trappings of capitalist society. In order to navigate away from this ever-present feature of contemporary modern life (Huws 2019), backpackers retreat into the hostel, where ideology can create and recreate itself through the social nature of backpacking (Pearce 1990). Maintaining the notions of authentic human connection through social reinforcement generated by interaction with other backpackers. Transforming how the backpacker experiences their trip, in escaping the invasive reach of capitalism, the hostel space preserves and extends the ideologies of backpacking maintaining and extending notions of community during resulting from the reinforcement generated by both real world and virtual tribe like communities.

My third chapter will examine how technology has aided the maintenance of backpacking ideology. Examining the transformative nature its had on the ease and accessibility of travel, accommodation, and planning. Arguing that this ease of travel streamlines and as a result moves backpacking away from its risky adventurous notions. Secondly, by looking at how social media enables backpackers to re-present the ideology through digital spheres. Distorting the reality of mass commodification resulting from the rapid growth of the tourism industry(Mbiawa 2019). Extending the ideology of the backpacker by maintaining its image through presentation on social media depicting a certain type of ideology to be conformed to, and re-presented. Thus, becoming a symbol as that which signifies backpacking's ability to provide the freedom and natural setting idealised by travellers, continuing the cycle of experience, negotiation, and re-presentation of the Backpacker.

In discussing how these three chapters interact, I will establish how this negotiating has become a normal process for contemporary backpackers to navigate in order to preserve the experience and ideology of backpacking culture. Concluding that although globalisation and modernisation of developing nations have transformed notions of backpacking, it maintenance and massification is symbolic in how global mobility; the freedom of movement and lifestyles has become of central importance to the reactions against the constraints of modernity and the expectations placed on the individual (Caserta 2020). Going on to show how in negotiating the issues generated by hyper-modernisation and global capitalism, helps individuals understand

how to interact with capitalism critically and ethically, furthering the notions of backpacking's ability to help personal-development and wider social understanding (Richards 2015).

Finally I will discuss the possible futures I see backpacking lifestyle and culture taking, in light of how globalisation will further transform and evolve ideologies and practices, examining how backpacking may further shift in light of global risks to society (Avdijev 2020); with a particular focus the way pandemics like corona virus will change social relations, and the way technology is further mobilising the nature of work aiding the growth of hybrid nomadic global identities (Avdijev 2020).

2 Methodology

An overarching problem with understanding backpacker studies, analysing the contemporary situation this form of tourism/lifestyle takes (Murphy 2001), is that there doesn't exist much research on the internalised motives of nation specific travellers. Apart from the work done on Israeli backpackers by Ureily et al (2002) which explores at depth the internalised ideals of Israeli backpackers and the practices they undertake. My use of autoethnography seeks to explore this gap in research. Using an analysis of my own thoughts, feelings, and motivations before, during, and after backpacking as this will enable me to add the internal subjective position to explore how contemporary backpacking lifestyle is experienced and understood under the effects of the globalised economic system through the understandings of a British Backpacker.

For seven months in 2017, I travelled across 6 countries (Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China) as a backpacker. Having kept a journal and an Instagram account documenting my experience, I feel I am in an in optimal position from which to reflect and look back on these recordings of my time and explore the effects of globalisation on backpacking. Although, not specifically directed to exploring this aspect, both documentations contain rich accounts of Backpacking experiences from which I can bring a sociological lens to critically analyse and reflect on how backpacking is affected by the nature of globalisation and technological development. So, in doing this my dissertation will employ autoethnography.

I feel adding my own voice to Backpacker studies, as a full participant, will best demonstrate and extend existing knowledge and critical discourses taken on Contemporary Backpackers in academic literature. This existing knowledge illuminating the culture seeks to understand and characterise the backpacking community and their physical movements and seemingly homogeneous ideology (collero 2003). However, what seems to be missing from studies and established knowledge is a first-hand personal exploration into the experiences which can serve to illuminate the internal motivations of backpackers far greater than other studies (Pearce 1990, Salvaggio 2016, Zhang 2017) have managed to. So, by using auto-ethnography, my dissertation will explore and "make sense in the context of their own lived experiences" (Bochner, 2005, p. 270). adding a more personal and insightful account of the current state backpacking's community spheres and how they are experienced, illuminating its ideology and its reality in practice. Updating and further establishing where backpacking finds its place in contemporary global society.

Carolyn Ellis (2004) constructs autoethnography as a combination of method, research, and writing that links reflections on personal experiences to the social and the cultural. Furthering this understanding Sarah Wall (2008) labels autoethnography a qualitative method which widens sociological understanding through giving voice to personal experience. For my approach in bringing a sociological lens to the processes of backpacking, S. Jones's (2005) extended definition of autoethnography reflects my reasoning for employing this method of narrative: Autoethnography is…a balancing act…a blurred genre…setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and

explanation…and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. (p. 765).

Ellis and Bochner (2006) add further support to Jones's (2005) avocation that the reader must get involved in and experience autoethnography by caring, feeling, empathizing, and acting. As an autoethnographic researcher I am willingly making myself vulnerable to readers. Sharing deeply personal experiences through excerpts from my travel journal and analytically reflecting upon them, demonstrating points from examples from my own experience, In order to evoke in my audience an understanding of how the effects of globalisation have placed limitations on backpacking practices, generating contradictions in the communities ideology.

The steps I have taken through autoethnography will hopefully inspire those who directly and indirectly encounter my research, to adopt a critical gaze on the nature of backpacking and the tourism industry, both in understanding it as a phenomenon and as a form of identity. Through employing autoethnography, I used my subjectivity as a lens through which to illuminate the cultural, sociological, and personal dimensions of backpacking as a way of life and what it means for global society (Harrison 2002).

Scholarship debating the legitimacy and practice of autoethnographic research held lessons for me as a researcher. Traditional ethnographers, such as Sara Delamont (2007), decry autoethnography as lazy, unethical, devoid of analytic outcomes, and spotlighting the powerful. However, because the backpacker identity is seemingly so tied up in notions of subjectivity, uncertainty, and fluidity (Salvaggio 2016). That a personal account brings an important illuminating effects to the nature of backpacking. From which a greater level of information and insight can be extracted and analysed, rather than linear and unmeaningful analysis in pre-existing literature on backpackers like Cohen's *'Backpacking diversity and change' (2003)* which examines backpacking as a changing phenomenon but does so without the first-hand accounts which I feel, using my own experiences, can act as a bridge between understanding the phenomenon and the practice, which is missing from contemporary backpacker studies.

To collect autoethnographic data, I used methods advised by Philaretou and Allen (2006): "Self-reflective accounts, derived from personal documents such as diary entries…personal recollections, and correspondence, constitute the primary data source for Autoethnographic research" (p. 65). The information recorded in my travel journal and on my social media travel account were both rich veins of such autoethnographic ore for this study. from which I can reflect upon and examine the limitations of the ideology which I was practicing whilst backpacking.

In using an autoethnographic approach I seek to deconstruct and explore the ideology and practices of Backpacking culture and how they are affected and embedded within the effects of globalisation. However in using the personal paradigm through which to criticise, I place myself in the firing line of superiors, colleagues, and criticism in future (Ellis 2004) as some of the topics I will talk about can be criticised as just being my own experience rather than that which is indicative of a wider issue. To combat this issue, I will compare my vignettes within the exiting theory on backpackers and compare the ways in which my experience reflects what is established.

In order to keep a watchful eye on my subjectivity I used secondary analysis of primary qualitative datasets. Mainly focusing on research done by Salvaggio in 'bursting the backpacker bubble: exploring backpacking ideology, practices, and contradictions' (2016). Which uses an ethnographic approach to analyse backpacker experiences in South and central America. Although contrasting the location of my investigation into Australasian backpacking culture. The findings of interviews done by Salvaggio reflects and contrast my own experiences whilst backpacking and add further depth as Salvaggio was able to interview participants through mobile methods; as he was able to travel alongside his participants, strengthening his understanding of the difference between ideology and practice, as a key dimension to the backpacking identity is that of mobility and movement (Pearce 1990). The strength of using Secondary analysis has important implications for qualitative researchers who seek to investigate topics in an elusive population (Long-Sutehall et al 2010) like those found in the ever mobile and ever-changing backpacker mentality.

Applying multiple data-gathering techniques, through autoethnography and secondary analysis enabled me to triangulate my findings and increase the credibility of my research (Glesne, 1999). Directing my examination in exploring the way in which globalisation has affected and continues to influence the contemporary backpacking sphere and the ways in which individuals can form notions of identity from participating in this form of lifestyle travel (Hetherington 1999).

An overarching problem with understanding backpacker studies, analysing the contemporary situation this form of tourism/lifestyle takes, is that there doesn't exist much research on the internalised motives of nation specific travellers. Apart from the work done on Israeli backpackers by Ureily et al (2002) which explores at depth the internalised ideals of Israeli backpackers and the practices they undertake. My use of autoethnography seeks to explore this gap in research. Using an analysis of my own thoughts, feelings, and motivations before, during, and after backpacking as this will enable me to explore how contemporary backpacking lifestyle is experienced and understood by a British Backpacker.

3 History of the Backpacker: Tracing the beliefs and practices of Contemporary Backpacking as they are established and understood in Academic theory

Contemporary Backpacking as its understood today, was first coined in academic literature as 'a group of predominantly young travellers who are more likely to stay in budget accommodation, have an emphasis on meeting other travellers, are independent and have a flexible travel schedule, stay for a longer rather than a brief holiday, and focus on informal and participatory holiday activities.' (Pearce 1990; p. 1) However, understanding the groups ideological roots would be flawed without exploring Cohen's (1972) typology of tourism roles -based on novelty and familiarity- on a continuum of 'organised to solo institutionalised mass tourists' to 'explorer' to 'drifter' tourists. the 'drifter' concept arises as the inspiration for Contemporary backpacking (Elsrud 2001 Cohen 1972).

First making their appearance after the second world war (Cohen 1972). The drifter found its subscription in the educated middle class starting up the trend of hitching their way across Europe. Distinct from the earlier imperialistic notions of travel Cohen (1973), which romanticised and intended travel to serve a "constructive social purpose"(Cohen 1973, p67). Transcending this notion, the Drifter ideology is self-defined as the opposite of mainstream cultural movements. Cohen (1973 1972) conceived the drifter as "individualistic", "disdainful of ideologies", "un-patriotic", "hedonistic" and "anarchistic" (Cohen, 1973, p89) shunning "any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and considers the ordinary tourist experience phony" (Cohen, 1972, p.168).

The Drifter, as a result, strives for authenticity trying "to live the way the people he visits live… wholly immersed in his host culture" (Cohen 1972, p.168) who reacts against or at least is disillusioned by the place they were raised. As a result, seeks to see the world "as it really is" (Cohen 1973, p.95) pursing social involvement in the host communities. These motivations have been assimilated into contemporary backpacking "maintaining an ideal of practices, embracing the ideology of drifting" (elsrud 2001: 601). As participation in this more ideologically loaded (Cohen 2003) form of lifestyle travel has increased with time, it has in turn created a stronger demand for host countries to create an infrastructure through which this community can be accommodated (Paris 2012).

An accommodation of these desires is enabled by the process of globalisation connecting and developing nations (Mbiawa 2019). A modernisation aided by rapid growths in technology and trade which has normalised the mobility of people (Salvaggio 2016). The opportunities provided by globalisation situate backpacking as a result of globalisation encouraging nomadic mobile identities (D'Andrea 2006) as they create new demands that need to be accommodated. The demands of backpacking, among other forms of global mobility(Hartman 1991), have further led to the modernisation and development of the tourist market economy by establishing fixed patterns and routes of travel, which local economies can grow from. immersing backpacking culture within all the "paraphernalia of mass tourism" (Cohen, 1973, p. 95) which has somewhat commodified the backpacking experience (Elsrud 1998).

Despite this commodification and Backpacking's comparability with the mass tourism industry, the idealised "[u]topian desire doesn't go away […]. in fact, never really went away" (McKay, 1996, p. 6). backpacking still enables the perception of escape from the individual's homeland (Pearce 1990, Cohen 1973). With Iso-Ahola (1982) noting that through adopting this mobile and unstructured mentality individuals feel they escape dullness and monotony of everyday life, and societal expectations. Allowing them to adopt ideals of freedom, independence and adventure (Cohen 2003). This is also reflected by Richards and Wilson (2004) noting that contemporary backpackers idealize this travel form as it exists in opposition to the constraints of modern society. In search of authentic travel, backpackers maintain the ideology of their travel as a trail of discovery of places unspoiled by mass tourism.

The common values which inspire contemporary backpacking also draw inspiration counterculture movements of the 20th century. And by understanding the values of the Hippie movement and Student revolution; in seeking open-mindedness and escape from society (Miles 2008) the ideology of Contemporary Backpacking and the experiences of alienation can be better understood. Both Periods (then and now) find such symmetry as they exist in a societal flux, the stresses and uncertainties of late modern life are certainly still a disorienting factor which induces young men and women to take 'time out' (Elsrud, 1998: 311–313) and unsubscribe from the demands of the hyper modern industrial world. In order to gain a greater understanding and perspective whilst in the place of the other, which backpacking is expected to provide (Hamilton 2003). Backpacking's seductive invitation for people globally is that in every society, adult life is associated with responsibility, predictability and stability (Eriksen 2001). Through its notions of perma-mobility and experience hunger (de Cauter 1995) backpacking enables individuals the ability to view themselves outside of the market-driven work environment, shaping decisions based on a relentless mindset of cost- benefit analysis towards all aspects of life (Hall 2004).

Paired with the ease of movement generated by hyper modernisation. The notion of 'taking a time-out' (Elsrud, 1998: 311–313) resisting the pace and demands consumerism and material aspirations, which comes at a substantial cost to their lives and mental well beings (Hamilton 2003), establishes the contemporary backpacker as a symbolic solution to the restrictions that this pace and demand creates. The symbolic nature being one loaded with internal meanings of freedom to 'roam alone the far-off places of the continents to experience risk and adventure in order to gain better understanding of the self and one's place within the global community' (Elsrud 1998, p 15). An expectation which encourages and develops the possibilities of backpacking to aid the formation of identity around more qualities of open mindedness, personal development and growth, and a readiness to overcome fear tackling new 'risky' experiences (O'Rieliy 2005).

Although, There are distinction between type of backpackers within the community (Hartman 1991). All types similarly idealise the practice of the drifter (D'Andrea 2006), when opting to 'take time out' (Elsrud 1998), as that which "preserves the freshness and spontaneity of his experience, the drifter purposely travels without either itinerary or timetable, without a destination or even a well-defined purpose" (Cohen, 1973: 176). However, as backpacking has become modernised so too has the way freedom and mobility is understood (D'Andrea 2006).

External constraints (limitations of visas and passports) and the internal constraints (competence, resourcefulness, endurance and ability to plan one's moves) effect the individual's ability to take on nomadic identities (Cohen 2003). With this modernisation creating constraints around that ideal image of the drifter making it one rarely met by todays contemporary traveller (Cohen 2011).

Irrespective of whether the goal is met, the idealisation of freedom, spontaneity, and the experience of risk is especially important to the contemporary backpacker's ideology as it furthers the process of personal development and growth; an important aspect of individualistic society (Elsrud 1998). So much so, that when backpackers speak of their travel in backpacker enclaves, or upon returning home and speaking to friends, the narrative is embedded in these notions. Demonstrating '… how the risk and adventure narrative … is (still) being manifested and expressed within backpacker communities' (Elsrud, 2001: 598). Regardless of the fact that the backpacker may not actually experience real risk or adventure because of the multiple levels of infrastructure captivating these desires, enabling a mythology of Backpacking which thrives on the notions of fantasy or performance (Perkins & Thorns, 2001).

Ritzer & liska (1997) noted the contemporary backpacker, in the face of this infrastructure, turns the quest for the authentic into a ludic enjoyment of surfaces, irrespective of their genuineness. Imagining the simulated and staged as the real world. Macannell (1992) furthers the postmodern nature of contemporary backpacking, stating there is an understanding of the disappearance of the 'original', legitimising the quest for fun and in turn a playful attitude towards the world, as the primitives and untouched cultures or environments rapidly disappear. Perhaps Wang's (2000) existential authenticity; experience derived through the state of real living is a better way to encapsulate the state of contemporary backpacking. However, regardless of these illuminations, backpacking communities comprehension and maintenance of ideals, establishes a conflict to be negotiated and navigated between the traditional expectations of backpacking experiences against the objective practice of backpacking in the modern globalised world within developing countries, effecting the ways in which narratives are constructed and maintained.

4 Quest for the Authentic: Exploring the desire, the Issues, and the transformation of backpacker's importance of experiencing the authentic

"..walking up the carved marble steps toward [Wat Phra That Doi SuTeph](#) was really something, its quite touristy and you have to pay entry but its so worth it, being able to take everything in; the way the dense jungle steeply rises onto the mountain with the gold plated architecture and shrines situated at the peak glistening like a beacon in the afternoon sunlight with the various translucent Jade, Emerald, Wooden, and Metal figures filling the interior of the temple. I feel so lucky to be immersed in this hugely spiritual aura. The care and craft of Thai craftsman bring the intricate depictions of Buddhist history to life, lit up by the reflection off of the golden roofs the presence of something greater is cultivated. Regardless of the mass of people visiting the temple it still feels like a place where you can partake, practice and gain a deeper connection to yourself and the spiritual natural world surrounding you…"

I chose to use this extract as the experience represents one of the key desires of backpacking trips; the experience of traditional cultures and spaces (Pearce 1990) that have not been transformed by the processes of modernisation. As it is thought that these places bring a deeper and more intimate understanding of foreign cultures (Salvaggio 2016) and their practices, conceived as a more authentic experience than that of the mass tourist (Elsrudd 2001). By following practices like visiting temples and rural areas independent from tour companies, backpackers can characterise their trips as a more socially aware form of travel that doesn't harm the tradition of cultures as much as massified tourism (Miles 2008) which is seen to provide a superficial understanding of the local economy. In conceiving of their experiences as more authentic as it is directed independently (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944) between locals and backpackers, where interacting with cultures in this way is a more adventurous, aware, and educational form of tourism (Elsrud 200).

This characterisation is almost in binary opposition to that of the mass tourist, which the backpacker sees as a meaningless experience (Paris 2012). Following pre-packaged, inauthentic ways of experiencing foreign cultures. In doing so are unconcerned with the local populace and rather than contributing to the local economy merely observe it from a distance (Salvaggio 2016). In turn contributing more to large conglomerate companies, rarely straying from their comfortabilities. Schuh (1981) pointed out that the discrepancies between the intensions of tourists and their practices is endemic to all forms of tourism. And backpackers ideology does not escape this as in the desire to experience the authentic, within the effects of the development, issues are generated for the host countries who have to present themselves as authentic and traditional (Dujmović et al 2015) in order to maintain tourisms investment in the country (Wang 2000).

Increasingly, as nations develop and progress in tandem with the rise of globalisation (Sengupta 2001), the traditional ways of life for these cultures seems to be rapidly evolving from their origins, which the backpacker seeks out in their drive for the authentic experiences. The increasing modernisation has seen a change in local interaction with the presentation of

authentic culture to the tourism industry (Jidvijak 1994). McCannel (1973) points out that this quest of authenticity, has driven a market which is staged for by obliging hosts, shown in how Doi Suthep has implemented paid entry and gift shops transforming it from its heritage of spiritual pilgrimage to a commodity to be bought into.

"... After looking around the local Buddhist temples, we walked through where the locals lived, I was amazed by the huge 15m high wooden structures that kept the houses above water during the rainy season. Pulling me out of my admiration of architecture, suddenly, the children of the village had surrounded us. They were fascinated by my hair and my glasses, their playfulness made me laugh. Then two women, shoeless and dressed in simple fabrics with one big bag each, came over and pulled book books and pencils out of their bags and waved them in our face, feeling slightly obliging, we each bought a set and the five dollars Oskar and I each spent provided about 15 kids with the stationary we had bought which nowhere near covered the amount of kids that were around us. it made me feel guilty as both of us are on a tight budget and don't have enough money to buy locals more. But as we said no to buying more, Mr T sighed and rolled his eyes "you have enough money to come here and see our way of life but not enough to contribute and help all these children" his words sit with me even now as I write this, I see the truth in his words we are privileged to be here but at the same time its not my responsibility to fund this whole village..."

Reflecting on this extract the local people of destinations like South East Asia are aware of how to take advantage of their situation and generate the most profit from those they perceive to be infinitely better off, indicated by the luxury of global mobility (Saisi 2018). In turn, demonstrating McCannel's (1973) point that local hosts are willing to show the parts of their culture which maintain the impression of authenticity through traditional representations, as there is an awareness that this is what is desired by paying tourists (Culler 1990). This somewhat undermines the adventure for authenticity and social awareness that contemporary backpacking advocates, as the neo-colonial connotations of this performance mean that even though these countries are developing and rapidly modernising, the discourse held by the "tourist gaze" which is based on identifying difference (Urry 1990), illustrated in how the villages seeming poverty in the vignette above was perceived, has a marginalising effect on the populace(Dujmović et al 2015). Whose developmental capabilities are somewhat reliant on the economic prospects of the tourism industry, and so must maintain this myth of the unchanged civilisation (Echtner and Prasad 2003) to attract paying tourists; who are defined as their opposite (in the post-colonial paradigm) through characterisation of being wealthier, show in Mr T's distain for us not spending more money. From a later interaction with another backpacker I found that this village was in fact a fantasy image maintained for tourists with the locals all have modern amenities. Making their 'simple' presentation constructed as a way to bring tourists to visit their village and contribute to the local economy. In cultivating an image to market to backpacker desires, the presentation of traditional culture is constructed and advertised And ends up captivating backpacker tourists far more easily than the reflexive and aware backpacker ideology supposes (Etchner and Prassad 2003). The drive to want to see difference in the vignette above superseded concerns for whether it was real or staged. And by providing the impression of exploring that which is untouched by the effects of globalisation, the symbols of traditional culture act as a reinforcement to the discourse that backpacking

provides an authentic and adventurous experience in travelling off the beaten tourist path (Cohen 1989), maintaining the mythology of backpacking. Ironically creating backpacking travel as that which thrives on fantasy and performance (Perkins and Thorns 2001) to confirm expectations. Reflecting the behaviours of the mass tourist which they define themselves against (Paris 2012).

"...I can't believe we bumped into Steve again, just sat having a drink with Oskar, and the energetic lad we met in Pai was sat right behind us. We all laughed at how we were following the typical backpacker trail of Asia through a variety of modes. Sharing stories of what we had done in our time apart, sounded like Steve had had a blast coming across the border to Cambodia, glad we flew even if Steve laughed and called us Tourists..."

Illuminating the similarities with the mass tourism industry further , this vignette demonstrates how in South East Asia contemporary backpackers follow very similar routes and itineraries which contradict the ideological distinction of backpacking being different from the mass tourist (Pearce 1990) as it is more of an independent mode of travel, where each participant individualises their experiences. when in fact we both commit to very similar paths and experiences (Cohen 2011) – almost following what's a popular trend for that area, shown in how another backpacker had informed us of the fantasy image the village presented us with because he too had been there, and how we bumped into another backpacker we had met in Thailand. So, "like the mass tourists, from whom they desire to distinguish themselves, most backpackers pursue highly conventional life-styles, characteristic of their sub-culture, following similar itineraries and sightseeing destinations" (Teas, 1988: 37). Making the distinguishing somewhat contradictory and the reality of authentic uncommodified experiences even more of a fantasy.

"... All the stories of Cambodia being backward and underdeveloped just aren't true. Since we have landed in Siem Riep all we have seen is English signs over shops, typical tourist merch stores, hotels, and all the locals trying to sell us some pointless crap... it's kind of disappointing really, after Thailand all I wanted was to experience and observe was some real culture, rather than being marketed things constantly. I mean for crying out loud they even use American dollars here, I mean I guess its good there is development in places like this but it's just frustrating as it doesn't live up to my expectations. I mean Pub Street just typifies how westernised places like this have become...

The vignette above demonstrates how the expectation and assumptions of lack of development and reflection of traditional symbols, in countries like Cambodia, have been undermined by globalisation and a rapid modernisation of developing nations transforming them in adherence to a market economy system (Katerin 2019), accommodating all demands, including those of the tourism industry, which for the backpacker, as I found in Siem Reip, extends the hyper-modern consumer economy already experienced back home (Richards 2015) creating a global environment which is hard to escape.

De Botton (2002) noted Tourists make the places they visit increasingly like home, which stimulates their restless search for difference still further. This seems to play true for backpackers who bring with them certain demands that need to be accommodated and it

becomes a contradiction for Backpackers to maintain that by going too far off lands, they're escaping the constraints of western consumerist societies of their home. When in fact. as a result of globalisation, these destinations are increasingly similar in terms of infrastructure and accommodating market demands to those of their western counterparts (De Botton 2002).

Interestingly, the seemingly sanctioned ignorance (Spivak 1999) of backpacker's; overlooking the modernisation of developing countries, buying into this primitive presentation, backpacker's unwittingly undermine the self- defined ideology of open-mindedness and supposed lack of expectation by taking a discourse on these countries that maintains notions of the uncivilised (Echtner and Prasad 2003). Differentiating developing destinations from the west as being more primitive, leading a simpler more meaningful way of life because of its perceived lack of economic development and traditional practices, setting these destinations in the discourse of desire (Said 1978), creating places and people as the other that supposedly exist outside the constraints of western hyper-modernisation(Spivak 1999). This perspective is further reinforced through the way countries advertise themselves, which the tourism industry operates through, enabling a "persisting western interest in the… production of what we might call exotic cultures" (Gandhi 1998; 59-60) reinforcing ideologies grounded in the relations of power and subordination found in the colonial representations of place which have come to characterise the global system of tourism (Morgan and Pritchard 1998, Said 1978).

Post-colonial perspectives like those above illuminate the contradictory nature of Backpacker ideology and practice. Exposing how the drive for traditional presentations reinforces power relations established in the colonial era "by which European culture was able to manage and even produce the Orient" (Said, 1978, p11). This cultural hegemony has been maintained resulting in a discourse on South East Asia which defines it as more traditionalistic. Subsequently, forcing Countries into rigid definitions of how they should present themselves to tourists visiting their land (Mbiawa 2019).

Following Dann's (1996) conception of tourism as a tautology where tourists "merely confirm the discourse which persuaded them to take the trip" (Dann 1996; 65) in that, the way a place is marketed forms a framework of expectations and attitudes towards the destination visited. Reflected in the frustration that Cambodia, in the Vignette above, fell short of expectations by not conforming to the colonial narrative of unchanged, uncivilised and unrestrained (Spivak 1990). Just as tourism marketing had formed my "tourist gaze" (Urrey 1990). Those being subordinated by the same myth are trapped in "a sort of tourized confinement in the suffocating straight jacket of enslaving external conceptions" (Hollinshead 1992; 44) lays out a performance structure they must conform to in order to attract the tourist economy.

Arguably, these destinations and their citizens as a result of globalisation and increased information technology have empowered developing nations to navigate the issues of presenting an authentic image by transforming it into a commodity for tourists to buy into (Cohen 2011). Enabling local people to maintain the financial benefits of tourism by presenting a staged traditional image to accommodate foreign desires, whilst continuing to develop and modernise themselves regardless of the external characterisations imposed by the wider global community (Said 1978).

This generates an issue for the contemporary backpacker, as typically in taking up their trip they are doing so in order to reject western consumerism (Pearce 1990), but through the commodification of what can be thought of as authentic and traditional, the backpacker is now required to navigate this and find ways to escape the omnipresence of consumer culture (Huws 2019), finding spaces that are unaffected by this market (Salvaggio 2016). In seeking these spaces, the backpacker places the hostel as central to this escape.

5 The escape into the hostel: Reactions against hyper modern consumer society and the formation of a neo-tribal community

Contemporary backpacking, through its ideology of practices and beliefs, establishes itself as a symbol for the rootlessness and mobility idealised by a culture of individualism (Eriksen 2001) by Defining itself in opposition to and creating itself on a continuum of resistance *to mainstream culture* and constraints of modern society (Richards and Wilson 2004, Westerhausen 2002, Clifford 1997, MacCannel 1976, *Hebdige [1979] 1981).*

However, as illuminated in the previous chapter, regardless of the ideals that seek to reject and resist the nature of marketized consumption for purely human experiences, as a result of modernisation and development backpacking unwittingly embraces this ideology (Collero 2013). In that the Freedom to do what you like is still hindered by capitalist constraints of space and time (Cohen 2011), as to participate in backpacking one must first invest into this market to acquire the commodities which enable and supply an inventory for backpacking (buying a backpack, navigation technologies, clothes) and once on the road must invest further into experiencing the chosen culture by buying into trips, transportation modes and events; making the rejection of western consumerism impossible and somewhat contradictory.

This seeming inconsistency that confronts the backpacker and their self-conception leaves individuals with the task of navigating themselves between the counterculture aspect of backpacking and the increasing conformity to the neo-liberal consumer market which commodifies local culture and repurposes it for profiting off of tourism demands (Paris 2012). An issue that many backpackers had directly and indirectly experienced in their wants to have a more traditional backpacking trip, distinct from the ones commodified by the contemporary mass tourism market (D'Andrea 2006). In Navigating this issue, to preserve the traditional ideology of backpacking, the hostel and its social proximity to other backpackers has become central to maintaining the freedom, which resists the growing inescapability of capitalist society, and preserves the intimate human experience by enabling it to flourish seemingly outside of this capitalist system (Salvaggio 2016).

"...I never thought being jet lagged would make you feel so crazy. But After a good two hours of trying to sleep I gave up on conquering jet lag and took up the earlier offer from the Three British lads that shared our dorm and went for a drink in the hostel bar. The conversation was an unexpected one I have to say, I was fascinated with where they had been and what they'd seen as they had all been on the road for over 4 years, which to me sounded like the greatest adventure but they were incredibly blazay about their experiences, which was slightly disheartening, saying the novelty wears off after a while and although you maintain movement; seeing the sights and encountering locals, its all based on spending money, so you end up spending most of the time in the hostel socialising with other backpackers you meet people on a similar wave length to you ..."

For the three Brits I met, the hostel had become central in the functioning of their backpacking experience. In offering a space for the backpacker to view themselves outside of the market-

driven work environment that exists outside of these spaces, The hostel helps to maintain the notion that the backpacker is consciously rejecting the responsibility and predictability of consumerism and materialistic society (Eriksen 2001, De Cauter 1995). As by spending time in these spaces, solely interacting with other backpackers, acts as a social reinforcement which confirms the countercultural aspects of backpacking (Salvaggio 2016). Although initially resisting this notion, increasingly my backpacking experience also became largely navigated through the various hostel establishments across South East Asia. As they provided escape from the interactions with locals which revolved around an interest in consumption, whereas the hostel encourages, by architectural design, a space free from the instability of global reality and the market economy, enabling a sociality between backpacker's who seek out the return of the drive for community and collective emotion (Malfoselli 2009).

Establishing the Hostel as a symbol whose meaning denotes a rest point for Travellers, with Salvaggio (2016) noting typical characteristics of Provide shelter, safety and security for backpackers. Offering a chance for them to collect themselves through using utilities such as Bathrooms, Internet access, Air conditioning, and shared social spaces. In addition, the hostel has a welcoming connotation offering a home for the backpacker, cultivating a safe space for human interaction based on intense emotion and experiences(Murphy 2001), encouraging interactions between backpackers that are familiar and collective, with the social nature reflecting traits of the symposiums of Ancient Greece in the way it encourages communal discussion and behaviour on all scales from ludic to sincere. This sense of community is reflected in an interview conducted by Salvaggio (2016) in which the backpacker stated:

"...everything we need is right here in the hostel: of course other travellers to discuss the hardships we encounter, like the time I survived crossing the border from Honduras into El Salvador...being around other travellers might be the most important thing about the hostel... [it] is a place where you can sit around and be merry and talk. In fact, nothing annoys me more than when I walk into a hostel, pay my five quid, and see that there isn't an area to socialize in with other travellers. Because it's a place to discuss our travel experiences..." (Salvaggio 2016; p129-130, interview with *Oliver)*

 Reflecting the idea that the social functioning of internal hostel life is key in the maintenance and recreation of Backpacking ideology and a reinforcement to ones backpacking identity. Through offering a cross cultural space where backpackers can escape the constraints of capitalist markets that dominate interactions (Salvaggio 2016) and converse with the open mindedness of the backpacking community, reassuring individuals that they can feel and share ideas about the area they are travelling through and the nature of backpacking itself (Cohen 2003). Rooting the hostel as a space which is solely for backpackers, directed toward the discourse of spatial mobility, experience seeking, and the process of forming and sharing notions of identity (Salvaggio 2016). In addition, offering a variety of experiences, backpackers increasingly concerned with "postmodern hyper individualism" (Muggleton 2002), are able to immerse and embrace the hostels and utilise them for self-construction of identity; using the fluidity of interactions within the space to reaffirm the emphasis on underlying essence as key characteristics of their trip.

Arguably, this is somewhat problematic as the expectation of what the hostel space provides has reduced attendance at family homestays with locals and increased franchises like YHA (Youth hostel association) to accommodate backpackers expectations of hostels which conform to a very standardised expectation. In addition, retreating and spending most of their time to the hostel, Backpackers restricts themselves from experiencing the local environment and its people on a deeper level and in many ways reflect the behaviour of mass tourism resorts which the backpacker vilifies and distinguishes themselves from (Paris 2013). In a way, hostels lack diversity of opinion, by maintaining a closed social space exclusively for backpackers, making the interaction and narrative between backpackers in these spaces fall into a structured ideological hegemony (Chen 2019); what backpacking is and what is agreed upon as acceptable characteristics of the travel lifestyle. Creating a status quo, structured in a way that limits the ability for new ideas to take hold, further contradicting the free-thinking nature of the nomadic individual, reinforcing the standardisation of backpacking experiences.

"The Base crew is fantastic! The group of backpackers I am working with in the hostel have been so much fun to get to know. Although, it has been very different making friends that I'll be living and working with, compared to the other interactions I've had with backpacker's where we move on every few days, Base has a comforting sense of home. The staff here organise regular nights out and small day trips on days off -to avoid spending money on tourist traps- with everyone contributing different things to our collective and individual experiences. Being part of this crew has made Base Backpackers and Queenstown a very special meaningful place for me, living with people from all walks of life, helping develop so many new skills, and ideas about backpacking. Another staff member, Marc, introduced me to a group of slackliners who now are teaching me to tightrope, I've been slow to pick it up but as the weeks have gone on, I am getting there. It has been such a laugh on my days off to just slackline by the lake or chilling with the rest of the Base crew doing anything and chatting about everything from the places we have been, to place we are in, to the place to the places we want to go

Regardless of the hugely positive experience I had whilst working at Base Backpackers in Queenstown, this vignette illustrates just how central the hostel becomes to the interactions and development of backpackers experiences which help to construct and reinforce the narrative of backpacking being a social, hedonistic retreat (Teas 1988) from contemporary modern society. Embedding the hostel as a symbol key to enabling this escape. Becoming a commune for backpackers, in a space separate from the negative effects of globalization and the market economy (Hampton 2015). Consequently, providing and maintaining a space for backpackers which reinforces beliefs in the ideology and expectation of experiences.

The communal understanding and interaction in how backpackers have utilised the hostel space solidifies backpackers sense of community and shared identity(Cohen 2011).Enabling a fluidity of social interaction where individuals can participate and interact within the community without previous experience, subscription or membership; unlike those found in communities where membership cards and a level of knowledge are necessary to enter and utilise the space E.G Gym based groups. Whereas within contemporary backpacking communities, although you must pay to enter the space and use the facilities, individuals have contributed to transforming the social spaces to act as key hubs that aid the process of identity

making through communal understandings (Pearce 1995). This reflects three key characteristics of Michael Malfoselli's (1999) concept of neo-tribalism in that Backpackers have utilised:

Territory: The area in which the tribe had managed to tame assures survival and solidarity, produced in the growth and certainty of the hostel space. Tastes: which uses commonalities between tribal members to act as a social cement which legitimises individuals, provided by the conversations and intentions which fill social rooms of hostels, aiding the creation of identities. Eternal Youth: giving free reign to ones tastes and passions, helping maintain ones youth and vigour, enabled in seeming communal desire for fun, openness and emotional connection found in individual motivations to going backpacking.

In addition, the community found in hostel spaces between backpackers across various destinations, further conforms to neo-tribal identity as although participation is encouraged, there is a necessity of acquiring and following certain patterns of consumption in order to part take (Malfoselli 2016) in the communities and spaces.

The hostel then, becomes a space with fluid boundaries and floating memberships which serve to allow individuals mobility to move between different forms of collective expression and reconstructing or maturing their identity (Malfoselli 1999; Sheilds 1992). Affirming the hostel as a living social space with its own autonomy (Aries 1980, Malfoselli 2016). Subsequently, the cultural instinct (Malfoselli 2016) of backpacking's nature; where people want to face their destiny and rather than fall into the predictability of plans create a culture around chance, risks and adventure (Cohen 1972), solidifying the shared interest and motivation between those flowing through the backpacker experience.

The hostel as an institution then, reaffirms and re-presents moments throughout backpacker travels, where the exchange of stories at once confirms status and at the same time the norms of the group reaffirming your place within the subculture (Richards 2015). As this done through the Hostel, the effects of the market economy direct the shifting nature of collective associations between individuals as societies become increasingly consumer orientated (Maffesoli 1996;97-8) and the hostel spaces becomes commodified and standardised.

But, as the adventure into the unknown and untampered natural world rapidly disappears with the illuminating and commodifying effects of the globalised neo-capitalist agenda. The backpacking community too is rapidly shifting in its behaviour. Although maintaining "an identification with nomadism that is seen to be more authentic than the sociality of modern industrial societies" (Hetherington 1998; 535) backpackers must still embed their community within the structure of consumerism.

The hostels significance then becomes a symbol of escape from consumerist society as it allows backpackers a disembodied negotiation of the issues generated by attempting to reject an ever present and somewhat necessary consumer economy (Hannam and Deikman 2010). Escaping the commodified in lieu of preserving the authenticity and creativity of human connection with an intensity individuals idealise as possible through backpacker interactions within the hostel.

This mirrors Bey's (1998) conception of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ), 2hich aimed to highlight indeterminate zones within late capitalism, everyday occurrences that refuse, whether by accident or design, to be incorporated into dominant narratives (Sellers 2010). Where even though the hostel is a commodified and profit minded business, the space it offers is a liberated area "of land time or imagination" (Bey 1991; p11) where new ways of being human as a community can be explored and experimented with. Resisting and ideologically free from the global grid of control and alienation found within hyper modern capitalism. Enabling a preservation of the feeling of cultural resistance through selectively participating within that society (Burkitt 2019), navigating ways to find experiences that allow a consumption based not on commodity consumption but on human community and emotional connection to the destinations visited.

Overall, the importance of the hostel to contemporary backpacking is that it preserves a space where backpackers can connect with like minds and share experiences which help to reaffirm their identity as backpackers. This intense persistent connection found in hostels, aids the individuals understanding of ideology and practices within the tribal community. In doing so understand themselves on a greater level because of the perceived freedom of expression these spaces and interactions encourage. The social nature encouraged in backpacking communities has cultivated a communion based on the sharing of experiences, paired with the development of technology and social media this social nature has transformed. Preserving the ideology of the drifter backpacking movements by creating a digital sphere in which backpacking is virtualised; with each individual backpacker presenting and re-presenting the backpacking experience through generating new content, connecting directly with backpacking virtual dimensions (Persson 2019).

6 Technological transformation: Identifying how backpacking has been transformed both in practices made easier by internet use and how it is presented through social media content

"…Do you think you're prepared for this trip?" a question posed by my dad lingered in my head. He had spoken about his backpacking experience with such grandeur; how he'd left the UK with his entire life in his backpack, abandoning everything he knew for a quest into the new and unknown with a only a few maps and some basic tools to get him across Europe and then Asia. He recalled his experiences with such intriguing stories of how he travelled, the types of experiences he had, and skills developed to overcome difficulties encountered whilst backpacking. It has left me a little nervous and feeling unprepared for the trip Oskar and I are about to take. Two lads from the lil old UK taking on the other side of the world, what could go wrong…"

Inevitably things did go wrong, like most backpacking experiences it was a *in medias res* learning and adapting, but my experience was so different to my dad's in the 70s. Although similar in places, the process of backpacking seemed so much easier than his, as mine simply required access to and ability to use the internet to navigate the spaces I visited, virtually as well as physically. Even though establishments accommodating backpackers and their demands have existed since the 1960s boom of countercultural revolution (Etchner and Prassad 2003), seen to have triggered the explosion of backpacking participation (Pearce 1990, Cohen 1972). The rapid growth of technology has enabled virtual spaces for backpackers and the hospitality that accommodates them to communicate directly with ease (Paris 2012). Enabling a more accessible accommodation of consumer demands; places to stay, access to transport, and knowledge of local areas. which Companies like Hostelworld.com, lonely planet, kayak, booking.com backpack.nz provide. Making information free and easily accessible helping to guide experiences. Social media also helps by establishing group platforms for user generated content (UGC) which disperses knowledge by recommending points of interest, and explanations of experiences ,which backpackers in general trust and invest time into exploring and interacting with the platform (Narangajavana et al 2017) utilising it as a tool to help guide and educate the direction of trips.

This ease and accessibility has helped to streamline Backpacking much more in comparison to the experiences of the drifter era backpacker (Cohen 1972) finding their way to hostels and locations of interest by Connecting with other backpackers through these various platforms (Paris 2012). Subsequently, the approach to backpacking has been reinvented and transformed by these developments. Establishing internet use as an integral aspect of contemporary backpacking, as it mediates and reproduces the social experiences individuals have whilst backpacking (Paris 2010, Hannam & Diekman, 2010) in virtual spaces. Facebook groups like "backpack Vietnam" and "backpack New Zealand" offer a chance for backpackers to share their experiences of places; both where to go and where to avoid. Interacting with these

platforms the Individual can gain a greater sense of assurance, knowing where to go and what to do to make the most of the experience (Molz 2008).

On one hand the increased use of communication technology is a positive as it allows both backpackers and the businesses that accommodate them an ability to connect directly. Enabling individuals the chance to personalise their experience more (Richards 2015), from the greater access to information, instead of relying solely on guidebooks and the word of mouth social culture of pre-digital backpacking styles (Paris 2012) making navigation and movement easier. On the other hand, the increased use of technology seems to undermine the countercultural motivations of backpacking (Pearce1990, Cohen 2011, Paris 2012, Richards 2015) being the way for individuals to adopt an adventurous lifestyle by distancing themselves from the ever present comforts of hyper-modern industrial life, in which technological dependence is a characteristic of the comforts of modern life (Tolkach and Pratt 2019), taking away from that somewhat risky perception of backpacking being an solo adventure into the unknown. In addition, The disembodying of time and space in the digital sphere, blurs the difference between being at home and being on the road (Cohen 2011). As in the past, Backpacker's would occasionally send a letter home (Pearce 1990), whereas now being contactable is possible even in the most remote regions of the world (Molz 2008).

"... been alone in Kanchanaburi, western Thailand, for the last week. It's been really emotional, exploring the area my grandfather was kept as a prisoner of war. Even though its so beautiful here with lush trees and animals covering the peripheries of the town in an abundance of lush greens, the omni-present aura of WW2 echoes throughout the town. After walking around the cemetery of the POWs, I was relieved to be able to use the internet café to call my grandma and talk to her about what was going through my head. I don't think I would have been able to see past my sadness had I not spoken to her, which would have tainted the experience I think…"

Just as being able to contact a family member helped me through an emotional time, the developments of technology have help improve the mental health and wellbeing of backpackers whilst there travelling because of the assurance connection provides (Mascheroni 2007). Despite the apparent contradictions explored above, the relatively homogeneous nature of backpackers (Paris 2012) maintain technology use as a good thing as it helps makes the experience easier whilst still enabling the presentation of a mythology that backpacking is still an adventure away from civilisation and its commodities, into uncultivated and unknown territories(Burger et al 2013). With A key aspect to this mythology being maintained is through the presentation of Backpacking on social media.

"With 9 days left, we have now set up a travel IG account! Follow @The_Fellowship_of_the_2 and keep up to date with the dank views, warm weather and the crazy adventures Oskar and I will get up to"

This is an extract taken from a Facebook post I made. It demonstrates how Oskar and I viewed the adventurous possibilities opened up by backpacking, just in naming our travelling account "the fellowship of the 2" obvious links can be traced to Tolkien's '*Lord Of The Rings*' through which Oskar and I in part drew inspiration from in journeying from the comfortable shires of

home into a world of supposed unknown dangerous adventure. Although not every backpacker draws such a direct inspiration from fiction as we did. The online narrative of 'the trip' on Social media, creates and sets the expectations of backpacking norms, helping to construct and romanticize notions of travel in the same way fiction operates by presenting images of the uncultivated, distinct from that of civilisation (Burger et al 2013, Cronin 1995).

This distinction can be established through utilising Travelling accounts, like the one I used, to help build and maintain a narrative by typically depicting images of a happy and liberated individual, having 'the time of their life' exploring exotic local unmodernised nature (Christian et al 2019). However, this desire to present backpacking on social media as the exotic and adventurous, maintains relations and consistent interaction through posting, increasing a proximity to friends and family, somewhat re-structuring the individual's relation to the home lives rather than wholly distance or take a break from participating at home (Christian et al 2019). In my own experience, I found that backpackers I became friends with on Facebook tended to conform to this behaviour of presenting this adventurous image backpacking. Somewhat making the presentation of backpacking formulaic and predictable. In that, its presentation stays within an existing social and artistic boundary (Adorno & Horkheimer 1944) established and reinforced by backpackers in previous years initially generating content whilst backpacking. Reinforcing expectations to have particular experiences in specific destinations, similar to those of other accounts (Narangajavana et al 2017). In addition, the development of hashtags on these platforms further enables curiosities and expectations to be developed and satiated instantaneously. I found this whilst backpacking when I'd explore tags related to the locations (#PaiThailand, #Changmai, #KohPhangan, #backpackthailand) I was visiting,
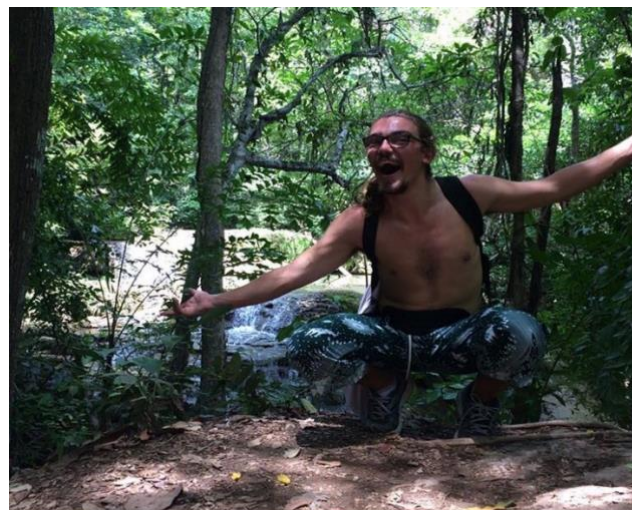
jesuswithmorestyle Visited some waterfalls yesterday just outside of town! Was beautiful in the dense forest to have pool to could jump and swim in! Unfortunately I didn't swim as much as I normally would have because they had fish that ate the dead skin off your feet and that's a nonono from Mr Aulsford! Still was stunning nonetheless! And to have monkeys leaping overhead was so much fun! A really good day out 😋 #thailand #kanchanaburi

inadvertently building intensions and expectations for places conforming to a fairly linear notion of what backpacking practices entailed.

Using the image posted above to exemplify how these expectations of backpacking are established, it is possible to extract how the myths of backpacking are reproduced and reinforced through social media. Barthes' '*Mythologies*' (1973) understands the meaning given to myths through Semiotics, the study of signs. Stating the sign (an image posted on Social media– like image x above) in simple signification, draws meaning from its denotation; an individual immersed in nature. Moving to a deeper level of signification, signs (like the image) become a *signifier representing* a wider meaning, *the signified* i.e. Backpacking providing an escapism from modernity. The presentation of the image re-presents the mythology of the backpacker through a digital medium. And the power of the image, in being a visual representation of reality, creates an iconography of backpacking characteristics; clothes, setting, visual expression, caption, which altogether help to reinforce the mythology (Barthes 1973) of backpacking, further immortalising the expectations of backpacking and what to present in that lifestyle.

Overall, the utilisation of digital resources into backpacking culture somewhat conflicts and with the ideals of backpacking being individualised and distinct from the mass tourist, with each backpacker being able to each tell vastly different stories of taking adventures into the unknown. Instead because of the way digital technologies have developed virtual spaces for backpackers it transforms the individualised nature of the culture to being standardised, making adventure known and streamlined (Paris 2012). Teas (1988) illuminated this about behaviour within the culture, before modern technology, stating:

"...backpackers pursue highly conventional life-styles, characteristic of their sub-culture, following similar itineraries, staying in the same currently popular enclaves, and participating in similar sightseeing, vacationing and partying activities…" (Teas, 1988; pp37)

But now with its massification in backpacking, social media and technology enables large numbers of people to express opinions, feeling, and experiences which aid the collaboration in producing, consuming and distributing cultural and travel information through the Internet (Yoo and Gretzel 2009, Luo & Zhong 2015).

Commodifying the backpacking experience and behaviour both in interaction with each other and the wider non-backpacker world, through re-presenting backpacking, as active participants in social media exploring and promoting aspects of backpacking ideology (Christian 2019). This becomes a catch 22, as on one hand if you 'log off' and choose not to participate in the virtual space you miss out somewhat in the access to the immediate, current, and the relevant locally and globally but you have a seeming more human experience of travel. On the other hand, by choosing to stay 'logged on' your accessibility; blurs the dichotomy of life at home and whilst backpacking, informing and directing the decisions made about what to do and how to present it, allowing the backpacker to adopt Cohens (1972) drifter role but in a virtual spaces, performing the narrative of life 'off the beaten' track(Paris 2012). Both options are viable ways to experience travel but as the world and destinations like Thailand continue to develop, by maintaining this image of backpacking you create an issue between the individual

being honest about their experiences and the way the affects the presentation and subsequent expectations of a destination and its people, an issue which as I travelled became more apparent in the way I was presenting my experiences on social media

7 Concluding thoughts

In conclusion this dissertation has attempted to explore and explain the ways in which contemporary backpacking practices have been and continue to be transformed by the progress of hyper globalisation and the rapid development of mobile technologies and the digital sphere. These developments have transformed the practices and behaviours of backpacking communities from how they were conceived in traditional notions (Cohen 1972,1973), (Pearce 1990), (Noy and Cohen 2005), but rather than internal ideology changing, Backpacker's re-presentation and constantly mobile evolutionary state have navigated the issues generated by globalisation (Harrison 2002). Creating a digital sphere in which backpacker's and their corresponding hosts can interact directly and flourish communally (Chen 2019).

This hyper-connectivity has increased the awareness and expectations of Backpacking ideology in both parties, maintaining and reproducing the status quos which motivate a market to accommodate and its Backpacking participants to seek out desires of rejecting society for authentic experiences in and of traditional human and natural environments, presenting that image to the rest of the world via social media.

The discrepancy between the reality and its presentation is a conflict within contemporary backpacking experiences that must be constantly navigated through the effects of a rapidly modernised and globally connected culture. The effects which not only work to transform these destinations into mirroring their more developed counterparts, But also forces all citizens globally to participate within capitalist consumer markets. Leaving the counter culturally minded individuals no choice but to participate within this system. its irresistibility makes its rejection futile (Huws 2019).

However, the power and omnipresence of the global market economy has not stopped individuals from reacting to the individualised and uncertain nature of contemporary society (Bauman 2001). In seeking fulfilment of their own desires based on deeper meanings and the consumption of human and emotionally intense experiences, backpacking is sought out as a path to personal fulfilment (Richards 2015). The desire for fulfilment paired with the difficulty of rejecting this market, establishes backpacker enclaves as somewhat self- fulfilling environment, helping to establish an authentic and traditional community environment based on sharing the human experience (Zhang 2017). Through the use of Backpacker enclaves both in reality and digitally, individuals establish a community which is based on a fluid approach to sharing the human experience, where likeminded people can interact, adopting a liquid approach to reality which seemingly enables an escape from the dogma and certainty of globalisation.

Just as I have written about how the rapid development of globalisation has affected the nature of backpacking, An interesting caveat for further research could explore new overlapping imaginaries such as ecovillages, intentional communities, new age travellers (Kuhling, 2007), the Rainbow Family (González and Dans, 2018), Woofing (Ince, 2016), nomad houses, transformational festivals (St John, 2001; Saldanha, 2002), hospitality exchange (Ince and Bryant, 2018) and hitchhiking, to look at the way technological developments are mobilising

and changing the nature of work, pushing more people into tourist spheres like backpacking because they can work flexibility in a way that suits them. Alongside the awareness of the risks and uncertainty generated by global issues like War, Climate Change, Pandemics, Poverty, and access to opportunity (Pieterse 1994) could see a shift in how people participate in backpacking. If they do not have to subscribe to one place for work to save funds, mobility becomes liberated and constant (Rattansi 2017). Evolving the way people relate to and think of the possibilities backpacking can provide. In regards to myself this intension seems absolutely paramount, in that I want to find as many ways to work as possible that enable me to further a career whilst being able to live my life with the freedom, mobility, and lack of constraining expectation found in the contemporary developed society, which is made possible by the nature of technological development (Burkitt 2019).

In writing this dissertation I have used auto-ethnography as my primary form of data. In doing this I aimed to bring a sociological lens to analyse and reflect on how the process and experiences that I have of backpacking could be understood through the processes and effects of globalisation. In making myself the subject I found I have further developed my own knowledge and understanding of Backpacking as well as adding depth and updating existing academic knowledge.

If I were to conduct this research again, I would conduct more primary research from the experiences of other backpackers, like that of my travel partner Oskar, so that my research isn't limited by imposed etic as it is in this dissertation. The critical reflection is a strength auto-ethnography enables and In going through this process, it had illuminated the continuous nature of globalisation and how that is, and will continue to change various global dimensions (Zhang 2017) and much like my work extends existing understandings of academics, future research too should build and illuminate the ways in which backpacker practices have shifted to accommodate and maintain a drifter typology within backpacking communities in a world of pre-trodden roads and routes.

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