

**BACKPACKING TOURISM:
MORALLY SOUND TRAVEL OR NEO-COLONIAL
CONQUEST?**

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“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Mark Twain

Introduction: A Personal Perspective

When asked to describe myself, I always include my ‘love for travel’. Normally this statement is followed by the question, “And where have you been?” This is my conversational green light to list all the places in the world I have been to thus far; Ecuador, Guatemala, numerous Caribbean Islands, Mexico, different places in the U.S and Canada including Nunavut, all over Western and Eastern Europe, Thailand, Myanmar, and Ghana. As my previous destinations and adventures roll off my tongue, the facial expression of the person questioning me always confirms my expectation to impress. In fact, my experiences abroad are the first thing I try and bring to the table in an interview setting. Western culture allots accomplishment and prestige to youth who choose to venture beyond the borders of the developed world, leaving all the comforts of home behind, in search of a greater understanding of the world, globalization, poverty and foreign cultures. Recognizing this cultural phenomenon, I choose to use it to my advantage.

To a certain extent I do believe that travel experience should be considered a valuable asset in youth. I feel strongly that my experiences abroad have helped form who I am today by putting me in circumstances that I would never have encountered in Canada and forcing me to reflect on aspects of the world that are easy to ignore from afar. I am also a strong believer in the notion that travel provides youth with a better education than any textbook could account for. I have participated in a number of study-abroad

programs and recognize how emotional, hands-on, experiential learning can compliment conventional sources of education. In addition, I believe that travel abroad can influence social action. My interest in development studies originally sprung from my fascination with the inequalities between the North and South I became witness to while in Ecuador.

Normally choosing to travel in a minimalist, backpacker fashion, I sought out authenticity and aimed to know, understand and at times even ‘help’ the host population. I was critical of mass tourism and its tendency to marginalize the poor and avoided what I considered to be “tourist-traps” as much as possible. However, by proscribing to backpacker tourism, and taking what I considered to be the moral-high-ground, I neglected to recognize the risks posed by my chosen type of tourism.

While conducting research for this paper I was granted the opportunity to reflect on my own experiences and beliefs in relation to a growing body of literature and analysis of backpacking tourism. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that although backpacking travel has the potential to benefit both the backpacker and host community, the construction of identities involved in backpacking tourism threatens to further perpetuate global stereotypes and inequalities. This analysis is followed by a short inquiry into the future of backpacking travel by identifying parallels and drawing comparisons between the anti-tourism sentiments expressed by Post-Colonial theorists and the views and demands of Post-Development theorists.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:

Every year backpackers continue to expand their presence throughout the world, and as a result the amount and diversity of backpacker research and literature has

continued to grow. Modern day backpacking has been associated with travel forms from as far back as the 17th and 18th centuries (O'Reilly, 2006:1005). Backpackers and participants of the Grand Tour, composed of well-off European male youth, have been noted for sharing travel motives. The Grand Tour, like backpacking, was considered to provide youth with an opportunity for character building, educational experiences and the chance to become a more 'cultured' member of society (O'Reilly, 2006:1006).

Backpacking has also been shown to share characteristics with 'tramping', a form of travel often considered to be the 'Grand Tour of the lower classes' (Ateljevic, 2004:64). Like backpacking, tramping placed an emphasis on low-budget travel (often combining work and travel), the exchange of knowledge, as well as the conception that the experience was a *rite-of-passage* undertaken before adulthood (Ateljevic, 2004:64). In addition, while the Grand Tour and tramping were criticized for placing a disproportionate emphasis on freeing oneself from the responsibilities of home and indulging in a lifestyle of leisure (O'Reilly, 2006:1006 and Ateljevic, 2004:64), modern backpacker culture has recently received negative attention for promoting an irresponsible existence involving drug use and sexual promiscuity (Maoz, 2005:233).

In the 1970's research focused on the distinction between the 'institutionalized' tourist and the 'non-institutionalized' tourist in an effort to identify what is now commonly considered backpacking tourism as a specific typology within the tourism industry (Ateljevic, 2004:61). While the institutionalized tourist was characterized by an interest in 'low-risk' travel involving the security of pre-arranged transportation and accommodation, and the maintenance of cultural norms and comforts while abroad (Ateljevic, 2004: 62), the non-institutionalized traveler was eager to immerse himself or

herself in foreign, 'primitive' cultures and experience the hardships of the real world by maintaining a strict budget (Ateljevic, 2004:63). These non-institutionalized travelers, often referred to as "drifters", "explorers" and "wanderers", were viewed by some as disengaging themselves from politics and modern day world affairs, such as the Vietnam war, through travel (Ateljevic, 2004:63). In this light, modern day backpacking can be viewed as a product of the "hippie" movement (O'Reilly, 2006:1005). Although these travelers were named drifters and wanderers because of their avoidance of structured travel and alienation from modern culture and politics, writers at this time began to take note of patterns and trends which pointed to the institutionalization of budget travel (Ateljevic, 2004:63).

It was not until the 1990's that the term 'backpacker', as traveler, was coined in academic literature (O'Reilly, 2006:1000). At this point, a broad range of research began to emerge ranging from studies concerned with what motivates backpackers to travel, backpacking as a culture and the backpacker psyche (Ateljevic, 2004:65-66) to the impacts that backpackers have on their host environments and communities and how their influence has the potential to hinder and/or aid development (Ateljevic, 2004:69). The concept of backpacking has been defined and re-defined through this literature (Ateljevic, 2004:65).

Backpackers, often youth from the developed world, embark on lengthy trips, normally to multiple destinations in the developing world (Noy, 2004:79). They are normally very budget conscious (Noy, 2004:79 and O'Reilly, 2006:199) and concerned with making sure their experiences abroad are 'authentic' (Muzaini, 2005:149 and Maoz, 2005:224). Backpackers believe that while conventional tourists observe their destination

from the safety of a bus, shielded by a glass window, backpackers' efforts to immerse themselves amongst the local population provides a more 'real' experience (Muzaini, 2005:145). Often at a turning point in their lives, backpackers can afford to spend time away from home (Sorensen, 2003:853) and often consider their time abroad as an opportunity for self-reflection and growth (O'Reilly, 2006:199). Backpackers prefer only to make necessary travel arrangements and avoid utilizing institutionalized travel services (Noy, 2004:79).

An examination of backpacking travel and culture through a post-colonial lens reveals the extent to which neo-colonial and neo-imperial tendencies remain embedded in modern day travel. Through this lens, the similarities between early European colonial conquests and modern day backpacking travel can be viewed (O'Reilly, 2006:1003). Although previously colonized nations have achieved independence, post-colonial theorists propose that the West continues to extend its influence abroad in order to maintain economic and political superiority (Williams, 1994:3). Colonialism can be considered an era within imperialism (Williams, 1994:2). Colonialism may have ended, but we have yet to reach the age of post-imperialism (Williams, 1994:2). Imperialism has been described as the "...expansion of a society's influences abroad whether imposed or adopted by an alien society," (Macleod, 2004:13). It has also been suggested that colonialism has been replaced by capitalist modernity (Gandhi, 1999:24). The West's imperial reign over the developing world remains intact past the age of colonialism because the birth and globalization of capitalism maintained the unequal power structure produced during colonial times (Gandhi, 1999, 24).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is considered the founding work of post-colonial theory (Williams, 1994:5). Drawing on the post-structuralist work of Foucault and the Western Marxist work of Gramsci (Williams, 1994:6), Said's *Orientalism* reveals "...the degree to which Western systems of knowledge and representation have been involved in the long history of the West's material and political subordination of the non-Western world," (Moore-Gilbert, 1997:38). Said, concerned particularly with the relationship between the Occident and the Orient, understands Orientalism as, 'a system of knowledge about the Orient' (Said, 1978: 6) and 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience' (Said, 1978: 1). For Said, Orientalism is "...not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice" (Said, 1978:6). Embedded in the body of theory is the concept of the Other (Said, 1978: 1) and the idea that, as the place of early European colonization, the Orient "...helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said, 1978: 2).

Post-colonial theorists are concerned with how knowledge of the "Other" is produced and the power structures that result because of the production of knowledge (Williams, 1994:8). During colonial times, Western powers relied on constructed images and representations of the Third World in order to justify their domination abroad (Desforges, 1998:178). As suggested by Said, the representation of the Third World as 'backwards', and the Western world as 'mature' enabled the West to justify its unrelenting power (Desforges, 1998:178). According to Post-Colonial theorists, the West's continued production of knowledge about 'Others', in other parts of the world, is considered legitimate because the power the West holds gives it the 'right' to 'enter or

examine' the Other as it pleases (Williams, 1994:8). Forming a cycle, the knowledge produced justifies the persistent expansion of Western influence (Williams, 1994:8).

The traveler is not free from this cycle of "Othering" and the reinforcement of power structures, for at the basis of all types of travel is the assumption that one has the 'right' to travel to the location of the Other (O'Reilly, 2006:1012). The nature of tourists' actions while abroad is a direct reflection of the 'framed' version or representation of the Other (Desforges, 1998:176). By dissecting the actions of backpackers and their interactions, or intended interactions with the local people and local environment (the Other), it becomes evident that the representations they hold of themselves and the Other are similar to representations of the Other during colonial times (O'Reilly, 2006:1003). Although the intentions of Western youth backpackers obviously differ from the objectives of their colonial counterparts, backpackers continue to view the Other as different (Desforges, 1998:178). Through a post-colonial lens, the motives, actions and intentions of backpackers abroad can be considered a product of their 'framing' of the Other (Desforges, 1998:178).

Methodology:

Most of my research relies on secondary ethnographic analyses of backpackers' self-narratives. Ethnographic researchers are concerned with the construction of reality (Binder, 2004:93). They attempt to deconstruct the perspectives of the 'investigated', which in this case belong to backpackers, in order to understand where the constructed 'realities' (for example, constructed individual and collective identities and representations of the 'Other') formed by the backpackers come from and how they were

constructed (Binder, 2004:93). They seek to understand, "...what is important for the investigated actors and how they experience 'their world,'" (Binder, 2004:93).

Ethnographic research tends to be exploratory in nature, rather than hypothesis driven (Sorensen, 2003:850). In addition, most of the information conveyed through ethnographic studies is reliant on qualitative rather than quantitative research methodologies as quantitative data cannot reveal and provide critical analysis of the inner workings of something as subjective as backpacking culture (Binder, 2004:92).

This type of research is most suitable for investigating backpacking culture as backpackers are quick to reveal their perspectives, beliefs, views and thoughts through story-telling (Noy, 2004:81). Socializing is a main feature of backpacker travel and has even been identified as a motivating factor (Noy, 2004:81). As backpackers socialize and communicate with fellow backpackers, future backpackers and audiences at home, the stories they tell form their "narrative identity" (Noy, 2004:83-84). The story-telling backpacker forms an identity by revealing to others his or her experiences (Noy, 2004:83), including experiences of self-change (Noy, 2004:80). Social scientists have become increasingly interested in the benefits of storytelling and suggest that self-narratives may be the best disclosure of a person's true identity available to researchers (Noy, 2004:83). The Internet now provides an excellent outlet for backpackers to communicate their stories to fellow travelers and friends and family back home. Written self-narratives of backpackers can be found on blogs or discussion panels on websites geared to backpacker travel such as BootsAll.com and "The Thorntree" section of the Lonely Planet website (O'Reilly, 2006:1002). My research relies on analysis of both verbal and written backpacker self-narratives by ethnographic researchers.

Benefits:

Building Capital:

Today's Western youth enjoy a prolonged youth in comparison to other generations and cultures (Arnett, 2002:311). They get married later and tend to extend their education well into their twenties (Arnett, 2002:309). Feeling limited pressure to take on the responsibilities of adulthood quickly, it is common for Western youth to take time away from school or work to travel (Desforges, 1998:175 and Ateljevic, 2004:62). These conditions have been made possible in part by the presence of the Post-Fordist era whereby youth are no longer required to find a lifelong job and are granted the flexibility to make changes to their career path (O'Reilly, 2006:1007). The transitional periods within a youth's educational or career path provide prime time for backpacking travel (Sorensen, 2003:853). Often referred to as a "gap year", youth consider their time abroad to be a one-time opportunity to see the world, yet frequently crave more travel upon their return home (O'Reilly, 2006:1001).

Extended youth travel is not only permitted by Western society, it is encouraged. Backpacking is becoming increasingly popular amongst youth and is even considered a "rite-of-passage" by some (O'Reilly, 2006:998). Travel and experience living abroad is considered an accomplishment by employers in the West (Desforges, 1998:177). For instance, Jenny, a subject of one study revealed:

...my next door neighbour, last summer sometimes [we were] talking about what I want to do, and as an employer he said he'd rather have someone who'd temped for a year and done six months traveling, worked hard for what they wanted, than someone who'd just got a mundane job for a year. He said that's far better. A more positively challenged, organized sort of person, is much more employable. (Desforges, 1998:186)

In order to secure jobs in certain fields such as international development and the non-profit sector, experience abroad is basically a prerequisite for employment (Desforges, 1998:177).

The knowledge accumulated through travel is also recognized as a form of education or an extension of a person's formal education (Desforges, 1998:177-178). A certain degree of authority is granted to backpackers in recognition of their newly absorbed knowledge (Desforges, 1998:185). This knowledge is transformed to cultural capital as employers, family and friends confirm its value as a representation of the backpacker's worldliness (O'Reilly, 2006:1013). Cultural capital has the potential to become economic capital when career and employment opportunities become available to backpackers based on the knowledge they acquired abroad (Desforges, 1998:177), which has been legitimized by their home society (O'Reilly, 2006:1013).

Backpackers also acquire social and symbolic capital. Social capital results from the relationships, connections and networks backpackers form while abroad, often with other backpackers (O'Reilly, 2006:1012). Symbolic capital entails the respect and acknowledgement paid to backpackers upon their return home for the valuable knowledge base and attributes they obtained while abroad (O'Reilly, 2006:1012). Both social capital and symbolic capital, like cultural capital, have the potential to produce economic capital (O'Reilly, 2006:1012). Social connections and networks, as well as skills and characteristics, acquired or heightened while away, that are considered transferable, such as patience, a heightened understanding of global issues and a respect for difference, are important in the Post-Fordist era where employment options and opportunities are continuously changing (O'Reilly, 2006:1012).

The Experience of Self-Change:

Backpackers also tend to experience varying degrees of self-change while abroad which can prove useful in their futures (Noy, 2004:87). Accounts of these changes are often embedded in the self-narratives of backpackers (Noy, 2004:87). The backpacker's experiences while traveling, and in particular, their search for 'authenticity', are effortlessly connected to the personal metamorphosis they undergo (Noy, 2004:87). This is commonly demonstrated through backpacker self-narratives (Noy, 2004:87). For instance, Brian, an Israeli research participant for a study conducted by Chaim Noy, author of "This Trip Really Changed Me", explains:

You're different as far as life experience goes. That is, when I left the country I was quite ignorant. I left ignorant in that I didn't know many cultures; I didn't cross paths with many cultures. I may have read about them, or seen them on TV, but I didn't actually meet them ... You see, when you leave the country you don't know that much, and when you return you suddenly know everything. You also know your self in many situations, like I told you – suddenly on top of the volcano mountain, or in very strenuous conditions during the trek ... You extend your own capabilities, and the limits of your knowledge of yourself. It's just like that. You know yourself better. (Noy, 2004:87)

Noy explains the correlation between interacting with other cultures and suddenly knowing everything and enduring an adventure up a mountain and suddenly knowing yourself, as demonstrative of the backpacker's self-reflection and construction of his identity (Noy, 2004:87). The concept of returning home a 'changed person' is an expectation common amongst backpackers and contributes to the forming of a collective identity (Noy, 2004:89). Normally traveling at a turning point in their lives, backpackers view the self-change they undergo while away as a step of maturity (Noy, 2004:90). Historian J.G.A. Pocock analyzes the identity crisis many Westerners encounter as a response to modernization; "[today we find] ourselves in a post-modern world in which more and more of us were consumers of information and fewer and fewer of us producers

or possessors of anything, including our own identities” (Barber, 1995:274). As well, it should be noted that the study conducted by Noy found that all of the accounts of self-change mentioned by backpackers were viewed as “positive and beneficial” (Noy, 2004:90).

Increasing Global Awareness:

In addition, world exposure through travel has the potential to raise the social-consciousness of backpackers while providing them with networks of like-minded people to promote social action (McGehee, 2005:761). Travel, especially backpacking which commonly takes place in the developing world, can spark awareness of global issues that are not always acknowledged throughout the developed world such as extreme poverty, inadequate access to clean drinking water and education, environmental degradation, and inequalities. This conscious raising can be viewed as the first step towards producing activism to promote positive change (McGehee, 2005:761). The level of awareness backpackers obtain about the world can have long lasting effects (McGehee, 2005:762). While abroad they may choose to volunteer in hopes of submitting themselves to more conscious-raising experiences and becoming effective agents of change by joining an alliance of local and foreign participants working towards a mutual cause (McGhee, 2005:764).

At home they may become part of a larger social movement, which can be defined as “an organized effort by a significant number of people to change (or resist change in) some major aspects of society” (McGhee, 2005:761). Often, social movement activists will not only contribute politically to their cause, but will make lifestyle changes that reflect their commitment to the movement (McGhee, 2005:763). For instance, a

backpacker who spent time volunteering in the developing world and became increasingly aware of the inequalities between the North and South may return home to lobby for fairer trade agreements as well as make changes to his or her lifestyle by shopping at fair-trade establishments (McGhee, 2005:763). Even if a former backpacker does not take it upon himself or herself to become and advocate for an issue, he or she may still return home more sympathetic to certain causes (McGhee, 2005:764).

In addition, some people, including former American president J.F. Kennedy and Mahatma Gandhi, consider travelers to be ambassadors of global peace. Gandhi states, “I have watched the cultures of all lands blow around my house and other winds have blown the seeds of peace, for travel is the language of peace” (Var, 1994:44). President J.F. Kennedy agrees, suggesting back in 1963 that:

Travel has become one of the great forces for peace and understanding in our time. As people move throughout the world and learn to know each other, to understand each other’s customs and to appreciate the qualities of the individuals of each nation, we are building a level of international understanding which can sharply improve the atmosphere for world peace (Var, 1994:45).

The search for a greater global understanding is commonly noted as a motivating factor amongst backpackers (Scheyvens, 2002:150).

Influencing Development:

In terms of international development, it has been argued that the growth of backpacking tourism in the developing world has been beneficial to host countries and communities (Maoz, 2005:223). It can be argued that backpackers help to empower local communities because their interest in becoming familiar with the authentic Other encourages them to stay, eat and shop in locally run establishments (Maoz, 2005:223). Particularly, women, who are often marginalized from formal economic opportunities,

can successfully target backpackers as customers to their informal businesses such as food and handicraft stalls (Scheyvens, 2002:153). In addition, because backpackers normally try to visit ‘off-the-beaten-track’ locations they are able to distribute the revenue they provide to the host population more evenly than the typical tourist (Maoz, 2005:223 and Scheyvens, 2002:151). Also, although backpackers are extremely budget-conscious, they spend more money on average while abroad than conventional tourists because the length of their time abroad is generally significantly greater than the average tourist (Maoz, 2005:223, Scheyvens, 2002:151). In fact, research conducted in New Zealand and Australia found that while, on average, the conventional tourist spends \$1,272 USD, a backpacker spends approximately \$2,667 (Scheyvens, 2002:151).

Dangers and Risks:

Despite the benefits backpacking can bring to youth participants and the positive social impacts the individual experiences may bring to individual societies and the global community, post-colonial theorists identify risks involved with backpacking travel which ultimately challenge its value. A significant contradiction arises as backpackers who, for the most part, consider themselves to be open-minded and advocates of liberal ideals pursue neo-colonial quests to identify, understand and consume the authentic ‘Other’ (O’Reilly, 2006:1004).

Exploring and Conquering:

Tourism is easily conceived as a form of imperialism when the basic concept of Westerners traveling to destinations in the developing world is considered (Smith, 2003: 172). While ‘rich’ tourists have the opportunity to leave their home locations to explore

other parts of the world, locals of the developing world rarely have the means, neither financial nor political, to travel abroad and become guests of the developed world (Smith, 2003: 172). While Western tourists have the freedom to trek around the world, the role of Third World locals within the tourism industry is constrained to playing host to curious tourists (Smith, 2003: 172).

Additionally, as Luke Desforges, author of “Checking out the Planet”, an article featured in the book “Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Culture”, explains, the desire for knowledge accumulation by backpackers, when explored through a post-colonial lens, can be viewed as a form of neo-colonialism (Desforges, 1998:178-179). He explains that, like colonial explorers, backpackers aim to find and understand parts of the world that are foreign to them and to gain knowledge about places that are ‘different’ by experiencing the ‘Other’ (Desforges, 1998:178-179). Once a backpacker has ‘collected’ a place and recorded the knowledge about that place by writing in a travel journal, taking photos, or purchasing souvenirs, he or she is ready to move on to the next location and rarely has an interest in returning to a location he or she has already ‘done’ or ‘conquered’ (Desforges, 1998:179). Justin, one of Desforges research subjects provides the following self-narrative:

‘When you look round the world at places where you could go and do some trekking, where we’d want to go, there was the Himalayas, we could have gone to Nepal, but I’d been there about six or seven years ago. So I didn’t want to go there again. So that really brought it down to South America, unless we went to somewhere like Africa,...I think there are some good mountain ranges but I don’t think they’re as good as you get in the Andes say. And I suppose there was North America as well,...but again I’d been there and I also wanted to go somewhere which had got a completely different feel to it. Like I went to India a few years ago and I thought that was absolutely brilliant because it was just a completely foreign environment. I’d never been anywhere like it.’ (Desforges, 1998:179).

Just like colonial explorers, Justin is determined to experience the foreign Other and believes that through his experiences he will be able to ‘understand’ and ‘know’ the Other. Representation of the Other as ‘different’ and the belief that difference can be understood through travel, extends back to colonial times when explorers traveled abroad to create maps of unknown coastlines and produce written accounts of the Other (Desforges, 1998:178-179).

The concept of backpackers ‘conquering’ their destinations is further evident through the establishment of backpacker ‘enclaves’. Noy’s research, which examines the backpacking experiences of Israeli youth, often recently discharged from the army, notes that although most of them claim they want to separate themselves from other Israeli’s while abroad, they often end up spending significant time together in Israeli enclaves (Noy, 2004:82-83). Establishments within the Israeli enclaves are predominately Israeli run and cater to the Israeli traveler, providing accommodation as well as Israeli restaurants serving Israeli dishes (Noy, 2004:82). In India, a common destination for Israeli travelers, numerous Israeli ‘colonies’ or enclaves have been established (Maoz, 2005:227). Israeli backpackers refer to themselves in Hebrew as *ha-kovshim*, which translates to conquerors, as well as *ha-mitnahalim*, meaning ‘settlers’ (Maoz, 2004:112) and have even labeled a beach in Goa *hof Tel Aviv*, meaning Tel Aviv beach (Maoz, 2005:227). Their choice of language reflects their neo-colonial attitudes. For instance, common notions amongst Israeli backpackers in India include, “in India everything is possible” and “it is a no-man’s land, one could do anything” (Maoz, 2005:226), demonstrating the Orientalist belief that as Israelis in India, they are free to do exactly as they wish, without consideration for the host environment or population.

The Hunt for Authenticity:

The “authentic paradigm” suggests that all tourists, including backpackers, are trying to escape their alienated modern world and all its impurities in search of an untainted more holistic way of life (Noy, 2004:85). Desperately trying to break free from the limitations of modernity, backpackers value societies which they consider to have successfully avoided becoming captive to the forces of globalization, and feverishly travel the world in pursuit of encountering the ‘primitive’, yet ‘pure’ Other (Richards, 2004:5).

“Tourism is so much about the production of dreams, the indulgence in fantasies and escapism into ideal worlds” (Smith, 2003: 175). Interestingly, backpackers choose to escape to the Third World where conditions of poverty and hardship are idealized by the backpacker to constitute a reality, or authenticity, which is not available to them in the modern, developed world they come from. France’s post-modern theorist Jean Baudrillard would likely consider backpacking tourism, which has been criticized as a form of poverty tourism (Scheyvens, 2001:150), to represent an attempt at ‘catastrophe management’ by the ‘rich’ of the West (Baudrillard, 1994:66). He explains, “We (in the west) are the consumers of the ever delightful spectacle of poverty and catastrophe, and of the moving spectacle of our own efforts to alleviate it (which, in fact, merely function to secure the conditions of the reproduction of the catastrophe market)” (Baudrillard, 1994: 67). In this light, Westerners are dependent on the images of poverty and catastrophe provided by the developing world and transmitted to them through the media (Abbinnett, 2003:214), and perhaps confirmed through travel, because their own realities are so simulated (Abbinnett, 2003, 214). Baudrillard considers this ‘moral and sentimental exploitation’ of poverty in the developing world to represent, the ‘last phase

of colonialism', whereby, "Other people's destitution becomes our adventure playground" (Baudrillard, 1994:67).

Backpackers believe that by experiencing the alternate lifestyle of the Other, they will become enlightened by their exposure to truth and realness, and their identity will change accordingly because of the existential experience (Noy, 2004:85). They are therefore in search of authentic places, but also, their authentic selves (Noy, 2004:85). "Being attuned with one's own experiences rather than interpreting the world through institutionalized concepts and abstractions makes people authentic individuals" (Steiner, 2006:300). Therefore, by experiencing the authentic Other and finding their authentic 'Selves', backpackers are able to bring meaning to a reality that is otherwise pointless (Steiner, 2006:300). Backpackers are so obsessed with authenticity that they have been labeled "authenticist tourists" (Noy, 2004:85). During self-narratives, backpackers use words such as "primitive", "genuine" and "pure" to express their experiences of perceived authenticity (Noy, 2004:85).

Noy explores the similarities between adventure travel writing of the 18th and 19th centuries and modern day backpacker self-narratives and suggests that, like their earlier counterparts, backpackers are in search of the authentic Other, and in doing so, undergo significant inner transformation (Noy, 2004:92). The desire to experience adventure and to travel to remote and exotic locations, where it is believed authenticity can be found, is expressed in the narratives of both the Romanticist traveler belonging to the age of colonial exploration and present day backpackers (Noy, 2004:93). For example, the colonial phrase, "to go where no man's been before" is commonly heard amongst backpackers (Desforges, 1998: 181). Similar to the element of self-change that

backpackers feel they experience as a result of their encounter with the authentic Other, explorers of earlier centuries were considered to become "...creative and divine, or at least legendary and heroic" as a result of their travels (Noy, 2004:93).

While mainstream tourists may observe difference from a safe distance, backpackers take pride in their commitment to be "at one with the locals" (Muzaini, 2005:145). Although it has been pointed out that backpacking tourism is becoming more and more institutionalized through the establishment of backpacker enclaves (Maoz, 2005:226) and as travel services catering specifically to backpackers grow in size and number (Desforges, 1998:183 and O'Reilly, 2006:1000), backpackers insist that backpacker travel is different from mainstream tourism because backpackers do not shelter themselves from experiencing the 'authentic' and 'real' world of the host population by staying in mainstream tourist bubbles (Maoz, 2005:221). While the backpacker, "...crosses physical and cultural barriers with apparent ease in search for difference and differentiation" (Richards, 2004:5), the tourist is, "...caught in the iron cage of the modern tourism industry" (Richards, 2004:5). In fact, the non-appearance of mainstream tourists and mass tourism institutions and infrastructure is considered a sign to backpackers that they have successfully arrived at an authentic location, home to the authentic Other (Desforges, 1998:183).

Constructing Identities:

Pre-conceived notions of the 'Other' are easily confirmed as backpackers tour the unknown in search of authenticity, and as a result, stereotypes can be reinforced (Stronza, 2001:4). Imagination has been identified as a central feature of modern Western society (O'Reilly, 2006:1008). The media, which includes everything from information on the

internet to television programs to travel brochures, provides images and narratives of the Other which help spark the individual's travel imagination (O'Reilly, 2006:1008).

An incredibly relevant media source to backpackers is the budget travel guide. Lonely Planet's guide to Thailand is filled with colourful pictures of Monks dressed in loose orange cloth, women and children in traditional outfits ready to dance, and vendors at the famous floating market shielded from the sun by oversized straw hats (Lonely Planet, 2005). In addition, it provides backpackers with descriptions of Thai culture and norms (Lonely Planet, 2005: 57). Consider the following excerpt labeled "Saving Face":

Thais believe strongly in the concept of saving face, ie avoiding confrontation and endeavouring not to embarrass yourself or other people...The ideal face-saver doesn't bring up negative topics in conversation, and when they notice stress in another's life, they usually won't say anything unless that person asks for help. Laughing at minor accidents - such as when someone trips and falls down - may seem callous but it's really just an attempt to save face on behalf of the person undergoing the mishap. This is another source of the Thai smile – it's the best possible face for almost any situation.

Talking loudly is perceived as rude by cultured Thais, whatever the situation. When encounters take a turn for the worse, try to refrain from getting angry – it won't help matters, since losing your temper means a loss of face for everyone present. (Lonely Planet, 2005: 57)

These pictures and descriptions fill the traveler's imagination with clichéd images and conceptions of the Thai Other. It is not that guidebooks and other media sources are untruthful, but rather that they provide a stereotypically selective lens to their customers (Stronza, 2001: 7). The resulting images are often Orientalistic in nature (O'Reilly, 2006:1003). For example, the excerpt above from the Lonely Planet attempts to make sense of the 'differences' in temperament and conduct between the Thai 'Other' and Western 'Self' in the same fashion as explorers of colonial times (Desforges, 1998:176). Always on the prowl for the authentic Other, backpackers let the images of the Other, portrayed to them through the media, fester in their imaginations until they have formed

expectations of what the authentic Other should encompass. “By touring the sites of this global “museum” tourists can ultimately affirm and reinforce what they thought they already know about the world” (Stronza, 2001:4).

Backpackers often imagine the local Other to be one of the few people left who remains isolated from modernity; never having come into contact with a Western person (O’Reilly, 2006:1003). It is also common for backpackers to assume that the local Other is content with his or her life despite conditions of poverty as they do not require much to be “happy” according to their religious or spiritual beliefs (O’Reilly, 2006:1003). Again, Israeli backpackers in India provide exaggerated examples of neo-colonial constructions of the Other. Israelis view their Indian hosts as ‘primitive’, ‘exotic’, and even ‘dirty’ (Maoz, 2005:227). One interviewee expressed, “they were all dirty and hairy with undershirts, they reminded me of slaves...it was like a slaves’ train” (Maoz, 2005:227). Employing techniques used during colonial times to distance themselves from oppressive power structures, one Israeli backpacker explained, “we treat them like trash, maybe because that is what they project. It’s not us, it’s them. They accept it as their *karma*, their faith” (Maoz, 2005:227).

Backpackers also perceive themselves, in an Orientalist manner, as brave, risk-taking adventure seekers. In the imagination of the backpacker, he or she travels great distances, “...against the forces of nature, savage “Others”, and his own physical and psychological limits” (O’Reilly, 2006:1003). The degree to which backpackers subscribe to these Orientalist fantasies obviously varies from person to person (O’Reilly, 2006:1004). However, even backpackers who try to avoid framing the Other in a stereotypical fashion remain consumed with experiencing the “authentic” or “real” Other,

and therefore still use pre-conceived images of the Other to evaluate their experiences (O'Reilly, 2006:1004).

Finding Ways to Know the Other:

Backpackers adopt a number of strategies and tactics while abroad to improve their chances of experiencing the authentic 'Other' and finding their authentic selves. Ultimately, they aim to integrate themselves with the portions of the host population that they consider to be the 'real' people (Muzaini, 2005:145). They intend to experience as many aspects of local life as possible in order to familiarize themselves with the authentic Other (Muzaini, 2005:147). Many backpackers realize that not everything they encounter will be positive and most claim they are ready to experience the good and bad (Muzaini, 2005:147). A participant of one study explains, "Whenever I go to Thailand, I want to do more than meet the locals. I want to talk to them, to understand them, to learn more about their cultures than what other tourists usually learn about them...I don't care if these experiences may be positive or negative" (Muzaini, 2005:147). However, it should be noted that many backpackers use their privileged position as an outsider to remove themselves from situations they are not comfortable with (Muzaini, 2005:147).

Most backpackers try to maintain a strict budget while abroad because their savings are limited and they wish to extend their trip as long as possible (Binder, 2004:103). However, they also defend their budget accommodation and transportation choices as an attempt to travel and live like the local people, thus, increasing their chances of getting to know the authentic Other in a meaningful way (Muzaini, 2005:148). For instance, they may choose to take local transportation instead of the air-conditioned tourist buses, or stay and eat in small locally owned establishments where they believe

they have a good chance of interacting with locals (Muzaini, 2005:148). However, their framing of the Other leads them to believe that they are living the way the locals *prefer* to live (Muzaini, 2005:148-149), resorting back to the Orientalist belief that the conditions of the Third World Other are somehow natural.

Backpacking can be considered an attempt by Western youth to rid themselves of the materialism and superficiality of modern Western society in order to confront their authentic ‘Selves’ (Binder, 2004:104). As one backpacker explains:

While backpacking you are reconciled with yourself, because everything you have is that backpack and what is inside. You are reduced to yourself. Everything around me is the minimum of what I need. I can’t be distracted by my CD collection any more nor by my books or anything else. I have to cope with my pure self. (Binder, 2004:104)

For backpackers, material wealth is considered a barrier to authenticity while conditions of poverty are sought after in their quest to experience pure and untainted life (Binder, 2004:104). Interestingly, by maintaining low economic capital, backpackers are rewarded high cultural capital, which, as explained earlier, can then be transferred into high economic capital (Binder, 2004:105). It should also be noted that the so-called conditions of poverty that backpackers submit themselves to are only relative to the conditions they are accustomed to and their claims of “being poor” are easily postponed when “once-in-a-lifetime”, yet expensive, opportunities such as skydiving and scuba-diving, arise (Binder, 2004:104). Regardless, by romanticizing the concept of being poor backpackers, “...help to produce and stabilize the constructions of cultural difference and the roles that the different countries play in the world order” (Binder, 2004:104).

The Power to Choose and Change:

Backpackers pick and choose who and what is authentic. A prime example is their complete avoidance of mainstream tourist sites. Backpackers do not believe that locals working or visiting tourist sites properly represent the authentic 'Other'. For example, one of Noy's research participants describes how she determines what members of the host community are 'real':

People who work with tourists eventually become very nasty. It's unavoidable. But there we successfully managed to reach the real people. And these are nice and good-hearted people. Or the children that run after you wherever you go – fascinating. This was the most important thing for me, and the reason to travel to the East and not to other destinations: the culture and the people (Noy, 2004:86).

Similarly, Israeli travelers in India are keen to befriend any local that they believe holds spiritual wisdom, such as a spiritual leader or monk, but are not interested in interacting with locals working in a restaurant, for example, beyond of course the customer/server relationship (Maoz, 2005:228).

With the power to determine who and what can be considered authentic, tourists mould the realities of the Other to reflect their own expectations (Desforges, 1998:183). They hold the power to both include and exclude people and places (Desforges, 1998:183). Locked in the travel imaginations of backpackers is the image of the authentic Third World Other as 'poor' or 'underdeveloped' (Desforges, 1998:183). Thus, they rationalize consuming the Other as cheaply as possible as a strategy to ensure their experiences and encounters with the Other are authentic (Desforges, 1998:183). For example, 'bargaining' or 'haggling' is a common practice amongst backpackers whereby they negotiate the price of goods with local vendors until they feel they are being offered local prices for the goods rather than the tourist markups (Muzaini, 2005:150). Even though both the tourist and the local often view the negotiation process as a friendly

game, backpackers have the power to take the game too far and exploit the vendor who is dependent on the sale (Muzaini, 2005:150).

The “tourist-gaze” is a term used to describe how existing power structures allow Western tourists to project their constructed images of the Other on to host populations (Maoz, 2005:222). Conveyed through these images are expectations which affect the actions and behaviours of local peoples (Stronza, 2001:7). The local Other adopts the image the tourist has of them in order to fulfill the tourist’s expectations and ensure that they are not marginalized from further interaction with the tourist (Stronza, 2001:7). The identity of the Other is altered to suit the tourist’s expectations and the constructed image of the Other is confirmed for the tourist, thus, reinforcing stereotypes (Stronza, 2001:4). Recognizing the tourist’s craving for authenticity, local people often conform to, or act out, the images of the ‘traditional’ or ‘native’ local in order to please tourists (Stronza, 2001:7). For tourists, “...the Third World becomes the playground of their imagination and a target to conquer and consume” (Maoz, 2004:233).

For instance, the Mayers Ranch, which operated from 1968 into the 1980’s was a tourist site established by an English family residing in Kenya since colonial times (Bruner, 2001: 884). Looking to satisfy the desires, of mainly Western tourists, for a taste of the Maasai tribalism, the family staged a show that aimed to “...achieve tourist realism, an ambience of authenticity, and the appearance of the real” (Bruner, 2001: 885). The directors of the Ranch worked with the images tourists held of 19th-century Massai warriors as primitive, dangerous and wild to create a show that coincided with tourist representations (Bruner, 2001, 882). The directors utilized a number of techniques to ensure that their paying guests were convinced that they were gazing upon Massai

tribesmen in their natural state. Firstly, they were dressed in traditional clothing, outfitted with spears and shields (Bruner, 2001, 884) and all their modern apparel was banned from the property (Burner, 2001, 885). Further, in an effort to maintain their primitive image, they were not allowed to speak to the tourists, despite the fact that many of them were educated and could speak English, in an effort to maintain their primitive image (Bruner, 2001: 885). The performance also played on the romanticized images the tourists held of colonialism (Bruner, 2001: 885). Following the performance the guests were ushered to the Mayer family compound for refreshments and the directors (who were once colonial settlers) mingled amongst the tourists (Bruner, 2001: 884). The contrast provided between the primitive, savage African tribesmen and the civilized colonizer appealed to, and reinforced the tourists' pre-conceived images (Bruner, 2001: 886).

The Power to Respond and Protect:

The 'local gaze' suggests that local people are agents of power as well and therefore have the ability to gaze back at tourists (Maoz, 2005:229). While the tourist gaze often leaves local people feeling as if they are constantly being watched and observed, tourists are rarely aware of the gaze transmitted to them by their local counterparts (Maoz, 2005:229). Nevertheless, the tourist's behaviour is regulated by the stereotypical images of tourists held by the locals and the expectations the local community projects to the tourists (Maoz, 2005:229). Unknowingly, the tourist absorbs the images of the Western tourist transmitted by the local gaze as their own and, as a result, confirms for the local community stereotypical images of the Western Other (Maoz, 2005:229).

While preconceived notions of the Third World Other are constructed by representations in the media, images of the Western Other are slowly formed overtime, as tourism grows within the local community, and therefore may be more realistic (Maoz, 2005:229). The framing of the Western Other by the local may also have its roots in colonial encounters (Maoz, 2005:229). For example, Indian locals who have regular contact with Israeli tourists view their Western Other as, "...hedonist, loud, superficial, overtly sexual, open and free people, who have bad manners stemming from a bad education" (Maoz, 2005:229). They also consider them to be, "...shallow, foolish, unsophisticated people who will settle for instant pleasures and knowledge" (Maoz, 2005:229). On the other hand, Indian locals who are, for the most part, sheltered from the impacts of tourism view Israelis as part of an advanced and superior Western society and believe that interaction with them will bring about cultural capital (Maoz, 2005:229). The images produced remain severely stereotypical (Maoz, 2005:229) and as the tourist and the local gaze upon each other, forming a "mutual gaze", stereotypes are confirmed and reinforced (Maoz, 2005:222).

Staging Authenticity:

Local peoples employ various strategies to manage the intrusive effects of tourism (Maoz, 2005:224). For instance, they may openly oppose tourism or revive traditions and the use of local language to passively reduce the presence of Westerners in their communities (Maoz, 2005:224). Alternatively, they may choose to adopt and embrace aspects of Western culture (Maoz, 2005:224). A common coping strategy used by local people in response to backpacking tourism is the 'staging' of authenticity (Maoz, 2005:224). Backpackers are obvious about their desires to experience and consume the

authentic Other. Local people recognize this and create simulated versions of authenticity for the tourist to consume (Maoz, 2005:224).

For instance, another study conducted by Darya Maoz, which documents the relationship between Israeli backpackers and Indian host communities, observes that the aggressive demands Israelis make for access to Indian culture, especially aspects of culture which pertain to spirituality, provides locals with the obvious opportunities to capitalize from their eagerness. As one Reiki teacher explains,

They want to learn everything instantly...I met a guy who said “my plane is leaving in a few hours, could you make me a Reiki master by then?” I really thought of opening a last-minute stand in the airport for Israelis who want to learn spirituality while waiting for their plane (Maoz, 2005:229).

Through the eyes of the locals, Israelis appear to be looking for real and authentic experiences but are so desperate in their search that they are willing to settle for a simulated spiritual experience (Maoz, 2005:229-230). Perhaps the desperation many backpackers feel to incorporate spirituality into their travels has to do with their tremendous desire to experience self-change while abroad (Maoz, 2005:228).

By creating a staged version of their culture, local people are able to distract tourists and shelter the ‘backstage’ life of their communities from the intrusive tourist ‘gaze’ (Cohen, 1995:17). Not only are they able to maintain their privacy by covertly staging ‘authentic’ tourist attractions, but they also create an opportunity for economic gain (Franklin, 2003:199). Locals are able to accumulate monetary profit while protecting aspects of local society and culture by manipulating the tourist’s gaze towards staged and commercialized versions of authentic local culture (Maoz, 2005:225).

“The Fool”, a short story by Smadar Lavie featured in the book, *Internationalizing Cultural Studies*, clearly describes the cultural tensions which arise as hippie tourists project their ‘gaze’ on to the Mzeina qua traditional Bedouin of the South Sinai desert. The character of the ‘fool’ represents members of the local community who sacrifice their deeply religious Islamic beliefs and morals in order to cater to the needs of tourists who flock to the desert area that was approved as a nudist colony by the Israeli military, despite opposition from the Mzeinis (Lavie, 2005:107). The fool puts his moral and religious ideals aside in order to sell the naked tourists alcohol, simulated traditional clothing and food, as well as huts to sleep in so that the tourists believe they are experiencing authentic desert life (Lavie, 2005:107).

Despite the monetary earnings the fool is able to accumulate from his entrepreneurial ventures, he always maintains his appearance as a poor, desperate, desert local in order to make his customers believe they are receiving good, local prices for his goods and services (Lavie, 2005:107). With the money he manages to make from the informal tourist industry, the fool builds mosques, perhaps in an attempt to counteract any negativity brought to the community by the young, drug and alcohol indulgent, sexually promiscuous tourists the fool caters to and profits from (Lavie, 2005:107) The fool considers himself a “merchant of sins” and explains, “I sell the tourists alcohol and rent them huts where unmarried people have tabooed sex” (Lavie, 2005:108). His actions, however, are not guilt free and his brothers suspect his shame drove him to make the pilgrimage to Mecca (Lavie, 2005:108).

The Fool provides a staged reality to his tourists and restructures his identity and his culture to their liking in order to secure economic profit (Lavie, 2005:108). He does

not necessarily appreciate the presence of the tourists, yet understands that he and his fellow locals do not have the power to normalize the behaviours of the tourists to their approval (Lavie, 2005: 108). By occupying the tourists with a staged identity and staged culture the Fool is able to create a boundary that protects the 'backstage' activities of the Mzeinis (Lavie, 2005: 108).

The demand for authenticity comes from the tourist, but it is the local who identifies the demand and decides to restructure his or her identity and culture to suit the desires of the tourist (Ateljevic, 2004:71). However, although it can be argued that both tourists and locals participate actively in the process of commodifying local culture, dangers do arise. The tourist's gaze manipulates how and what aspects of local culture are revived resulting in the creation of a fake, simulated version of local culture (Bennett, 2005:16). By restructuring their culture to suit the expectations of tourists, and marketing it as authentic and real, local communities are permitting the "metonymic freezing" of their culture (Bennett, 2005:18). They are committing their culture to become and remain in a specific form, which mirrors the pre-conceived images that tourists have of the Third World Other, to please tourists. Tourists neo-colonial assumptions about the Third World Other are confirmed by the staged attractions, justifying their continued belief that it is natural for the Third World Other to remain 'under-developed' because of their desire to resist modernization (Bennett, 2005:18).

Cultural Commodification:

Also of concern is the possibility that cultural materials, rituals and traditions will lose meaning to the local population as they become commodified in order to meet tourist demands for authenticity (Stronza, 2001: 6-7). In fact, some scholars worry that

acculturation will occur as culture is transformed into a commodity and cultural items become goods to be "...evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade..." (Stronza, 2001:6) Theorists propose that through commodification, local cultures are homogenized to reflect the expectations of tourists and, "...reduced to inauthentic shadows for sale to the gullible masses" (Meethan, 2001:122).

Additionally, cultural identity can be uprooted as a result of the commodification of culture. Locals become dependent on the economic profits they acquire from providing staged versions of their culture for the pleasure of tourists, and eventually, the staged culture is the only remaining version familiar to the local (Stronza, 2001:7). For instance, in Bali, the commodification of culture has penetrated so far into society that locals themselves can no longer determine what has been constructed for tourists and what is authentically indigenous to their culture (Stronza, 2001:7). Local culture and cultural identity are eroded as hosts in the developing world "... sell their culture, history and customs as major commodities, pose as the primitive and exotic, and preserve an authenticity that no longer exists or never did as conceived by these tourists" (Maoz, 2005:224).

Conclusion: Evaluating the worth of going 'Post'

Theoretically, it would be sound to conclude that the risks associated with backpacking tourism out-weigh the benefits when observed through a post-colonial lens, where concerns of identity construction and coinciding power relations are of main concern. As demonstrated above, the traveler's imagination is fed by, and perpetuates the creation of stereotypes that work to secure and reinforce global inequalities. In addition,

backpackers, as authenticity tourists, seek to break through any ‘staged’ front put up by the local populations and therefore may actually constitute a more invasive and influential form of tourism than the highly criticized mass tourism typology. The ‘Othering’ involved in modern day backpacking travel and the obsession backpackers have with discovering, knowing and understanding cultural ‘difference’, direct post-colonial theorists to consider backpacking travel, and perhaps all forms of tourism, to be “the contemporary manifestation of colonial travel” (Bennett, 2005:18).

As a general consensus, if the risks outweigh the benefits the activity in question should not be pursued. It would therefore seem appropriate to call for an immediate halt to all backpacking tourism activity and perhaps an inquiry into whether all forms of tourism should be abandoned. Rationalizing that more harm than good is caused by tourism, we would ultimately follow in the footsteps of Post-Development theorists and enter a Post-Tourism era.

Numerous approaches to development have emerged over the years as existing approaches are critiqued, edited and restructured by development theorists (de Kadt, 1992: 48). There is no one overarching theory to which development experts are satisfied (de Kadt, 1992: 48). Rather, they continue to look for ways to improve upon existing development approaches (de Kadt, 1992: 48). During the 1980’s theories began to evolve which called for development initiatives to take a step away from large scale economic ventures that previous mainstream development approaches had advocated and as a result numerous small-scale approaches with specific concerns began to emerge (de Kadt, 1992: 48). Theorists began to comprehend the diversity of situations in the developing world

and understand that one theory could not appropriately address all circumstances (Kambhampati, 2004: 81).

The numerous approaches that emerged were commonly concerned with sustainability, and collectively became known as ‘alternative’ approaches to development (de Kadt, 1992: 48). In general, these alternative development theories sought to be more people-centered and focused on the social and environmental needs of the ‘world’s poor’ (de Kadt, 1992: 49). Mirroring the progress of the development field, alternative forms of tourism are considered to be moralistically driven (de Kadt, 1992: 48) and have emerged out of recognition that large-scale tourism initiatives pose significant risks to host populations (de Kadt, 1992: 50). Primarily, “Alternative Tourism is applied to tourism which does not damage the environment, is ecologically sound, and avoids the negative impacts of many large-scale tourism developments undertaken in areas which have not previously been developed” (de Kadt, 1992: 50). Alternative Tourism aims to ensure that local people are not exploited and that they benefit from the projects being undertaken in their communities (de Kadt, 1992: 50-51). Often this entails encouraging local participation in the organization and implementation of tourism initiatives (de Kadt, 1992: 50).

Considering the above criteria, it can be argued that backpacking tourism falls under the category of Alternative Tourism. For instance, backpackers can be considered environmentally friendly because while mainstream tourists require access to resource-draining luxuries such as air-conditioning and hot water for their showers, backpackers are normally content with very little, and even prefer to minimize their resource consumption in order to live like the locals (Scheyvens, 2001: 152). Additionally,

backpackers' desire to know the local Other also leads them to support locally owned and run establishments and businesses, and reject giving money to large foreign businesses, which can result in the empowerment of local people to determine how tourism develops in their community and ensure that they are the primary benefactors (Scheyvens, 2001: 152).

However, like theories of Alternative Development, alternative approaches to tourism have also been met with criticism. The Post-Colonial critique of backpacking tourism, demonstrated above, suggests that despite potential benefits, backpacking tourism cannot be considered a sound form of travel because of the risks it poses. For Post-Colonialists, even alternative forms of tourism, like backpacking, are deemed unacceptable as they strengthen and support stereotypes that uphold an unequal global order.

Similar to the ideas expressed by Post-Colonial theorists concerned with tourism, Post-Developmentalists believe development to constitute a new form of colonialism as it involves the interference of the West in the affairs of sovereign nations, and thus, "...denies any agency to post-colonial states, institutions and people" (Nanda, 1999: 12). For Post-Development theorists, alternative approaches to development do not sufficiently justify the risks posed by development. Post-Development theorists apply 'zero-sum logic' in determining that all forms of development should be abandoned (Nanda, 1999:5). They believe that the West should give up their development efforts before they inflict any more harm on nations of the developing world (Nanda, 1999:5).

Like Post-Colonial theorists, Post-Development theorists are concerned with the construction of knowledge and believe that the *intent* to 'develop' stems from a western

system of knowledge, projecting capitalist economic rationale, and "...masquerading as a universally beneficent idea" (Nanda, 1999:5-6). However, some radical or extreme Post-Development theorists, often labeled as Anti-Development theorists (Simon, 2006:11), are concerned beyond the fundamental critique of economic growth as a key contributor to underdevelopment (Nanda, 1999: 6). These theorists call for the termination of development efforts based on Western knowledge, Western culture, and Western imagery, and the re-emergence of efforts that encompass local and traditional knowledge (Nanda, 1999: 6). Similar to the concerns posed by Post-Colonial theorists regarding tourism, Post-Development theorists are concerned that objective 'truths' constructed by the West and their Third World elite counterparts have created a 'reality' which acts to produce and maintain global and local inequalities (Nanda, 1999: 12).

The critiques of both tourism and development are valid and strong. However, in part by applying the critiques of Post-Development to Post-Tourism, one can see that it is both impossible and impractical to disregard alternative forms of tourism, including backpacking, as viable industries to invest in and improve upon. Firstly, tourism is inarguably on the rise. According to the World Tourism Organization, a United Nations agency; "The substantial growth of the tourism activity clearly marks tourism as one of the most remarkable economic and social phenomena of the past century" (World Tourism Organization, Facts and Figures). While 25 million international arrivals were accounted for in 1950 there were approximately 763 million international arrivals in 2004 (World Tourism Organization, Facts and Figures).

In addition, backpacking as a specific type of tourism, is well regarded in the West. This paper began with the identification of potential benefits brought about by

backpacking tourism. From enabling the traveler to build cultural, social and therefore economic capital, to providing experiences which influence self-change and personal identity construction, to sparking global consciousness, awareness and action, to assisting with local development efforts, backpacking tourism has been accepted and recognized as a positive indulgence by the West and therefore will likely continue to grow and expand as an industry despite the risks observed by Post-Colonial theorists.

Secondly, just as Post-Development theorists have been criticized for their desire to bring a halt to development efforts when voices from the developing world are demanding a continuation and broadening of development efforts to suit their agendas (Scheyvens, 2002: 150), the notion that backpacking tourism should be abandoned as a viable development strategy when members of the developing world have clearly communicated their desires to incorporate appropriate tourism into their development plans is unjustified (Scheyvens, 2002: 150). Local people are not simply recipients of tourism, but rather active agents who have the ability to embrace and reject initiatives as they see fit (Scheyvens, 2002: 151). For instance, while the people of Goa are extremely vocal in disapproving large-scale tourism projects which marginalize local people and threaten local businesses, they happily embrace backpacking tourism because it brings economic benefits to the local community, and thus, contributes to local development (Scheyvens, 2002: 151).

However, just as Post-Development theories shine a necessary and important light on the pitfalls of international development, the risks associated with backpacking identified by Post-Colonial theorists bring light to a number of serious issues and concerns regarding the creation and reinforcement of global stereotypes and inequalities

which merit further attention and prompt resolution. This must begin with a humbling of backpacker travel. Backpacker travel does not constitute a morally sound form of travel and "...backpackers should not assume that by choosing what they see to be an alternative tourism experience, their ethics will be beyond scrutiny" (Scheyvens, 2001:159). While efforts should be made to enhance the benefits and reduce the risks of backpacking tourism, backpackers should be reminded of their identity as privileged travelers in an unequal and unjust global society.

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