THE SOCIAL PERFORMANCE OF BACKPACKING: 
AN ONTOGENESIS

How are backpacking identities organised, constituted and performed?

By Neil Michael Walsh

Submitted as a PhD thesis at the Department of Tourism, 
University of Otago
I, the author, published some of my findings from this thesis in the peer reviewed international journal *Tourist Studies*. I also published material from my literature review as a peer reviewed encyclopedic headword in *The Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*.


# Table of Contents

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. xii
List of Diagrams ............................................................................................................... xiii
Photographic Material ..................................................................................................... xiv
Abstract .......................................................................................................................... xix
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... xxi

## Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
Research aim ...................................................................................................................... 4
Research Objectives .......................................................................................................... 4
Chapter Outlines .............................................................................................................. 5

## Chapter 2: Backpacking ‘In’ Tourism: A Literature Review ....................................... 10
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 10
Tourism epistemology ....................................................................................................... 11
The development of backpacking research: chasing a chimera? ...................................... 15
Backpacking studies ......................................................................................................... 19
Backpacking as a heterogeneous assemblage ................................................................. 25
History of travel guidebooks ............................................................................................ 28
Contemporary guidebooks ............................................................................................... 31
Backpacking ‘versus’ tourism, backpacking ‘and’ tourism, to backpacking ‘in’ tourism. 34
Summary .......................................................................................................................... 36

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspective .............................................................................. 38
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 38
Theory as dangerous ....................................................................................................... 39
Symbolism ......................................................................................................................... 40
Interdisciplinary studies of the social ............................................................................. 46
Poststructuralism .............................................................................................................. 46
Deconstruction .................................................................................................................. 49
Matters of Identity ........................................................................................................... 52
Postmodern hybridity ................................................................................................. 54
Re-reading Derrida ..................................................................................................... 57
The meaning of ‘meaning’ ......................................................................................... 59
Relationality ................................................................................................................. 60
Posthumanism ........................................................................................................... 61
Settling on the post-human ....................................................................................... 62
Actor-network theory (ANT) ..................................................................................... 63
People and things ........................................................................................................ 65
The reflexive networks of ANT ................................................................................ 69
Limitations to ANT .................................................................................................... 70
ANT and agency .......................................................................................................... 73
Modern disdain ........................................................................................................... 75
A performance studies approach to backpacking ...................................................... 76
The performative ......................................................................................................... 77
Culture and performance ............................................................................................ 81

Chapter 4: Methodological Framework .................................................................... 84
Introduction ................................................................................................................ 84
Ontology ....................................................................................................................... 85
Social constructionism .............................................................................................. 88
The body in social constructionism .......................................................................... 89
An ontology of becoming .......................................................................................... 91
Methodological effect ............................................................................................... 92
Qualitative research ................................................................................................... 94
Scaffolds and frames ................................................................................................. 95
Material Culture ....................................................................................................... 96
Constructing a new grammar .................................................................................... 98
Reflexivity in research ............................................................................................. 100
Ethnography .............................................................................................................. 105
Writing people/writing culture: ethnography ............................................................ 112
Research Methods .................................................................................................... 113
Autoethnographic methods ...................................................................................... 114
An implicated social body ........................................................................................................... 120
Visual Methodologies ............................................................................................................. 121
Participating with time, space and people .............................................................................. 123

Chapter 5: Discourse and Guidebooks ................................................................................. 127
  Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 127
  Guidebooks and performativity ......................................................................................... 128
  Narrative-performativity ...................................................................................................... 131
  Performative narratives ........................................................................................................ 133
  The literary performative ‘you’ ......................................................................................... 135
  Narrative assimilation ......................................................................................................... 139
  Words and feelings ............................................................................................................... 139
  Hypertext ............................................................................................................................. 141
  New materials/new connections ....................................................................................... 143
  Material practices of reading ............................................................................................. 144
  Beyond discourse ................................................................................................................ 149
  What exactly is the status of the guidebook as a material artefact? ................................. 152
  Note-taking in guidebooks ................................................................................................. 155
  Affective reading ................................................................................................................ 156
  Material signifiers defer meaning ...................................................................................... 159

Chapter 6 Backpacking materials and backpacking bodies .................................................... 162
  Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 162
  What is a thing? ................................................................................................................... 163
  Material histories or history of the material ....................................................................... 165
  The identity of things .......................................................................................................... 167
  Performative things ............................................................................................................. 168
  The ubiquitous backpack .................................................................................................... 169
  How are backpacks performative? ..................................................................................... 171
  Backpacks and backpackers: an intimate etymology! ....................................................... 173
  The fabric of things ............................................................................................................. 175
  Backpacks and space-time .................................................................................................. 176
  Backpacks and mobility in KSR ......................................................................................... 176
Chapter 7: Space ‘In’ Backpacking .................................................................205
  Introduction ..........................................................................................205
  A brief history of space! ................................................................................206
  Space, things and identity: material performativity in ‘KSR’ .........................208
  Backpacking enclaves .............................................................................209
  Space-time compression and backpacking spaces .......................................212
  Contested Space in KSR ..........................................................................213
  Materialised spaces ..................................................................................214
  Backpacking en masse ............................................................................218
  Material Simulacra in Khao Sarn Road .......................................................229
  The beach and the backpacker ....................................................................231
  Arriving on Koh Png Nan ...........................................................................232
  The Didgeridoo .........................................................................................233
  The material production of backpacking identity ........................................235
  Material architectures of backpacking in Thailand ......................................239
  Materials and architecture .......................................................................253

Chapter 8 Becoming-backpacker ................................................................256
  Introduction ..........................................................................................256
  Resignifying backpacking ........................................................................257
  Subjectivity revisited ...............................................................................257
  Expressions of the social .........................................................................259
  How does a poststructural logic of deconstruction frame backpacking? .......261
  ‘Allied’ expressions of the social ..............................................................262
  Researching, multiplicity and anxiety .......................................................267
  The shift to performance .........................................................................269
Chapter 9 Outcomes, Reflections and Conclusions ................................................................. 272
  Folding subject/object ........................................................................................................... 272
  On Words and things ............................................................................................................. 274
  What does ANT really do? ..................................................................................................... 277
  Backpacking research from homogeneity to heterogeneity ................................................. 281
  Spatialised identity .............................................................................................................. 283
  Backpacking identity as performative .................................................................................. 283
  Suggestions ......................................................................................................................... 285
  Oscillation and definition .................................................................................................... 288
  Viscosities and ‘gloopiness’ ............................................................................................... 288
  Backpacking Identity Constitution ..................................................................................... 290
  Backpacking identity as contingent, materialised and networked ..................................... 291

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 294
List of Tables

Table 1: Identity from a traditional and poststructuralist view .......................... 54
Table 2: Research Paradigms ............................................................................ 99
Table 3: Reflexivity in research ....................................................................... 104
List of Diagrams

Figure 1: Poststructural Critique .................................................................51
Figure 2: Domains of becoming .................................................................56
Figure 3: ANT a performative science .........................................................73
Figure 4: Map of Thailand ........................................................................107
Figure 5: The Production and Reception of Backpacking Guidebooks ........151
Figure 6: In word and deed: the socio-linguistic production of reality ........260
Figure 7: Backpacking identity performance as multiple alliance ...............263
Figure 8: Backpacking identity jigsaw .........................................................264
Figure 9: ‘Relating’ backpacking .................................................................265
Figure 10: An infinitude of heterogeneous backpacking assemblages ..........278
Photographic Material

Plate 1: Two archive pictures ‘Drifters at a Beach party in Goa 1976’ ...........................................21
Plate 2: ‘Insurance advertisement in STA travel’................................................................................35
Plate 3: Child dressed in Tribal clothing ..............................................................................................110
Plate 4: The practice of text................................................................................................................145
Plate 5: Used backpacks, guidebooks and clothes for sale .................................................................150
Plate 6: Reading practices ....................................................................................................................154
Plate 7: Steel nut ....................................................................................................................................164
Plate 8: Seashell ......................................................................................................................................164
Plate 9: Secured backpack ....................................................................................................................174
Plate 10: Avoiding local agents ...........................................................................................................174
Plate 11: Backpack badges ..................................................................................................................175
Plate 12: Backpack badges for sale .....................................................................................................178
Plate 13: Backpacker in alleyway ........................................................................................................180
Plate 14: Backpack and taxi driver .....................................................................................................180
Plate 15: Backpack, guidebook and tuc-tuc .........................................................................................181
Plate 16: ‘Backpack’ and ‘tuc-tuc’ .........................................................................................................181
Plate 17: Backpack, shops and narrow streets .....................................................................................182
Plate 18: Wheeled luggage ...................................................................................................................183
Plate 19: Backpacks and beach sand ....................................................................................................185
Plate 20: Walking with backpacks .......................................................................................................186
Plate 21: Walking to find beach-hut ......................................................................................................187
Plate 22: Waiting with backpacks ........................................................................................................188
Plate 22a Embodied performances .....................................................................................................195
Plate 23: Two flashpackers .................................................................................................................196
Plate 24: Hair Brading ........................................................................................................................199
Plate 52: Concrete structure (bathrooms) left standing .................................246
Plate 53: New resort accommodation...............................................................247
Plate 54: Older-style beach bungalow ...............................................................247
Plate 55: Basic Palm-frond beach hut .................................................................248
Plate 56: Fantasy 'Robinson Crusoe' beach-hut ............................................247
Plate 57: Corrugated roofs...............................................................................248
Plate 58: Backpacker villages..........................................................................248
Plate 59: Boutique backpacker-huts .................................................................248
Plate 60: Home-stay in Piloki, Northern Thailand .........................................267
ONTOGENESIS: The formation of ontology or ontological-ogenesis.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANT Actor-network theory
ICT Information and Communication Technology
KSR Koh Sarn Road (area in Central Bangkok comprising main pedestrianised road – KSR, and adjoining streets and alleyways)

THAI-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Soi - alley way
Farang - foreigner
Sawasdee - welcome/hello

THAI CURRENCY

1 US $ = 30 Thai Baht
(September 2013)
…If knowings gain be this and this be so, then knowing knows yet which it doth not know (William Shakespeare, *Labours Loves loss*).

**Abstract**

How are Western backpacking identities organised, constituted and performed? A scenario understood as ‘backpacker-becoming’ is described as a process in which individual backpackers are activated, that is, continually negotiated through performances which are discursive, corporeal, and materially embedded. Adopting performativity, (the production of effects through re-iteration) as a theoretical underpinning to my thesis; in the first, as a deconstructive tool, but later as a reconnective fabric, I explore how backpacking identity is ontologised, that is, brought into being. Backpacker’s are constituted in ideology and discourse, in the relations between themselves and other backpackers, yet also with the ‘things’ or ‘non-humans’ in the world that surrounds them. Backpacking is supported by an assembly of objects and material ‘things’. This includes guidebooks, luggage, clothing, souvenirs, equipment, belongings and various paraphernalia that contribute to the minutiae and sentence of this social world. Importantly these things ‘coalesce’ and ‘mean’ differently in various spaces and contexts. Hence, I am critically concerned with the performative effects of each composite realm within the performance of backpacking; discourse and ‘materialised’ bodies-in-spaces. Thus, an ontogenesis of backpacking is a study of the social lives of backpackers and their associated artefacts. In the thesis I trace the genesis of backpacking identity formation. Through this process I examine the way in which Western backpackers both reassert and resist hierarchical dualisms of self/other, tourist/traveller, West/East and alternative/mass. I present a research methodology and theoretical framework that identifies socio-cultural and material ontologisations within the contemporary performance of backpacking. My basic point is that the people and things of backpacking tourism do important social and cultural work that perform the identities of backpacking travellers. My research is methodologically underpinned with a hybrid (auto)ethnography that acknowledges my prior backpacking experience and utilises the empirical material gathered during a five
month ethnography across various locations on Thailand. This stylised, personal and performative ethnography is used to critically engage and assess ontological praxis in the social performance of backpacking. My thesis falls under the branch of tourism research concerned with tourist ontology and the wider question what constitutes particular travellers? Furthermore, I ask just how is ontology manifest in backpacking- praxis, bodies, and place? In short, I seek to address the following concerns, how is backpacking identity performed and what are the (material and semiotic) parameters within which practices of backpacking identity performance occur?

This process permits deconstruction, as a point of departure, yet to compliment a auto-ethnographic methodology, itself a mode of critical social constructionism, I (re)constitute backpacking with a politics of connectivity. In sum, I consider backpacking identity formation as a deeply performative arena. Throughout my thesis, therefore, I investigate the potential for resistance and agency, yet importantly, I reconfigure ‘agency’ as performative ability to avoid essentializing the debate. This leads to a consideration of backpacking, of one which is not just an identity, but an articulating principle for the backpacker whilst still allowing for a plurality of specific affiliations.
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First and foremost I would like to posit that this PhD has challenged me – it has undeniably been the largest project I have undertaken. I have learnt so much and yet need to question so much more. Both an autopoietic and performative exercise; I have asked myself things that I am not sure there is an answer for, and am still not sure that there ever will be. Above all, if I can reflect at this stage, I have become part of this work; on each page I co-construct and am activated by the observations, narratives and arguments presented. I can think of no other moments in my life where I have been at the same time so wonderfully occupied and deliriously distracted by the methodological and ontological concerns this thesis grapples with and forms. I have struggled at times, physically, financially, and emotionally with the pressures of performing research, writing the thesis and living far from home. Yet in this time I have developed an awareness of my excesses and limitations which have bound this PhD from its inception. I now know that these conditions have not inhibited the PhD, indeed they make the PhD what it is. Second then, but far from secondary, I would like to thank my family. I am embraced by their love, warmth and help, despite the miles that separate me and them. Mum, Dad and Daniel, and my Nan and Grandad, have been the source of encouragement in my times of doubt and my source of inspiration in its times of need. This PhD is for them as it is for me. I wish also to acknowledge my close friends in Liverpool and the UK, whom through their correspondence and visits have each given their ongoing support in different and many ways, special thanks to those individuals.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are always other ways of proceeding, other perspectives to be occupied and explored, than those contained within our history (Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion* 1995).

This ontological genesis of backpacking identities involves a study of the social lives of the researcher-as-backpacker, other backpackers and their associated artefacts. In the thesis I trace the histories of backpacking and provide an ontological genealogy of backpacking identity formation. Moreover, I present a research methodology and theoretical framework that identifies socio-cultural ontologisations within the contemporary performance of backpacking travel. When I refer to the *social* I refer to the structure and institution of social groups - class, status, horizontal and vertical divisions in society, whilst mention of the cultural refers to the associations within those social groups; the particular meanings and significance attached to the structures, the artifacts and images that, together, constitute backpacking. I ask what is, and where is, the locus of meaning and the object of understanding in backpacking identity production and maintenance? In other words, I seek to determine how meaning is generated within the performance of backpacking identity. And furthermore, how is the exchange of meaning affected by ontological convention? How do words and things have performative and agentic capacities? How does this affect backpacking identity formation? In short I ask ‘what provides backpackers with being?’ My intent is to explore how backpacking identities are organized, constituted and performed. That is, aside from any *a priori* ideological construct I want to know what keeps backpacking together, over such vast distances, different terrains, and changing environments. Broadly, the thesis engages with what constitutes backpacking identity? I do not offer another typology, nor do I necessarily define backpacking, rather I discuss the impossibility of this quest. Most importantly, I attempt to describe how backpacking identities are configured (or brought about).

Thus in the beginning I am broadly interested in constructionism; the linguistic and social construction of reality, yet am, always already, aware of its contradictions; its reductive tendencies and its limitations. I thus combine a ‘material-semiotic’ analysis of
backpacking, which still reflects on discourse, other literature and signs, but importantly resignifies their importance vis a vis material means. After these analyses I suggest that the cultural is embedded in the material; in the ‘things’ that surround backpackers. Thus, through the theoretical intervention of a particular poststructural lens (material semiotics) and advances in its associated methodologies (actor network theory) I work to collapse differences between backpacking sociality and materiality.

Thus, as I write above, rather than attempt another typology or even essentially define backpacking I intend, instead, to explore how backpacking identity is performed, and, in this process, possibly disrupt and re-position the category of backpacking itself. My study indicates that performing posthuman methodologies offers rewarding insights into tourism practices. I also explore the importance of the position of the researcher, or more specifically my own ontological arrangement and epistemological affinities. This entails critical debate that investigates power and reflexivity in the research design. Thus to begin with I acknowledge that analysing backpacker travellers albeit under a performance lens places a label on their identity that is itself potentially reductive and an oversimplification of an immensely diverse group of people. I do, however, recognise the need for purposes of clarity in academic inquiry and, subsequently for my categorical deconstruction to name, in the first instance, a group of travellers that represent both a product of and a reaction to a history of tourism practices within which backpacking has established but at the same time ignored, misunderstood, subsumed, displaced and (re)formed, and from which have tended to have been excluded from writings on ontological provision.

At this stage it is first necessary to point out that the contours of my thesis are not always laid out in lineal form, (the sequence of events of knowledge production in research) that generally goes something like this: shortcomings of former literature, theory, methods, data analysis, then interpretation, and then some definitive conclusions. Suffice to say although this ‘superstructure’ still resounds, rather, I prefer to follow a more postprocessual way of thinking, which implies a much more reflexive and nonlinear approach. Second, in order to draw attention to the embodied aspect, my own lived and recent ethnographic experience of backpacking, I use the first person ‘I’ and ‘me’, and write in my own research narratives (see Emerson et al 2011, Gough in Given 2009). This enables me to include what my own histories have done or ‘do’ to reflect on how I also constitute this research. Indeed Webb (1992) shows how writing in the third person is
incommensurate with the philosophical underpinnings of both interpretivism and critical theory, given the social nature of qualitative research (see chapter two) and the position of the researcher (see ‘performative ethnography’ chapter 4). Later Webb (1992) goes as far as saying to write qualitative research in any other way is a ‘form of deception in which the thinking of scientists does not appear, (in which the researchers) are obliterated as active agents in the construction of knowledge’ (ibid 749). Elin and Bochner (2000) further advance the voice of the first person in a discussion of autoethnographic reflexivity. This has since been more widely debated in the later works of Denzin and Lincoln (2010) and Cooper and White (2012).

There is a considerable body of literature, particularly that of critical realists, including Sayer (2000) that regard wholly discursive accounts of constructionism as dangerous in their fundamental failure to take account of an external reality, for example the qualitative inquiry advocated in the seminal works of Bergman and Luckman (1972). The tension between the discursive and the real has since been more widely debated (See Sayers 2000 and Maxwell 2012), as well as this more reflexive discursive approaches advanced, such as that of Cooper and Burnett (2009). In chapter 5 I draw attention to the textual performance of social norms and the interpretive demands expressed, by textual form and content yet also illuminate the physical presence of guidebooks; this invites further exploration of materiality in chapter 6. In this sense I engage in a methodological overlap between the sensitivity to textual performance modelled by linguistic scholars and the methods of ethnographers. I invoke as evidence, through a mix of linguistic, materialist and anthropological procedures, the traces of feelings and performance as they emanate from both text, and material artefact. My thesis thus contends with materiality in the performance of embodied text. This repositions my inquiry into the post-symbolic realm.

Abstraction may be considered a central aspect of symbolism (and ultimately its central shortcoming). In the course of the decades that have passed since the emergence of symbolism, different ways of perceiving and explaining the world have emerged. I refer to the term post-symbolic realm in its purest sense, that is, after-symbolism. In lieu of abstraction as its central shortcoming I turn to materialities (as part of broader post-symbolics) to analyse backpacking identity. The inadequacies of symbolism are clear (and further extrapolated later in this thesis); the inadequacies of modernist theory have also become increasingly apparent.
In light of this I offer an actor-network or material-semiotic (Law 2004) inspired study of backpacking discourse and materiality (where lexis and ‘things’ both act). I also critically consider corporeality, their embodiment, the articulation of backpackers’ bodies - how backpacking bodies are configured, how they articulate, contest and embody the available backpacking norms.

**Research aim**

To examine the performativity of Western backpackers in and through a reimagination of their materials, bodies and spaces.

**Research Objectives**

In order to address the fundamental research aim of this thesis, I present the following objectives.

- To identify how performance is generated in, and through, the materialities of backpacking.
- To explore the discursive processes from which Western backpacking identities emerge, and thus related to this;
- To examine the affective and performative properties of backpacking guidebooks.
- To identify the interplay of corporeal performativity and backpacking travel (How is the backpacker’s body spoken, read, affective and materialised into existence?)

Through these objectives my intent is to explore how the performance of Western backpacking identities are organized, constituted and performed in Thailand. That is, as well as *a priori* ideological construction I examine how Western backpackers are ontologised, over such vast distances, different terrains, and changing environments. Through this process I also examine the way in which Western backpackers both reassert and resist hierarchical dualisms of self/other, tourist/traveller, West/East and alternative/mass. Ultimately I want to know ‘what constitutes backpacking identities?’ I do not offer another typology, nor do I necessarily define backpacking, rather I discuss the impossibility of this quest. Most importantly, I attempt to describe how backpacking identity is configured (or brought about). This itself necessitates a tracing of the concept
of identity, from its modern roots located in the fixivity of self, to its postructural plurality – *identities*, or *identifications*; its subsequent implosion – *there is no coherent notion of identity*, and then its reconfiguration as Deleuzian *multiplicity*.

**Chapter Outlines**

While chapter one provides an introduction, chapter two *Backpacking ‘In’ Tourism: A literature review* frames my thesis and introduces my key areas of concern that I develop in later chapters. I include an overview of the tourism studies, and other literature from which my argument is constructed. I also refer to recent approaches in tourism studies that exhibit a critical reading of phenomena that engages with the epistemological, ontological and methodological regimen of the social world (Tribe 2005, Morgan and Pritchard 2007). To contribute to this critical turn, I configure my research on backpacking identity in a performative operation of re-iterative ontological practices.

In chapters three and four I present the theoretical and methodological scaffold that supports my thesis. I posit that a poststructural version of semiotics lends valuable insights into backpacking identity research. Structuralism introduced its own methodology built around the dichotomies of signified and signifier, and so on. But rather than negating this apparatus, post-structuralism explores the paradoxes behind these dichotomies and overcomes them by undermining the first concept of each pair, that is, their separation. This change of perspective (from structural to postructural semiotics) engages the material, processual, and intertextual character of signs as well as the embodied manner of interpreting reality itself. Indeed Posner (2011) argues that through the rejection of ‘rigidly fixed methods as well as general theories, and waiving the distinction between object-signs and meta-signs in favor of their joint reflection, post-structuralist semiotics becomes an alternative to conventional practices of academic sign analysis…’ (ibid 9). Thus a postructural semiotic approach not only strengthens the interest in the material, processual and relational character of reality but calls for a focus on the ‘sensousity’ of interpretation. In chapter four I introduce an alternative methodological approach to backpacking studies with my application of actor-network theory (ANT) and
performativity. ANT is employed to organise the complex ontological processes involved in the development and performance of backpacker identity. I use theoretical developments in performativity to describe how identifications in words and things act. Thus chapter three demonstrates how ANT provides a useful framework for engaging with foundational questions regarding the role of different domains of reality in backpacking travel. Thus I enter into my thesis by constructing four broad areas that together constitute the backpacking social network of identity; discourse, materiality, corporeality and space. I discuss the concept of translation, a step which, I argue, is necessary in order to redirect analytic attention to the processes through which claims about reality are transformed into relations between these domains, people and their artifacts.

My main argument in chapter five rests upon the notion that travel guidebooks are performative. Specifically concerned with the social performance of backpacking guidebooks I explore how backpacking identity construction is produced in relation with the guidebook. I examine how backpacking guidebooks mediate, shift and perform backpacking identity. I also confront the paradox of the guidebook as a meta-narrative in late modern times; purportedly an era that encourages the development of differentiated, individualised and diverse forms of identity. To this end I therefore question the function of hypertext in the production of a postmodern aesthetic. Drawing from material collected during my ethnography of backpacking and the wider contribution from the theoretical development of performativity I illustrate critical interactions between backpacking and guidebooks and outline their narrative and material performance. Thus first my thesis enters into the literary and discursive world of the guidebook in which the uncertainties of travel are made unshakably certain. One function of literature is to show things as they are. Another function is to show things in their ideal. Guidebooks excel at this. And second, by attending to the very ‘real, material effects of using guidebooks. Hence much of chapter five details the various performative elements of backpacker guidebooks and makes important suggestions over how these books ‘do’ things. My inquiry thus embodies the paradox of material culture needing to know objects intimately whilst organising them in and through cultures (and the related intrinsic versus relational debate) which ANT (Actor Network Theory) collapses into hybridity.
In chapter six ‘Backpacking materials and backpacking bodies’ I then set out to explore how the former attention to words also connects to material practices; the cultural work of the guidebook and the backpack, for instance, now becomes a matter of the relation between the structures of language, the material environment and embodied sociality. Thus in chapter six I explore the complexity of the material and embodied world of backpacking travel. Studies in materiality explore the relationship between artifacts’ and social relations, see Millers early work (1987) and his later contributions (1998, 2005) as well as Carlille et al’s (2013) edited collection of works. Materiality can be said to engender a historicisation of the exclusively ‘narrated subject’ (discussed in chapter five) in ways that take account of the determining power of language but without losing sight of the significance of material and corporeal realities. Chapter six then illustrates specific corporeal identifications adjoining the material-semiotics of backpacking ontological production to studies of corporeality which then form the subject of further discussion and analysis for chapters seven and eight. In the section on ‘The body in backpacking’ I continue to highlight the tension between the discursive and the material, and present other ways to think about the interface between inscripional and corporeal backpacking practices. The core questions I raise in this chapter revolve around the various articulations of backpacker bodies, through and ‘in’ things and spaces, and then consider how the material cultures of these spaces intersect with the backpacker body in becoming.

In chapter seven, ‘Space In Backpacking’ Khao Sarn Road (KSR), a backpacking mecca in Bangkok, Thailand, and beach locations in island of Koh Pnang Nan in Southern Thailand are depicted as some of the many sites for the production and consumption of backpacking identity. I discuss the materiality of space through its relational properties because such work really calls for a reconfiguration of space with a material methodology, in a way that is appropriate for an analysis of backpacking artefacts in situ. First, I question the way cultural performance creates material culture. This involves a dynamic investigation between humans and things in their environment to understand the incidental products as well as intentional products of cultural activity. Second, I am concerned with the definition of material culture for an analysis of spatial dimensions. To this end I follow James Deetz’s (1977, 1996) understanding of material culture, which emphasizes that material changes reflect how physical environments are modified through culturally determined behaviour. Along with Karen Barad (2013) and Gilles Deleuzes (1996) more
explicitly (actor) networked provocations of the spatio-temporal material. The third reformulation involves the ways the backpacker’s body intersects with the landscape by enacting embodied response to the material world (a backpacking kinesics). In sum I contend that attention to the experiences of bodies in space can assist in illustrating the complex, discontinuous network of actions and responses that shape that same space. I uphold an interdisciplinary approach through a brief historical analysis of KSR, drawing from materialist philosophy, spatial ordering and social discipline. Importantly I ask whether this approach is a better way to consider the space of enclaves than those that risk imposing the chronologically fabricated architecture of the place-culture. I also address the role of empirical evidence in this reconfigured approach and thus raise important questions about the status and methodology of material culture studies. The chapter illustrates how backpacking spaces such as KSR and the beach spaces of Koh Phang Nan in southern Thailand are interactive productive ‘doings’ of Deleuzian ‘becoming’. I therefore, necessarily branch into spatial aspects of poststructuralism and material semiotics.

In chapter eight ‘Becoming-backpacker’ I reflect on each of the different performative domains; discourse, materiality, space and the body, on their relative performativities. Among other observations I suggest that one of these domains figuratively and historically inhabits a realm typically beneath discourse; this ironically elusive layer is the material realm. I return to methodology and concur that this domain is often hard to see precisely because of the lack of methodological apparatus to see with. Beyond important reflections on the performance of my three other domains (‘discourse’, ‘space’ and ‘the body’), I contend that materiality is fantastically performative, a result in part of it being an ever present modus operandi, perhaps even more than space [for materiality gives space form, discourse is inscribed and the body is materialised] and the effects on backpacking, I argue are far reaching.

In the concluding chapter nine ‘Outcomes, reflections and conclusions’ I contend that backpacking travel is neither a straightforward act of intention, nor narratologically determined, but involves a complex performance incorporating language and body, self/other, place and thing. I argue that the chapters of my thesis search to make a modest contribution to an expansive body of theory by rephrasing the question how the
multiplicity of the subject is practiced into what kinds of procedures exist (in language, materials and place) that transcend the tension between subject-multiplicity and subject-positioning and accounts for an active production of backpacking realities. Thus I ask what is backpacking travel, if not, another domain for philosophising different modes of being and displacement? I enter an ontological debate on the trajectory of identifications, for narrating and theorizing in a poststructural world of ‘becoming’. Representations are a fundamental mechanism in the relationship to reality. Is it possible, I ask, to get beyond a representation; a universal? Is representation an inescapable mode of understanding? From pictures, models, images and (rigid) theory - to ‘being”? I then reflect on the nature of tourism studies, in general. Is it a range of practices for ‘relating’ the self in a contested space which does not belong to anybody; a form of denial, an exploration ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ as opposed to one of ‘other’: an engagement in multiplicity? I end the thesis with a return to the ‘real’. Amidst this age of the ‘post’ it can be said we have become post-theoretical, that is, because of the multiplicity of theories for analysis of any given aspect of the social we have too many to choose from and because of this postmodern cache of a multitude of theories - no one theory (in a postmodern sense) need (or can) be applied alone (see also Beyers 2005). And certainly no one theory may be applied without deconstruction of its methods. That is what I mean by post-theoretical. Ultimately I provide a post-theoretical vision of backpacking identity performance deconstructed to its etymological roots, yet then connected with a twenty-first century signature of posthuman difference.
Chapter 2: Backpacking ‘In’ Tourism: A Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter traces the histories of backpacking tourism and backpacking research. In order to do so I first turn to etymology - the study of the origin of linguistic forms. An important interpretation of tourism lies in its etymological analysis. It should be said, however, that I vehemently believe that the meaning of words lies not exclusively in their history but predominantly in their use. I thus subscribe to etymology only as a point of departure. Moreover, when I use this as an analytic frame for my thesis it is done so as etymology with a performative twist.

The word ‘tour’ originates from Ancient Greece – a ‘torno’ (or tornos in Latin) is a tool used to crush grain that moved in a circular way. The word then developed into the French verb ‘tourner’; to turn or shift. To go away, and come back. The use of the word ‘tour’, meaning to travel from place to place in a circular mode, was first noted in Seventeenth century Europe. The use of the word ‘tourist’ appeared around this time and the word ‘tourism’ soon after (Hunt and Layne 1991).

...the word tour was more closely associated with the idea of a voyage …or a circuit, as in the case of a theatrical tour, than with the idea of an individual being temporarily away from home for pleasure purposes which is such a significant feature of the use of the word tourist today (Burkart and Medlick 1974 in Hunt and Layne 1991).

Significantly, the words ‘tourism’ and the connotations of the word ‘performance’ have conceptual affinities; both fabricate and dramatise, both have a beginning and an end, both imply a change of the state of current being, and can be said to involve a series of acts that constitute meaning. The word ‘travel’, however, is from the French ‘travaille’, meaning ‘work’; not play or entertainment, it is quite the antithesis. Daniel Boorstin (1961) has argued that this came about because, at one time, ‘traveling,’ involved working: in terms of actual labour and learning the language and local customs. Boorstin contrasts this with
‘tourism’ which does not entail any work the tourist’s part. This etymological historicism continues to polarise the ‘traveller’ and the ‘tourist’ today. It conceptually fractures and dichotomises tourism and travelling. Further to this it has encouraged the (disciplinary) creation of incessant typologies. Franklin and Crang (2003:156) are critical of this ‘obsession with taxonomies’ in tourism research, but also admit ‘as yet, tourist studies have not come to terms with the continual oscillation around the poles of traveller and tourist’.

**Tourism epistemology**

Colonising, gendered, sexual, national and (hetero) normative agendas constitute the history and experience of tourism. Tourism research is guilty of the same ontological and epistemological affliction. According to Foucault any epistemology is a regime of power (ibid 1980). It is with reference to these above concerns, that Botteril (2001) claims that tourism research is imbued with assumptions that are seldom made explicit. He writes:

> The assumed normality of positivistic epistemology in tourism research is, it is argued, unhelpful to the development of the field. That the more complex and difficult matter of the underlying assumptions upon which positivism is premised – the nature of reality (the ontological question) and the way of knowing (the epistemological question) – are rarely articulated can be construed as a potentially serious flaw (Botterril 2001:199).

Throughout my thesis I wish to challenge the silence of tourism research. Moreover I intend to speak and ‘undo’ some institutional epistemological and ontological histories, as well as my own. Contemporary travel is regularly framed within the modern tension between the centre and the periphery, a universe in which transformations of global culture are reinscribed in certain terms. ‘Who defines this present from which we speak?’ asks Homi Bhabha (1994:244) in reference to the oscillation, specific to modernity, between what he calls the performative and the pedagogical. In order to make sense of this statement it is first necessary to take a brief historical sojourn into the rise of tourism studies. Tourism has, in the past, been described as a discrete activity, one that occurs in a
distant location - another place, elsewhere even. This results in studies of a specialist consumer product, Franklin and Crang (2001), for example, whom, among others argue that such interpretations lead to a critical misunderstanding of tourism. Tourisms polarization of home and away, translated otherwise as the ‘security of the familiar’ and the ‘adventure of the strange’, is an illusion. Tourism is really a substitute for the absent ‘real’ thing: the simulacra of being home when you are away. In other words tourism is the epistemological fantasy of knowing a place when, in reality, tourism (the tourist) always struggles to know what it is to ‘be’ and dwell in that place. Under the theoretical jurisdiction of structuralism notions of tourism have been based on distinctions between home/away, everyday/holiday, real/fake, work/leisure, tourist/host. Crucially, these oppositions no longer apply the way they once did (Franklin 2003). Thus structural accounts of tourism are limiting. Among a myriad of serious implications there is the key problem of ‘tourist centric’ models - the focus on the subject; the tourist, and not the social cultural and political environment or fabric (the world they tour and the networks) that construct and constitute tourism. Structuralism too easily dismisses processes in its endeavour to bracket tourism, people and their associated identities. In order to explore the situated performance of tourism I look beyond structuralism into poststructuralism, indeed favoring the rise of a material posthuman dawn.

Before I move forward I want to draw out some important developments in tourism studies. First, with respect to sociological perspectives I celebrate Chris Rojek’s (1995) contributions especially in his book Decentring Leisure where leisure activity is seen as a central component of capitalism (not something enjoyed only after work). Importantly he considers the blurring of boundaries between work and play, this has particular resonance for studies of backpacking travellers – whom often work, travel, rest and play, with much emphasis on the latter. In historical overview sociological and anthropological tourism research has been produced by (along with a whole host of many others, and now with an increasing portion of postcolonial and previously ‘silenced’ authors - those reclaiming epistemological space including women, minority groups, for example, writers concerned with disabilities and tourist spaces, sexuality and tourist spaces, and non-Western, and ‘local’ authors). Among many others, of course, and highlighted elsewhere in this thesis, Dean MacCannell (1976), Erik Cohen (1973, 1985, 2004a, 2004b), Graham Dann (1989, 1996a, 1996b) Tim Edensor (2000a, 2000b), Tom Selwyn (1996), Ning Wang (2000), John Urry (1996), Hazel Tucker (2003, 2004), Hazel Tucker and C.M Hall (2004), Adrian
Franklin (2005), Irena Atelyevic and Stephen Doone (2000, 2002, 2005a, 2005b), Keith Hollinshead (1999, 2004), David Crouch (2004), John Tribe (1997, 2001, 2004, 2005) have each offered unique contributions to the development of tourism studies and tourism epistemology. I later expand on how this (epistemological) base of tourisms knowing continues to diversify and include different authors and, therefore, in turn - new epistemological platforms. In MacCannels seminal work The Tourist (1976) the idea behind his notion of the tourist is premised on structural opposites and, of course, the quest for authenticity. Urry (1990) adds much weight to the authenticity argument and introduces his concept of the post-tourist; one who revels in the inauthenticity of the experience. Urry’s works The Tourist Gaze (1990) and Touring Cultures 1993 (with Chris Rojek) re-articulate earlier concepts of authenticity as a key motivating feature of mobility. Urry examines mobilities in terms of experience of time, space, dwelling and citizenship. Crucially, however, this earlier work is based on structuralist underpinnings; the binary division between the ordinary and the extra-ordinary. Thus much research since focusses on the effects or the impacts of tourism, rather than processes, or networks. Foucauldian ocularcentricity has meant that much tourism research has been organised around the gaze, which is conceptually visual and arguably, therefore, denies the situatedness of tourism phenomena. Indeed critical tourism studies have since noted that insufficient attention is paid to the lived experience and practice of tourism.

I am positively encouraged by the idea of the social world ‘doing’ things, that is, the discovery of the world not just as symbolic backdrop (in which tourists somehow walk freely in) but an innovative world which performs tourists, and is performed by tourists (see Crouch 2000). Barbara Kirchenblatt Gimblett (1998) brings performance to the study of leisure and tourism, when she describes how places and people both perform and are engaged in tourism (see Adrian Franklin’s 2001 interview published in Tourist Studies). Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1998) is also widely known for her contributions to discussions of tourism heritage. She illustrates how and why the past is commodified and represented through tourism. Among other things, she explains how the quest for authenticity is often located in representations of the past; in the explosion of heritage sites around the world and the associated ‘muting’ of culture.

Thus with these conceptual developments made in tourism and into tourism studiens, I move forward and continue to frame my study. I shift from the symbolic registry of
research and into the performative. I do not portray the tourist only as ‘sightseer’ or as consumer (visually consuming places through ‘gazing’ at sites and people, subscribing/succumbing to texts and signs). Instead I follow an understanding of the tourist and tourism as a dynamic and multi-facted ‘doing’. In short: a ‘performance’.

Denzin and Lincoln (2004) trace paradigmatic developments in social science research and summarise these, respectively, as the predominance of positivism, modernism, blurred genres, the crisis in representation, the end of grand narratives, post-experimental and the future. In the latter two phases, the social is comprised of only stories yet to be constructed. Denzin and Lincoln’s framework of social research points to the performative phase, in the latter of their seven moments. Importantly these moments are not necessarily chronological; they overlap and co-exist. Indeed such a geneology is socially constructed and quasi-historical (Andrews, Mason and Silk 2005). It is only in recent years that scholars such as Adrian Franklin (2003), Daniel Miller (1998, 2005) and Tim Dant (1998, 1999, 2004) have begun to talk of the performative nature of material things in the context of leisure and tourism; that the surrounding world performs. Thus, as part of the broader relational turn in ontology (the argument that the essence and existence of entities are best understood as the temporary results of interconnecting relations), I seek to describe how travel is not an isolated exotic island but a set of social and material relations connecting and reconnecting people, tourists, places and things.

The chapters of my thesis represent key aspects of this shift. I depart, therefore, from a solely semiotic operation and move into the analytical realm of tourism’s ‘doing’. By nature and necessity this also involves a shift from the ocularcentric (the visual focus) to a performative lens, where it also follows to deconstruct this ‘doing’ of tourism. Yet rather than sever all ties with the semiotic my thesis hybridises the symbolic and the constitutive. It accounts for ‘semiotic experience’ as well as ‘networked becoming’, among other areas this involves a consideration of the embodied practice of ‘being in a place’. Thus in chapters 6, 7 and 8 - I address these aspects in localised studies of backpacking materiality, spaces and ‘the body’, respectively. In sum, my thesis sees backpacking tourism as embedded within social networks, and critically these networks are comprised of people, discourse and things, and always in space – of course.
The development of backpacking research: chasing a chimera?

What do I know about backpacking travel? And more importantly how can we know about backpacking travel? What does it mean to know about something that, always and already, lies before me, morphing, shifting; changing in ways unprecedented or unexpected? In this section I would like to clarify some preliminary points. First, in my inquiry, the primary orientation is ontological. This said my thesis has real methodological impact and will lend itself to other research regarding identity politics and performance studies. Second, the general tourism approach is essentially interdisciplinary (see also Tribe 1997). Further to this, I wish, also, to pose the question of what discipline should deal with the backpacking phenomenon. Quite obviously most of the work in this area has been carried out in the framework of tourism studies. However, the fact that there are multiple epistemological bases gives rise to debate on the problem whether tourism is exclusively competent to deal them all. For example, is tourism or critical tourism studies the best discipline to explore backpacking ontology? The discussion is somewhat redundant, since modern theories of the social cannot be conceived of as separate from general ontological analysis. Thus among others this research subsumes philosophy, literary analysis, cultural studies, human geography, and anthropology as approaches to the broader topic of backpacking culture, as well as to the thesis itself. For example, due to the fact that the backpacker guidebook is at one and the same time a textual artefact and a material object I cannot, in the first, attempt a deconstruction of backpacking ontology solely in terms of linguistic theory. Yet, the guidebooks specific characteristics as text however (as opposed to spoken language) and moreover as a literary text with fictional possibilities necessitate its discussion in terms of literary theory, especially through the lens of the linguistic performative. In order to study the enfolding convolutions of text and performance communicative semiosis (symbolism) as well as material semiotics, must be taken as intimately engaged. Yet, as I mention above the guidebook is also a material object; it is also read and unfolds (literally) in material conditions. Moreover, just as backpacking research may derive much benefit from a theory of linguistics so may the reductionist tendencies of literary theories do from the accompaniment of theories other than the semiotic. I spent much time deliberating over which theory, indeed which methodological framework could allow for such a plurality of allegiance whilst maintaining an integrity and clarity for the purpose of research, writing and my analysis.
In short I need a postmodern logic that would account for the diversity I envisaged. To this end a posthuman critical social constructionism is applied.

The starting premise of my thesis hinges on the essentialising debate between backpacker and tourist, and should be taken as such. It appears that a basic dichotomy underlies it, but this is not the intention. The supposed dichotomy is historicised, and moreover deconstructed. I point to the distinction between backpacker and tourist. Thus, instead of starting with a distinction and ending up with an assortment of deconstructions that deny there is a distinction, I want to start without any real ontological dichotomy and construct in material semiotic fashion a possible *networked construction* for the performance of backpacking and importantly *then* begin its critical deconstruction. Studies of ontology often tend to distinguish identity almost exclusively with a range of cultural tools for ‘becoming’ (a sort of enculturation that never quite happens). I take culture as the combination of practices and rituals that shifts and translates identity difference. Geertz proposes that culture functions as a ‘set of control mechanisms . . . for governing behavior’ (1973:44). It is manifested through visual symbols embedded in gestures, ceremonies, rituals and material artefacts situated in constructed and natural environments (Ruby 2005). This latter observation leads my writing on to a necessary (albeit only initial) introduction to Actor-network theory (ANT) as proposed by Law (1993) or abbreviated to AT – where the emphasis as demonstrated through the different acronym AT lies on the actor/actant and not the network, as espoused later by Latour, 1997). Actor-network theory or AT, as Bruno Latour explains is concerned with the ‘attribution of human, unhuman, nonhuman, inhuman, characteristics; the distribution of properties among these entities; the connections established between them; the circulation entailed by these attributions, distributions and connections; the transformation of those attributions, distributions and connections, of the many elements that circulates and of the few ways through which they are sent (ibid 1997:7).’

I would like to emphasize, that through an actor-network approach, the theory (also an ontology and methodology) adopted for this thesis, it is more rewarding to think of backpacking culture or any socio-semiotic system as the *network* that holds all of the factors together in *relation*. It is therefore less a cultural approach to backpacking and more strictly a *relational* approach to the analysis of backpacking culture. Thus, whilst the nature, dimensions, and specific tools of the network certainly determine the nature of
backpacker travel in the socio-cultural environment, it is not the network itself which determines these features. Rather, it is the interaction in and between the various factors of becoming (the material-semiotic features of backpacking) within the network that resolve the ontological features of backpacking. Fundamentally then, I am concerned with the exchange between the various artefacts involved. The backpacking network, therefore, is not locked or static. In this sense the ontological network of backpacking is better understood as a collective of entities – related but not exclusive or exclusionary. Ontological genesis is thus conceived of as an act of intervention, either by one of the entities into the lives of other entities in that network. Hence, it entails the introduction of change into the present situation.

Taxonomies, hierarchies, systems and structure represent the instinctive vocabulary of institutionalised thought in its subordination of movement and transformation (Cooper 2005:108).

Bruno Latour (1993) suggests the need to classify, order, and in particular dichotomise, is a key characteristic of modernity which creates ‘two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of nonhumans on the other’ (ibid 1993:10). It creates ‘a partition between a natural world that has always been there, a society with predictable and stable interests and stakes, and a discourse that is independent of both reference and society’(ibid 1993:11). Following Latour’s lead I do not wish to seek out another typology of backpacking; I wish to explore how backpacking identity is constructed – these are two different quests. However, in order to reflect on possible formations of identity I do, however, need a substantive understanding on how backpacking has been, and is currently conceptualised in both popular and academic terms.

Travel has always been captured in the literary imaginary. Indeed the roots of modern tourism are can be found in European Romanticism. Among this literary trope authors like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron, all capture the freedom that threatened to suffocate under the reality of the new industrial development on a scale unprecedented. The imagination of these authors reflects a societal concern at the time; the need to reclaim that which was seen as lost. In other words, the romantic isits transfigured freedom, social
idealism and removed it into a realm of the imagination, until it reappeared in the discovery of nature, history, and primitive utopias. Ideas on the way the world can be seen through tourism, pristine landscapes (see backpacking novel by Alex Garland *The Beach*, 1997) and romantic nostalgia, for example have since remained the models of modern tourism:

Tourism is thus nothing other than the attempt to realize the dream that Romanticism projected onto the distant and far away. To the degree that bourgeois society closed itself, the bourgeois tried to escape from it - as tourist. Flight from the self-created reality was facilitated by the very means of communication with which reality had shaped itself. There is more to the feverish enthusiasm with which the English railroadswere constructed in the 1830s and 40s than merely the speculative zeal of the capitalists. Railroad mania betrays the ardent desire to escape from the working and living conditions of the industrial revolution. But the network of the railroad system destroyed the very freedom it seemed to create: tourism had thought of the net as a liberation, but knitting this net ever more tightly, society closed in again. Just like the fairy tale in which the tortoise awaits the panting hare, tourism is always outrun by its refutation. This dialectic is the driving force of its very development: far from resigning and giving up the struggle at the cost of freedom, tourism redoubles its efforts after each defeat (Enzensberger 1996:126).

The idea that tourism refutes itself is well established. This said my thesis makes an early departure from the nihilism of the romantic period and certainly challenges the modernism of romantic understandings of travel, travel literature and travel identities:

The tourist made no attempt to fit in; he rather accepts a specific social role: that of foreigner. In so doing he shows himself comfortable with his own culture, which is strong enough to sustain him even in his temporary position as an outsider. I am at home elsewhere, he says; therefore you will accept the fact that I am different, as I enjoy the fact that you are different. The greater the difference, the more the journey is worth the trip and the
more worth collecting are the images, memories, and souvenirs that the tourist takes home with him (Redfield 1985:100).

Grand tours were journeys for the upper classes of Europeans and largely for men (Towner 1985). They often lasted for over a year and made cultural, educational and leisurely pursuit of the adventure (Graburn and Jafari 1991, Oreilly 2006). Upon return home the tourists were subject to inference of status (Adler 1985, Locker-Murphy and Pearce 1995), something akin to the more contemporary Western middle class anxiety of ‘keeping up with the Jones’s. In the nineteenth century tours by younger, less privileged travellers facilitated the expansion of cheap accommodation across Europe. Indeed, the founding of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) marked the establishment of the first ‘youth branded’ hostels to set-up in Europe. They supplied affordable accommodation; a way of socialising and the beginnings of organised budget travelling. These organisations set the benchmark for other budget travel enterprises to provide competitive rates and realistically priced accommodation (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). Thus the Grand Tour is often seen as the precursor for the style of travel for contemporary tourism.

**Backpacking studies**

Backpacking travel is a social and cultural phenomenon. The beginning of backpacking travel is difficult to historically pinpoint, indeed I believe the task itself is flawed; as a travelling style backpacking is emergent and peculiar to the conditions in which it is produced. However, a key operation in this literature review and my thesis is to trace the etymological and performative histories of backpacking as a mode of travel. Thus, to begin, Western notions of backpacking travel: overseas, privileged and for fairly long periods of time (longer that is than which is normally afforded by statutory holidays) can be traced back to the Grand Tours in Europe of the 17th and 18th centuries (Adler 1985, Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, Cohen 2004).

Atelyevic and Doorne (2004) identify three historical trends in the formation of backpacking research. First, in the 1970’s there was a focus on the tourist and notions of freedom, exploration and escape, probably best encapsulated by Cohen’s drifter travellers.
They describe the second phase as a shift from the periphery to the mainstream, where backpacking was typologised, primarily for market means. This stage is significantly marked by economic and management vocabulary. The third phase, of which we are now part, is summed up by Ateljevic and Doorne as a domain of ‘theoretical hybridity’ (ibid 2008:250). Thus backpacking can now be articulated, configured and approached under the broad umbrella of postmodernity. In this contemporary phase a myriad of research agendas and disciplinary perspectives have the potential to add richness and detail to the backpacking phenomena. It is characterised by a growing diversity in research that celebrates difference in the backpacking experience rather than homogeneity (see, for example, Teo and Leong’s 2007 postcolonial analysis, Maoz’s 2005 interpretative profile of older, female Israeli backpackers, Tetsuya’s 2009 non-Western account of backpacking in Asia). In short the idea has been to *widet the perspective* in backpacking research (Richards and Wilson 2004). In the section beneath I elaborate further on these key phases.

The study of a distinct sub-discipline of backpacking tourism began ‘when Cohen (1972) differentiated between non-institutionalised tourists and their institutionalised counterparts’ (Uriely, Yonay and Simchai 2002:520). This initial dichotomy has essentially organised backpacking research over the past thirty-five years, despite the fact that Cohen himself recognised serious ambiguity in categorical distinction for the tourist. In the early 1970’s he asserts there is ‘no sharp transition from membership to non-membership’ (1972:528). More recently Wilson and Richards (2004) show in their review of backpacking literature, *The Global Nomad*, there was relatively little attention paid to backpacking until the late 1980’s. A result perhaps, because the original backpackers were seen as nomads or ‘drifters’ on the edges of both society and the tourism industry (Cohen 1973). Back in the 1970’s Vogt (1976) referred to youth travellers ‘wanderers’. He follows Cohen’s earlier typology yet prefers the use of this term rather than the more stigmatising phrase ‘drifters’. There is further discussion of backpacking travel in Cohen’s (1984) work and also in this period a number of other small-scale case-studies by independent consultants and government bodies appeared [and continue to do so]. Riley (1988) defines the term budget traveller, and perhaps marks the first of several ‘culturally’ aligned analyses of backpacking travel and backpacking identity.
Pearce (1990) declares backpacking tourists demonstrate a preference for budget accommodation, a flexible travel itinerary and longer rather than shorter holidays. This has since been rebuted by other tourism researchers as it too easily dismisses heterogeneity in the backpacking mix (Uriely 2005) and like many typologies the explicit categorisation brackets some people and denies others. Sorenson has since defined backpacking travel as ‘self organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extended beyond which it is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern’ (ibid 2003: 851). This representation is also reflected in popular culture, the public sphere and in other ethnographic studies (Elisrud 2001, Noy 2003).

Plate 2: Two archive pictures ‘Drifters at a Beach party in Goa 1976’

The term backpacker was created originally as ‘a description less derogatory than ‘drifter’ and more succinct than ‘budget traveller’” (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000:131). Indeed, recently scholars have drawn attention to the changing nature of backpacker tourism (Sorenson 2003, Jarvis 2004, Hottola 2007). Sorenson (2003) and Jarvis (2004) both report a growing trend for shorter backpacking experiences whilst Kanning (2006) points toward a distinct style within backpacking, referred to as flashpacking (see chapter 8). In the past backpacking has been viewed, socially, as something quite unusual, yet nowadays is often construed as a ‘rite de passage’ (Richards and Wilson 2004). From ‘drifter’ to ‘independent mass tourist’, ‘explorer’ to ‘sanitized tourism alternative’ (Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003) backpackers are referred to with many different names; budget travellers (O’Reilly 1996) ‘long-term travellers’ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000), they are also popularly framed under various other labels including ‘eco-tourists’ (Wearing 2002), ‘anti-tourists’ (Shepherd 2003), ‘non-tourists’ in popular media, ‘neo-nomads’ (D’Andrea
As Hottala states the ‘validity of the drifter past’ (ibid 2005:411) is now up for question. Indeed, various other foundational attempts at characterisation like spiritual growth are also queried in today’s self-oriented consumerist backpacking culture – see my work in chapter 8. Party ing and hedonistic consumption are certainly visible, perhaps has always been visible – but understood or interpreted differently. Backpacking understanding has hitherto based itself upon the level of planning involved, budgets saved and spent, age of travellers, consumption habits, and information sources used (Loker, Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai, 2002).

A rich and detailed field of backpacking literature has appeared in recent years. This includes a diversifying array of topic areas, including narrative and identity (Noy 2003), the changing nature of, (Hottola 2002); local interactions, (Huxley 2002), (Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003); culture, (Riley 1988, Sorenson 2003) (Gibson and Connel 2003); traveller-tourist dichotomy, (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003); contribution to third world development, (Spreitzhofer 1998); backpacking performance and identity (Shaffer 2004, Ateljevic and Doorne 2005, Wilson and Richards 2004). There have been considerable efforts to ‘make sense’ of backpacking travellers under the broad school of symbolic interactionism. Welk (2004), for example, argues that backpackers construct their disassociation from tourists along symbolic lines. There are particular implications associated with this sort of analytical lens (see chapter 3 ‘symbolism’). Of fastidious importance to this approach is the extent to which individuals seek symbolic information (that which indicates value through signs) and this is seen as prior, or substitute, to their performance. Olivia Jenkins (2003) explores evidence for a ‘hermeneutic circle’ within a backpacking/media image apparatus; where backpacker’s reproduce the images of destinations in their personal photographs. Both the images projected to backpacker tourists as well as their own photography are found to be part of a cultural ‘circle of representation’ or a ‘spiral of representation’ (ibid 2003) through which iconic images of place (Jenkins focuses on backpackers in Australia) are perpetuated. Jenkins ascertains the pervasive power and cyclical energies of imagery in backpacking culture (and wider media systems) and does so within the parameters of an ocular and signifying approach, the article eludes to the affective (but does not engage in this) in the sense that our passions and desires are channelled in and through images, but the article does not (but nor does it intend to) analyse the material energies of backpacking literature (the brochure, in this
instance). Thus although it is claimed (later in this thesis) that backpacking imagery is materially affective, this is not Jenkins (2003) focus and thus her contribution, though revealing and innovative, does not take into account the materially affective or sensuous dimensions of backpacking cultural production (see later chapters for discussion).

Dann’s analysis of the nature of photographs in travel brochures (1996), and Cohen’s interpretation of the language used in promoting trekking in Thailand, (1989) represent definitive examples of the variety of approaches to the semiotic study of tourism promotion as does Selwyn’s (1993) critique of the ‘multi-faceted’ nature of texts in brochures. Elsewhere Palmer (1999) explores national symbols of identity, in the UK and heritage tourism. Urry’s identity work is also premised on the visual:

Identity almost everywhere has to be produced partly out of the images constructed or reproduced for tourists, including the image of being a place…which is on the global tourist map (Urry 1994:90-91).

The collective effect of such studies is the recognition of the legacy of symbols (and structuralism). Making an early departure from the ocular Pritchard (2000) demonstrates that tourists are not passive recipients of images but are themselves products of particular cultural systems and share common ontologies with the tourism industry. Ultimately, I wish to transcend the ocular in order to confront ontological relativism, difference, and performativity with the concept of posthumanism - the deconstruction of the human condition by critical theorists to a networking semiosis that is based on its interpretive means (Hayles 1999). Implicit throughout my research, therefore, lays the broader philosophical tension between Lyotard’s (1984) avowed explosion of the meta-narrative and posthumanisms call for the return of the real (Hayles 1999).

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) in a study of Israeli backpackers seek to distinguish analytically between ‘backpacking’ as a specific form of non-institutionalised tourism and ‘backpackers’ as a group that attribute distinctive meanings to travel. They suggest that backpackers constitute a heterogeneous group in terms of diversity in the rationales and the meanings attached to their travel experiences. They agree that some backpackers do display an attachment to non-institutionalised modes of travel, which is central to their self-identification as backpackers (see also Adkins and Grant 2007). In a more conceptual
way however, it could be, as Hampton (2010) argues that there may well be a remnant of these types of non-institutionalised backpackers who appear to inhabit a binary construction (that is they eschew more institutionalized modes of travel) versus what could now be called mass backpackers.

In a more recent book chapter entitled ‘Deconstructing backpacking’ Uriely (in Woodside and Martin 2008) reconfigures the ‘type and form’ analysis and explains that backpacking can be further segmented by the meanings that backpackers associate with their tourist experiences. Theoretically this constitutes a symbolic deconstruction of meaning, not Derridean deconstruction. Uriely (2008) questions the validity of former backpacking typologies yet does so through a re-deployment of categorical essentialism.

Forms refer to visible institutional arrangements and practices by which tourists organize their journey: length of trip, flexibility of the itinerary, visited destinations and attractions, means of transportation and accommodation, contact with locals, and so forth. Types refer to less tangible psychological attributes, such as tourists’ attitudes toward fundamental values of their own society, their motivations for travel, and the meanings they assign to their experiences (Uriely 2002:521).

Camille O’Reilly, in her book chapter: ‘Tourist or Traveller? Narrating Backpacking Identity’ addresses the identity anxiety of backpacking travel. She maintains that backpackers tend to prefer the term traveller because of its associations of freedom and exploration. She writes: ‘There is a contradiction however, between this seemingly innocent discourse of adventure and self-discovery and the reality of unequal global power relationships in which it takes place’ (ibid 2005:167). Critiquing the discourse of colonialism Bell (2005) in her book chapter The Nervous Gaze: Backpacking in Africa shows through analysis of two case studies how locals (the Other) are constructed as both the ‘poor and dangerous subaltern’ (ibid:424). Of course, tourism studies has since been introduced to the idea of the mutual gaze (Maoz 2006) whereby the locals and tourists gaze upon each other, constructing each others possibilities through interrelating although different gazes.
Drawing upon Maffesoli’s (1996) concept of *tribus* (tribes), Richards and Wilson write that backpacking can be characterised as a ‘neo-tribe’. Neo-tribes are those groups traditionally theorised as coherent subcultures – now better understood ‘as a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships’ (Bennet 1999:516). Citing Rojek’s work, Richards and Wilson (2004) describe how neotribes are organised around cultural products, especially icons of contemporary culture. They illustrate the literary icons that many backpackers identify with and trace the systems of meaning that follow from them. Although I am definitely interested in Richards and Wilsons’ broad semiotic approach I wish to extend their sense of meaning-making beyond the iconic into materiality. This includes the things that surrounds backpacking; a position that views the guidebook, and the backpack, for example, as textual products yet also as embedded material artefacts. I elaborate further in what follows by examining some of the ways in which the contribution (in terms of identity construction) of objects is considered as a strategic resource in the alignment of backpacking identities. I will attempt to circumscribe the *domain of backpacking* in terms of which both avoid and critique categorical essentialism: that definite edge between what is in and what is not. Through the search for the ideal in representation I come against the crisis of representation, and I will discuss a few, but by no means all, of the main issues that present themselves once backpacking identity formation is taken as a field of study and analysis.

**Backpacking as a heterogeneous assemblage**

My thesis develops an understanding of the stabilization and formation of the social structure of backpacking culture that results from the convergence of materiality, text and (performed) identity. Backpacking is a culture emblematic of the increasingly mobile world. Using poststructural theory I ask what holds this culture together, and examine backpacking as an integrated system composed of socio-material systems.

Hottola writes that ‘backpacking has progressively widened its sociocultural base’ (2008:45). It is true that the individuals that make up the backpacking market are increasingly diverse, for example, some authors have noted the growing presence of older backpackers (Hecht and Martin, 2006; Scheyvens, 2006). Accordingly, this thesis also celebrates growing diversity within backpacking travel, as well as among backpacking
research, yet it still calls for more performative ethnographic accounts that speak of situated backpacking experiences, instead of those that run the risk of mainstreaming the phenomenon. Maoz writes: ‘Heterogeneity in the backpacking phenomenon is manifested in terms of nationality, purpose, motivation, organization of the trip, age, gender, and lifecycle status (2007:124).

In addition to this I suggest that future backpacking research might question how sexuality is performed and organised within a predominantly heterosexuality mainstream backpacking culture – and also propose that research on gay and lesbian backpacker travelers’ (see Pritchard et al 2000) might benefit from the dual insights of the existing queer tourism literature (Puar 2002, Hughes 2006, Johnston 2009) and queer theory itself (Butler 1990, Sedgwick 1990, Ahmed 2007, Puar 2007). In other literature Cohen (2004a, 2004b) calls for sub-cultural differences to be explored between working-class and middle-class backpackers. In reference to backpacking as a practice for travelling individuals (Scott) Cohen (2014 in press) writes ‘backpacking remains a multifaceted practice, which includes sub-types’ (ibid. Increasingly, there are examples of more situated backpacking research rather than those which might universalise backpacking (often based unwittingly on western epistemology) and instead investigate the experiences of particular groups of backpackers with alternative research analyses. Importantly analyses in which the onto-epistemological lens is both acknowledged and critiqued, for example Teo and Leong’s (2006) postcolonial analysis of backpacking reclaims epistemological space for Asian backpackers, and Noy’s work ‘Traversing hegemony: Gender, body, and identity in the narratives of Israeli female backpackers’ also provides some insights on how heterogeneity in backpacking may be explored. The growing numbers of groups of female backpackers might be also be analysed within a ‘poststructuralist feminist framework’ (Jordan and Gibson 2004). Hanam and Diekmann (2010), in their recent book Beyond Backpacker Tourism: Mobilities and Experiences also provide and compile insightful forays into ‘new’ directions in backpacking research. Including, Scott Cohen’s (2010a) contribution to backpacking research in his chapter ‘Re-conceptualising lifestyle travellers: contemporary drifters’. Along with Scott Cohen’s other works (2010b; 2011) on backpacking as a way of life, indeed a lifestyle.
History of travel guidebooks

I will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge...Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology (Deleuze 1988:576).

Guidebooks have been written and read since antiquity and arguably beyond (I am thinking of early travel scripts or pictorial directions). In Europe the genre has developed over the last two millennia, with contribution from the early medieval Monastic guides to the narrated journal styles of the early Grand Tour. It was during the Grand Tour that it became popular for tourists to publish from the travel journals (Bendix 2002). Indeed tourism itself grew under the travel narrative conditions of the bourgeois Grand Tourers (Phipps 2007). The development and proliferation of mass produced guidebooks that describe places and experiences is a modern phenomena. They, like many other books were able to be published *en masse* with the advent of the printing press in the sixteenth century Europe. Indeed, Gasson writes that tourist guidebooks are a ubiquitous part of print culture (ibid 2005). The enlightenment project took it as axiomatic that there was only one possible answer to any question (Horkheimer and Adorno 1991). In this period Western Europe began to focus on the creation of reliable and interconnected infrastructures. The tourist guidebook developed hand-in hand with modernitys efforts to rationalize and make sense of the world. Historically, travel guidebooks share a modernist philosophy. From this it follows that the world can be controlled and rationally ordered if it can only be pictured and represented rightly. This is reflected in the design and intent of many contemporary guidebooks. They have developed in conjunction with modernity; their project is one of order and effect (Buzzard 1993, Cronin 2000). Hodges writes:

Guides narrate an evolving landscape of power thus imagining the history of places as a spatial genealogy. While the guidebooks locate the experience of given places within an historical trajectory, the portability of
these books reveals another of the guidebook’s functions as it traces a traveller’s itinerary, a journey that provides the book’s spatial plan; for the telos of a point of origin to a destination; it literally moves its readers from one place to another, from the origin of a journey to destinations along an itinerary that is both spatial and historical. The guidebook, like the traveller who refers to it, mobilizes cultural knowledge and those who had access to books and writing (ibid 2008:136).

Since the introduction of tourist guidebooks (in the modern mass produced sense) they have significantly influenced tourism. Before further literature review or detailed analysis it is clear they reflect and influence tourists’ lives. Historically marking the moment of divorce between the Guide and the tourist, guidebooks mediate between tourism and (local) interpretations. They make sense of and narrate travel and place. Guidebooks allow tourists to follow the discordant flow of happenings as a story with a readable plot (De Certeau 1984). Thus a study of them opens up a space of intersection where global, local and supra-local narratives of the world meet (Bruner 1995). ‘Guidebooks’, writes Furlough, ‘contribute to the legibility of space through maps’ (2002:454). Thus tourist guidebooks frame and depict ‘what ought to be seen’, the imagined-geographies and cultures of tourist guidebooks provide a travellers-oriented means for ‘knowing’ the world. As Gayatri Spivak (in Morton 2003) suggests there is an ‘assumed topography’, an already ‘worlded’ world.

Among the first travel guides for the mass bourgeois market were those published by Baedeker, a German travel writer (Koshar 2000). The Baedeker Company began publishing guidebooks in Germany in the early nineteenth century, then in Britain and across Europe participating in the birth of the guidebook as a genre. Newmann writes: ‘as travel became increasingly popular among members of the middle classes, the Baedeker quickly rose to prominence, and by 1856 was a standard accoutrement of the traveller in Europe’ (ibid 2006:55). There are historical accounts that suggest how even in this early period of intelectual travel there were tourists who sought to avoid literary saturation. Von Goethe, A German travel writer in his journey to Italy, deliberately leaves behind all books ‘So much has been said and written about Venice…and so much has been written about Naples…in fact all this has probably been printed in books! – that this overload of information must now be left behind, lest the writer can never learn to look at things with
clear, fresh eyes. After all, no book or picture can do justice to Italy. No words can describe its charm, the landscape is indescribable and everything defies description’ (Wolfgang Von Goethe in Dainotto 2004:8). Goethe was one among many of the European nobility of that time to take what was known as an educational journey, a ‘bildungsreise’ (Bendix 2002).

Naples and Venice, for example offered theatre and entertainment to eighteenth-century tourists, Whilst Rome – the Eternal City remained a climactic destination. Inextricably intertwined with Rome’s role as an artistic and cultural capital, both ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, was its historic identity as a centre of Western power, one that represented a common heritage to educated Europeans. Travelers came above all else to see the antiquities, the physical remains of ‘their’ history, and to tread the ground that spawned them. This trope of ownership was to continue to shape Western tourism for the next two hundred years.

Guidebooks indicate the literal space of places and events but they are also realized and practiced by people. The itinerary, whether in graphic form on the map, a written list of places and times, or implied in the narratives, mediates between the possibilities of the space of the real world and the transformation of the experience of space in writing. In chronological fashion the guidebook traces the order and the direction of travel; its mnemonic, spatial and temporal sequence. Thus guidebooks introduce tourists to space. They inform the reader where to look, focus the tourist gaze and attention, and reflect information intended to enrich the tourism experience. Typically guidebooks are not written by locals or for locals, but rather by ‘expert’ travelers who come, assess, and depart: who maintain a distance between themselves and the spaces through which they pass. Their standards of judging, and the depth to which they are able to penetrate the local scene are determined by their status as outsiders and authorities.

Carole Paul (2004) describes how pocket guidebooks were used by those on the 17th and 18th century Grand Tour. She writes: ‘It was wonderful to see how tourists really used these works, as in the early nineteenth-century edition of Mariano Vasi’s Itinerario istruttivo di Roma antica e moderna, heavily annotated in English by its British owner, John Waldie’ (ibid 78). She explains that many of the guidebooks were kept over a number of generations with changes annotated by their different owners. This palimpsest
stylisation of the guidebook continues today when backpackers write onto their guidebooks, then loan or sell them to others – their histories live on through the pages of the book. Indeed in such cases the guidebook speaks anew.

**Contemporary guidebooks**

In recent years the category of travel literature and travel guides has become a focus of debate in the fields of english literature, translation studies, cultural studies and tourism management (Buzzard 1993, Cronin 2000, Koshar 2000). There has been increasing interest in backpacking in certain areas (narrative and identity, Noy 2003; control management, Hottola 2002; performance and authenticity, Shaffer 2004; local interactions, Huxley 2002, Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003; culture, Riley 1988, Gibson and Connel 2003; traveller-tourist dichotomy, Kontogeorgopulos 2003; third world development, Spreitzhofer 1998, yet there is a comparative dearth of research conducted on the actual interaction between guidebooks and the performance of backpacking tourism. There have been a number of studies focusing on what sort of information guidebooks communicate to tourists (Bhattacharyya, 1997; Lew, 1991; McGregor, 2000), but fewer studies have examined guidebooks as a source of development for backpacking identities. Some research has indicated the high usage rate of guidebooks as a source of information for backpackers (Loker and Murphy 1995), and some highlights that this type of literature is culturally formative for the individual reader (see Welk 2004, Jack and Phipps 2003).

Travel guidebooks have recently been understood as ‘cultural mediators’ (Clarke 2004), they fix and channel experience. Backpacker guidebooks are commonly understood as ‘Bibles’ (Welk 2007). Kraft (2007) also draws parallels between these travel books, religion and religious texts and uses the example of Lonely Planets guide to India known as the ‘Yellow-Bible’ in some backpacking circles. Elsewhere, Alneng (2002) writes that guidebooks nurture phantasms. Similarly, Dann (1996) critiques over-dependency on tourist guidebooks and alludes to their fictional functions. Clarke (2004:503) reminds us how Roland Barthes regards the Blue Guide to Spain as ‘an agent of blindness’. They contribute to the increasing mundanity of the word (Koshar 2000). The tourist guidebook has become incredibly influential in the construction of the tourist gaze and the
interpretation of places (Bhattacharya 1997, Jacobs 2001, Laderman 2002). In terms of backpacking travel Hillman (2000) asserts the guidebook is an integral part of this world.

…we provide everything you need to know about Cambodia’s attractions from the palace and markets of Phnom Penh to the idyllic beaches, from the banks of the Mekong to the wonders of Angkor. Insight Compact Guide Cambodia (2000:1)

As cultural mediators they make travellers ‘selectively aware’ (Cohen 1985); attentive at certain places, oblivious at other times. Indeed, Barthes goes as far as labelling the Blue Guide to Spain, ‘an agent of blindness’ (ibid 1972:76). He named the tourist guidebook ‘an instrument of delusion’. Furthermore the ontological ambiguities of memory constructed in the guidebook embeds desires that perhaps never once were. Therkelson and Sorenson describe how the guidebook ‘leaves the tourist blind to all other aspects of the place visited than those pinpointed as sight-worthy…’(ibid 2005:49). They continue, however, to suggest it is problematic to rely on the assumption of a direct correspondence between the text and the reading of it. In other words, ‘a need exists for studying tourists’ actual reading and usage of guidebooks to shed light on the position of the guidebook in the tourist experience’ (ibid 50). In their research they conduct qualitative interviews with guidebook readers in Copenhagen, Denmark and analytically focus on the tourist practices connected with those books. Among their conclusions they suggest researchers should focus on the active role of the tourist guidebook use. Thus I respond to Therkelson and Sorenson (2005) as well as to Brown and Chalmers (2002) ethnographic study of tourists and mobile technology in which they describe the tourist guidebook as a ‘rich collaborative artefact’ (see also Brown and Perrry 2002).

In part of an effort to demonstrate the level of impact the Lonely Planet has on backpacking travel Welk (2007) draws parallels between Tony Wheeler (the founder of Lonely Planet publications) and Bill Gates, both are devoted pioneers of their respective businesses, both interconnect people, one with a Windows operating system and the other via his travel survival kits. Welk also add that both cultivate their ‘immodest myths of origin’ (ibid 2007). One of my research participants reflects on how Tony Wheeler has become the iconic pioneer of backpacking travel:
It (the *Lonely Planet*) comes in handy as a steering point, but you sort of evolve from following the book, then you want to be part of the book; so you start to write into the book, so you become part of the book...it’s your next peg in the travellers hierarchy; that your names in the back of the book, and I’ve had that and I’m like yeah right, aren’t I great - I was a kid, back then. Really it should say - people have saved us thousands of pounds in research, thanks guys – you know what I mean? Saying that I was in Laos, I ended biking a track, and in the guidebook it says look out for the temple and the mysterious sundial hanging in the tree, so there I was cycling and I found this thing, and what it was – was an inner-hub of a lorry wheel with twelve wheel nuts in it, I’m still not sure if they’re joking or haven’t checked their information (James, UK).

Guidebooks are a collusion of historical fact, entertainment, and moral discourse bound together in a way that poses as neutral, objective, and stable (Gencarella 2007:272). Their narratives dramatise otherwise unknown territories. They form and shape geographical knowledge (Gilbert 1999). Guidebooks are significant elements of the tourism infrastructure; they influence the perceptions of destinations and the travel cultures of millions of tourists. The information within backpacker guidebooks commissions a specific socio-spatial politics. Adler (1989:1369) writes that guidebooks provide a script for the tourist. This type of literature is written and consumed with the precise intention, on both parts, of affecting behaviour (Jack and Phipps 2003). The tourist guidebook positions readers, guides behavior and foregrounds the media of its communication; it is precisely the kind of social text enabled by the performative paradigm. Jack and Phipps (2003) first suggest that travel guidebooks are forms of literature with important performative and agentic functions. They define travel guidebooks as forms of apodemic literature or the ‘art of travel’ (ibid 2003) and also argue that guidebooks innovate and affirms the norms of travel performance. They write that guidebooks are produced to affect behavior. Following their initial contention, in the following chapters I detail specific types of performance associated with backpacker guidebooks, and build upon the notion that travel guidebooks expertly construct the *how to travel* as well as describing the *where to go or what to do*. They present considerable travel knowledge for backpacking, yet more significantly, they provide ways of being a backpacker. I therefore contend that backpacker guidebooks perform important ontological as well as epistemological tasks for
backpackers, and that as objects of a culture, their use can be analysed when considered, as postmodern hybrid. In doing so rather than question their ‘restrictive role’ (McGregor 2000), a more reductive quest, I am more keen to explore their ‘productive role’ (Tegelberg 2010); and thus their performative characteristics.

**Backpacking ‘versus’ tourism, backpacking ‘and’ tourism, to backpacking ‘in’ tourism.**

Backpacking is a form of alternative tourism (Mustonen 2006). Backpackers have been distinguished from tourists. This distinction is reaffirmed in the academe and in popular culture; in the arts, the media and in corporations (see Plate 2 ‘Insurance for travellers not for tourists’). It is upheld in discourses of travel such as Anthony Bourdain’s mantra in his Travel Channel show, *Without Reservations*, ‘Be a Traveler, Not a Tourist’. Indeed, I argue that the reason for this dichotomy lays in people’s insecurities about mass tourism travel. In the following chapters my intent is to dissolve this reductive binary. I make every effort not to duplicate rigid identity labels and instead I wish to maintain the encounter between backpacker and tourist as one in a state of flux. In other words, acknowledging that the backpacker/tourist dichotomy is one which has been constructed within a specific framework for categorising and stabilising tourism itself, is the first step towards its deconstruction. Thus, to begin the binary opposition of tourist and traveller, around which this dichotomy is formed, needs to be questioned. I also argue then, following Urry’s earlier observations, that the distinction backpacker and tourist, or better said the exchange between the two, has to be tackled in order to reach other understandings of backpacking. Significantly, my research starts from the recognition that backpacker and tourist are positions distinct from the persons who occupy them. That is, by foregrounding the dynamism and flux of the encounter between backpacker and tourist, be it through an understanding of any identity as ‘performative’ and *without* the desire to ‘backpack’ the encounter between the world and a certain ‘type’ of traveller it seems almost impossible to perform a reading of identity (transactions) specific to backpacking (see also Desforges 2000). To this end it has to be stressed that whilst there exist backpacking strategies for re-imagining exchanges, backpacking readings themselves can be only momentarily glimpsed. They are not (meant) to be fixed.
Beyond the morass of difficulties involved in any effort to affirm indexical properties of backpacker and tourist it is necessary to address former conceptions of backpacking. To this end I believe that many depictions of backpacking are manipulations of a pre-existing (a priori) discourse that either impose far too narrow a frame on what backpacking is, or render it Other to tourism itself, where identity is understood through lack (not to be a tourist) rather than through (the products of) difference in being a backpacker. Yet despite this subjection, the word ‘backpacker’, does not represent a tightly defined phenomenon. Furthermore, increasingly backpacking travel is conceptualised as a part of mass tourism and no longer outside of it (Cohen 2005, O’Reilly 2006). Thus in conceiving backpacking I ask, are backpackers new cultural subjects (akin to Deleuzes nomads, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987), in which the nomad is construed as escapist and creative, that is, postmodern in their praxis? Or are they ultimately modern; predatory voyeurs?
I begin with the observation that researchers readily refer to travellers in the world as backpackers but often without pausing to consider what this title means. This poses a problem for an ethnography purporting to write about homogenizing concepts such as culture, particularly when studying the same group of people is fraught with competing and diverse interpretations of them. Furthermore, I argue that backpackers and tourists are continually (re)produced into new social positions constituted by a travel ontology which is situated in practice. Thus how am I to depict backpacking? No longer deemed to be a unified, homogeneous concept when not only the contemporary academic arena but the very people that comprise this culture cannot themselves, agree on its definition and hold very different conceptions of what backpacking might actually be.

Summary

In this section I traced both the literature of backpacking studies and that of the history and role of guidebooks in the practice of tourism. In previous studies quantitative analyses have played an important role in ascertaining data on backpacking, but in terms of socio-cultural detail these same studies have failed to get behind the backpacking characteristics that they work so hard to identify. This type of research generally sought to determine a typology of backpacking through market segmentation and demographic means. Out of my key research question arises the issue of whether backpacking travel can really be typified. I argue that a study of backpacking behaviour as a set of identity types (adventurous, budget conscious, and so forth) via a questionnaire method, for example, essentially decontextualizes this tourism experience and logically positions it in a travellers’ scale or typology, in which individualism is inconsistent and therefore subsumed within the worldviews of categories more abstract in focus. In other words, such research is somewhat reductionist. Reductionist methods are not able to (re)present the contingent nature of backpacking identity, which my thesis portends and engages (in a theoretical and methodological sense). The complex juncture where knowledge, affect, performance and identity meet require a nuanced, more rigorous methodological application, and herein lays a central problem. At the moment of this postmodern juncture there are possibilities of an infinite regress. And does this regress ever really cease? If I answer quickly: it does not. The regress will continue so long as I apply various acts of
deconstruction, it lies before all poststructural work. But for me this is not exclusively politicised by a Baudrillardian despair of the simulacra (see Baudrillard 1994). There are things I can do to address this. I explain later. But first, I must stress I start my thesis faced with this formidable methodological challenge. Thus I begin with a key question, which my thesis seeks to address: Where do I start, and indeed cease, researching when, under the theoretical jurisdiction of postmodernity the performative nucleus of backpacking identity is necessarily dispersed, diffuse and composed of multiplicities?
Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspective

A progressive postmodernist rewriting . . . proposes that, because all knowledge is partial and situated, it does not mean that there is no knowledge or that situated knowledge is bad. There is no view from nowhere, the authorless text... There is only a view from somewhere an embodied, historically, and culturally situated speaker (Richardson 1990:27).

Introduction

This thesis is premised on a relational ontology, supported by Actor-network Theory (ANT) (which appropriates Deleuzian thoughts). That is, Bruno Latours’ Deleuzian inspired ANT accounts for the social as assemblage in which the ‘body’ (among other entities or actants) affects and moves. Before returning and resting on this, I would like to take the reader on a journey into my theoretical scaffolding. First, I will turn to theory itself, and then second I reflect on some theoretical possibilities that offer an ouevre into this analysis of backpacking-becoming, yet acknowledge their limitations. Third, I posit the theoretical framework upon which this thesis rests.

The Greek term theorein means the practice of travel and observation; it was to travel to another place to view ceremonies (Redfield 1985). The word ‘theory’ is thus a product of this original displacement, it implies a comparison, and a certain distance. To theorize, the thinker left home. Like the act of travel, theory begins and ends somewhere, and is subject to what happens at the time; the formation of theory is a social and contemporary engagement. In a posthuman perspective any theory is socially, culturally and temporally embedded. As Haraway writes, it results in ‘situated knowledges’ (ibid 1988).

Thus etymologically ‘theory’ developed from the Greek ‘theorin’ itself a derivation from the common root (theastai). It then moved into Latin to create the word ‘theater’, this word therefore is linked through shared meanings and is related to notions of speculation, contemplation and performance. Theory is, after all, just like theatre in its challenge to the
real. Representations, just like theoretical writings, precede the world in a process of ambiguous categorical expression. Similarly, philosophy is a discourse of acts that maintains associative semiotic meanings with theories of performance and acting. The phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau Ponty and Mead (see Rosenthal et al 1991), seeks to explain the way in which social agents constitute reality through acts of language and in this sense provides the cue to the later studies of the performative (see J.L Austins theory of performativity later in this thesis). With Austins work providing the performative framework, albeit linguistically formed, Judith Butler (1993) moves the act (of the performative) into the body when she contends that gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceeds; rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time through a stylized repetition of acts. To say that backpacking social reality is performative means simply, that it is only real to the extent to which it is performed.

Theory as dangerous?

The act of thinking is an act of seduction which in itself deflects the world from its being and its meaning, at the risk of being seduced and led astray. This is how theory proceeds. The object of theory is to arrive at an account of the system which follows out its internal logic to its end, without adding anything, yet which, at the same time, totally inverts that system, revealing its hidden non-meaning, the Nothing which haunts it, that absence at the heart of the system, that shadow running alongside it. ...To duplicate the world is to respond to a world which signifies nothing with a theory which, for its part, looks like nothing on earth (Baudrillard 1988:79).

With Baudrillard’s unease with theory in mind I am determined to follow a perspective that is as much methodological as it is theoretical. For this I turn to performativity. Performativity is trans-theoretical, it is a methodological enterprise; a tool of deconstruction. Its critical orientation is not only deconstructive but reconstructive; it helps to (re)constitute backpacking social arrangements. Whilst Althusser’s and Foucault’s view as expressed by Payne (1997) that social subjects are shaped by discursive practices is important, I am interested in the networked perspective on
discourse and subjectivity which sees social subjects as capable of reshaping practices (Giddens 1984; Fairclough 1999). It follows then to acknowledge Althusser’s (1971) notion of how subjects are created by, and forced to participate in, particular ideologies because they are ‘cajoled’ by an authoritative set of discourses and practices. Yet at the same time I must historicise these claims as they go some way to mute the subject. In thinking through the discursive aspects of subjectivity, I consider Althusser’s idea of the subject. His work on ‘interpellation’—how ideologies position the subject such that the subject is informed of his/her presence thus internalising social relations were initially promising. But after reading his ideas a little further I am left with a feeling that there are a little too much ‘cajoling’ and ‘conducting’ and a lot less ‘performing’ and ‘contesting’. His work denies, somewhat, the performance of the subject in lieu of this positioning, and although he points me in the direction I wish to go – this is as far as I can take Althusser’s notion of the subject into my analysis of backpacking ontogenesis. Moreover, if I am to adopt a theoretical framework wholly inspired by Althusser it could result in a kind of linguistic and social determinism in which possibilities of a reflexive and embodied project is diminished.

Symbolism

Structuralism stresses that all texts share common elements, including conventions, genres, and structures, metaphors, signs, symbols, and signification; images (Barthes, 1971); discourse patterns (Goffman, 1981, Bakhtin, 1981). The multi-modality of Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (1996) ‘levels of meaning’ and Lyotard’s (1984) ‘rules of grammar’ and ‘language games’ began to reconfigure language along other means. I avoid wholly symbolic critiques of backpacking and the backpacking subject (the backpacker). Instead, a networked ontology that collapses binary division between subject and object enables a degree of friction which momentarily anchors my focus of analysis, that is, at the point of exchange between backpacking and their social worlds. Thus in order to express what I believe is essentially postmodern about my inquiry it follows that I must know (be familiar with) that which is modern. Hence, before I can attempt a deconstruction of backpacking social performance I must start by questioning the semiotic underpinnings that I wish to deconstruct.
I am now drawn to the work of material semiotics, in which the production of text is not antecedent to its reception, text is now seen as networked. Indeed it is the difference between the production and reception that constitutes its performance. I contend that meaning-making in backpacking, precisely because it is a material process as well as a semiotic practice, necessarily overflows the analytical boundaries between distinct, idealized semiotic resource systems such as language, gesture, depiction, action and so on. Every material act and sign can be, and usually is, construed in relation to more than one system of sign relations. Text is intertextual. Therefore it becomes important to study how different sign-systems are physically and semiotically integrated into texts and productions of various kinds. In their book Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) describe how multimodal resources allow meaning to be made in various ways and at different levels. They go beyond the traditional linguistic notion that relies on just form (signified) and meaning (signifier) and propose that multimodal texts can make meaning in ‘multiple articulations’. Their four strata can be used to conceptually organise the textual representation of backpacking. (1) Discourse: socially constructed knowledge of reality (2) Design: conceptualizations of the form of semiotic products and events (3) Production: articulation in material form of semiotic products or events (4) Distribution: reproduction of semiotic products and events. The latter two, as operational strata can be superimposed on, or aligned to Jenkins’ (2003) backpacking ‘circle of representation’.

I found it initially tempting to conduct a cultural analysis of backpacking premised on a study of backpacking symbols. I soon felt, however, that the symbolic realm was an inadequate forum to discuss the complexities of backpacker identity construction. I became increasingly aware of the limitations of using symbolism alone as a semiotic approach to the study backpacking identity. Etymologically the word symbol comes from the Greek verb symballein; to piece together; to (re)join. Within the verb symballein this assembly or ‘joining together’ also implies a ‘veiling’ or ‘coveting’ (Walsh 2009). In its modern meaning the word symbol is that image of an object, person or thing made to stand for a wider concept or quality. By utilizing imagery symbols are visually affective; they embody ideas and reinforce ideologies and beliefs. Symbols are multi-layered; they can have multiple meanings. To deconstruct symbols in poststructural fashion, therefore, involves peeling back the layers of cultural and historical palimpsest, in order to glimpse at the structural origins of meaning. Symbolism as a form of cultural analysis is a popular
and historically legitimised modus operandi for making sense of the social realm. It attempts to harmonize the problematic relationships between the ideal and the material, in order to synthesise organisational and cultural discord. Historically framed in the mystic and spiritual symbols crystallize ideas whilst remaining general. By reason of relationship, association, attribute or convention symbols have complex and intentionally ambiguous meanings (Walsh 2009).

Dominant epistemologies that link knowing with seeing are not attuned to meanings that are masked, camouflaged, indirect, embedded, or hidden in context (Conquergood 2002). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) the acclaimed French sociologist developed the related concept of symbolic capital in his book Distinction, the origins of which are found in Max Weber’s analysis of status. A fundamental problem when using symbolic value as an analytical tool to determine (backpacking) meaning is that symbols may be too abstract or too complicated (in their relationship to the real or the material) that they can never easily be defined or interpreted.

The conceptual framework employed in many studies of symbolic value is Symbolic Interactionism and particularly the perspective of George Herbert Mead (1934). Within this broad school of thought the individual and society are characterised as part of a dynamic communicative system in which the self is conceptualised as a social structure; a result of social experience. Groups as well as individuals have the ability to create and interpret symbols. Symbolic function is thus fundamentally social. Throughout the course of history philosophy has argued that the formation and use of symbols is both an exemplary and differentiating feature of human kind. In recent philosophy symbolism is a social theory that emerged as a distinct perspective in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Those who advocated the theory had a core belief that humans construct their realities through semiotic investment in the power of symbols. Thus semiotics is the science of signs and the study of any medium as a sign system. It seeks to answer what is the nature of meaning? And, how do human realities attain meaning? Semioticians consider coded systems essential to the organisation of people. The history of semiotics can be traced back to the pre-socratic era. It gained modern explication through the works of Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913), especially (Walsh 2009).
Symbolism shares analogous elements with structuralism and therefore has a significant influence on Modernism. Indeed, because of their structuralist underpinnings symbolism and modernism are often virtually synonymous. In both tropes differences and diversity in the social world are subsumed under broader signifying categories. It was during high modernity in the mid-nineteenth century that many nation-states developed. Symbolism was adopted for specific purposes of nationalist canon building, to codify new national identities. Modernity sought order and effect and the symbol was the de rigueur instrument of social and national control. Mick (1986) in an article Consumer Research and Semiotics: Exploring the Morphology of Signs, Symbols, and Significance charts the rise of semiotics, and thus symbolic value as a crucial research tool in the social sciences, particularly emphasising the applications and implications for cultural research. He writes ‘like most semioticians, symbolic interactionists view human minds as fundamentally social – existentially dependent upon shared symbols’ (ibid: 204). Thus whilst symbolism certainly offers an analytic lens for backpacking studies it is reductive in its process.

Jean Baudrillard a French poststructuralist espouses his theory of the symbolic in response to the metaphysical underpinnings of structuralism. He claims that structural investigations of symbolism (cultural analyses, for example) uphold the ‘law of value’, a polarising, metaphysical quest which enables researchers to report on the meaning of things. According to Baudrillard any theory of ‘real values’ ultimately underscore the fetishized relations they criticize. He therefore relocates the law of value within a genealogy of the ‘image’. In his work Simulations he describes four periods of simulacra (in which the image becomes more and more free of its referent) where eventually the image has no relation to reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum. This hyper-real stage describes the extreme limit of symbolism, wherein representation transcends reality (see my work in chapter 7 on Khoa Sarn Road - KSR, a ‘hyperreal’ space in Bangkok). The simulacrum is challenged, however, in Chapters 7 and 8 when I discuss the performative energies of what I term material simulacra in the backpacking architecture, materials and space of KSR. Here, I articulate a theoretical tension between the semiotic significance and the materiality of this environment (espousing hybridity; they both have social implications) with the observations made during my ethnography. Thus I problematise the postmodernists claim that the world is increasingly charaterised by what has been called the hyperreal. In other words, I demonstrate that although signs and simulations are indeed important signifiers (the visual coda of backpackers reading
guidebooks, for example), there are material affiliations that also socially construct backpacking travel (the weight, form and size of the guidebook, for example). In this sense the construction of backpacking identity must be seen as a hybrid constitution. It is important to note, that Baudrillard and others in his field are criticised (not unlike symbolists) for reducing everything to surface and text, in which a world without substance is premised on relations between indefinite images that bear no resemblance to the real. Whereas Deleuze (1988) shifts the meaning of the simulacrum by severing it from any ties with an original, as well as divorcing simulacrum from the melancholy of Baudrillardian loss. Thus when Deleuze (1988) argues that any original is itself a copy, in essence he re-writes the theory of simulacra.

Importantly, much contemporary philosophy in general, and critical tourism studies, in particular reminds me that the categorical boundaries between modernism and postmodernism are blurred. Despite suggestion that symbolism is synonymous with modernity, postmodernity also succumbs to the alluring power of the symbol. Postmodernisms proclivity for eclecticism, appropriation and contradiction leaves no exception for the domain of symbolism. Luce Irigaray, a French feminist, in her general project of deconstruction on the history of philosophy exposes patriarchy and its dread of females and produces, instead, a positive symbolism for women. Many other disenfranchised groups, by using symbols as metaphors of power, have also attempted to reclaim epistemological and symbolic space in which rhetorical intervention is made possible.

The broad shift in the social sciences to collapse binaries and to celebrate diversity and multiplicity in the world corresponds with the postmodern view of culture as disjointed and contested rather than integrated and normative. The modern view of symbols are things that represent reality, the structuralist view of symbols are scaffolds that frame a cultural reality, and the postmodern view of symbols are those arbitrary flotsam and jetsam, or at best fragments, built into performative social existence. The principal conclusions are that: (1) consideration of the past still requires a journey into symbolism (as this is often all that is left); (2) Poststructural accounts of the social highlight the negligence of structuralism, offer limited practical guidance, but do encourage alternative epistemologies (feminism, queer theory, non-representational theory, actor-network theory, performativity and materiality, for example); (3) Human symbolism is incredibly
diverse it includes artefacts – (for example, the backpacking guidebook, the backpack), signs (all backpacking imagery), icons (real and fictional backpackers, for example Tony and Maureen Wheeler, characters in the book and film – The Beach); rituals (for example, hair braiding, drinking from cocktail buckets; stories, myths, legends and identities including, among others, genders, sexualities, ethnicities; intellectual, technological and indigenous knowledge; and a range of ideologies) with the implication, therefore, that more reflexive and inclusionary methodological approaches are required; and (4) the structural underpinnings of symbolism can no longer substitute for multiple truth claims and perhaps the most alarming; (5) the return to the real, the body-politic, social performance, the matter of the material, and material performativity, instead of symbolic representation alone; all vehemently undermine the epistemological and historical legitimacy of symbolic value as an analytical tool and a theory for the social. Risking generalization, an historical overview of the theories of symbolism include those modern traditions that tend to view symbols as representing social realities, while postmodernists and poststructuralism usually view symbols as constitutive of social realities and cultural existence (Walsh 2009).

In short, symbolism historically divorces the subject from ‘the real’. It fetishizes the social. The symbolic tempts and teases ambiguity and difference into the magnetism of the symbol. I cannot capture multiplicity or conflict with symbolic theories alone. The material realm always remains beyond the reach of signification. Once the material is signified relationality is lost, the corporeal is undermined – and the matter is now subject to the limits of representation. This leads me in a posttheoretical sense to return to the real, in which materiality and performance become the modus operandi for the backpacking social. In the course of the next six chapters I continue to (re)discover the body politic (the sensual and material social body that occupies space), and thus the symbol as the ultimate optical stimuli loses credence in my contemporary ontologies of backpacking becoming. An important question arises, then, is the value of the symbolic now waning? In sum despite the epistemological shifts and the methodological challenge, symbolic value continues to organize how backpacking and other tourism studies is conceived and approached (see my earlier work - Walsh 2009).
Interdisciplinary studies of the social

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) identifies interdisciplinarity as a postmodern condition of knowledge, one that he called a delegitimation - the end of the grand narratives. My research is always interdisciplinary and draws from sociology, anthropology, human geography, philosophy, literary, critical tourism and cultural studies. I combine theoretical approaches from the post-philological world; post-structuralism, material-semiotics, deconstruction and performance studies whilst historicising more traditional theory (structuralism, symbolism and semiotics). I take interdisciplinarianism as an asset, rather than a weakness, it helps develop my methodology and research practice. In any case, research is always shaped in the historically contingent interactions between multiple discourses (Jenson 2004). Thus in this post-paradigmatic context, there is no longer one perspective of what constitutes research. Instead, as Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest, there are multiple views that a researcher might engage and, more importantly, many theoretical perspectives which a researcher might follow. To this end I explore an intersection between philosophies of language (including Austin) and continental philosophies of deconstruction, post-phenomenology, and post-Marxism (Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze). Judith Butler’s work is an explicit case in point, where her revisions of Nietzsche and Foucault find productive enunciation with Derrida and Austin. The contributions of this work have to do with the recovery of possibilities for agentic capacities: *performativity*. Furthermore a consideration of posthuman performativity is only possible *after* the poststructural deconstruction of the subject.

If everything truly were radically indeterminable, either we can not know this fact, or we can know only this fact, and all further discussion and interpretation are pointless. Even if this were true, nothing can follow it, except an infinite and subjective play of signifiers (Phiddian 1997:221).

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a critical move within postmodern subversion. It first emerged just as structuralism reached its zenith in the late 1960’s (Macey 2000). Frustrated with the
structures of modernity, (the church, the judiciary, the nation-state) late modernists and now poststructuralists, including Jacques Derrida, believe all such structures are inherently power laden (see Sarup 1993). It was certainly reactionary when Derrida suggested that stable meanings are an illusion created by structures that effectively work to obscure and conceal the tensions within their operation. In terms of subjectivity poststructuralism maintains that signs and their referents are in constant states of referral, ‘the signified is always already in the position of the signifier’ (1976: 73) thus origins become problematic. This has particular resonance for studies of backpacking artefacts, especially the guidebook and the backpack, in which their intimate proximities (in terms of subject/object) arguably benefit from a poststructural analysis. Derrida states:

Representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer. A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable (ibid 1976:76).

Perhaps the most radical claim of poststructuralism is to reject the possibility of arriving at a ‘truth’ claim about the essence of a phenomenon (Sondergaard 2002). Jacques Derrida (often referred to the father of poststructuralism) reframed Roland Barthes’s semiology (Suausserian linguistics) by demonstrating the fusion between the signifier and the signified (the sign and the referent) Derrida went as far as saying the signified, always already, functions as a signifier. Thus any significance between one thing and another is involved in a constant movement (Derrida 1976). The effects of poststructuralism on the backpacking subject are complex. First it reveals what makes the subject possible (the conditions of its possibility) and second, it questions what happens as the backpacking subject assumes this position (re-enacts and re-iterates it). The latter is possibly the most exciting, and revealing – for it is in the re-enactment where deferral and resistance takes place, that is, the subject eclipses power with power (Sondergaard 2002).

What becomes interesting for me is to adopt this constitutive performativity as a source of inspiration and use it to investigate the conditions for both the creation and manifestation of backpacking ontology. Such conditions cannot be studied unmediated, neither in their
shape of sociocultural and historically sited practices and discourses, nor in the shape of material or bodily processing. Indeed Sarup (1993) states that they cannot be investigated as ‘pure’ phenomena, as though they were ‘uninfected’ by culture (the focus is therefore on the constituting processes that lead to an inquiry of the type related to my fundamental research questions. How is the backpacker’s body spoken, read and materialised into existence? Through which discursive processes does it emerge, and in what kinds of contexts or spaces? How are backpacking identities brought into existence and practiced?

I would first like to draw attention to several key themes within poststructuralism. The first theme is that the human being is not only a natural entity but a social and historical construct. The person is made, not born. It follows, in the second theme that the formation of the subject can occur only in a social context that is constitutive of being. Variations of this theme can be found in Foucault (in Keat 1982) (1990), Lacan (see Richardson 1988), Marx (in Hobsbawm 2011), Habermas (see Keat 1982), Bourdieu (1984), and Latour (1997). The third theme highlights that the ‘relation’ between social context, people, and things is sustained and transformed in practical activity. Thus any social contexts, including the various domains of backpacking, I come to examine, are themselves the product of language and social practice.

Thus post-structural versions of semiology can offer ways of thinking and conducting research that avoids both free floating contingency and constrictive determinism. It allows me to think beyond dualistic orthodoxies that view the subject as conditioned and determined or as a constructed product of voluntary agency. Furthermore, poststructuralism challenges essentialist dichotomies of ontology and dismisses notions of explicit backpacking categorical distinction. Backpacking identity is reconfigured as an interactional accomplishment; continually renegotiated via linguistic exchange, material affiliation and social performance (see Figure 2 domains of becoming). Thus poststructuralism marks a paradigmatic shift whereby investigations of phenomena become explorations that attend to the semiotic modelling involved in the production of meanings. In an effort to broaden the poststructural agenda, I employ a materialist stance. I explain in the following: The post-structuralist theory of discursive positioning has been used as an analytical tool in social investigations. Poststructuralism argues that the self is not fixed: instead it is positioned and positions in ‘discourse’—socially and culturally produced patterns of language, which constitute power by constructing objects in
particular ways. A backpacker, for example, could be positioned in a discourse of colonial travel, or could be positioned as something against the notion of the classical tourist, adventurous, or non-institutionalised (Cohen 1985). Material semiotics, on the one hand, though born out of a broader poststructural logic offers the chance to incorporate notions of resistance and contradiction that move beyond mere language (Keane 2003). I believe is does two things to poststructuralism, first it recognises that the self is positioned in certain discourses, but is at the same time active in positioning these same discourses. And second, that the self (still unhinged by earlier poststructural accounts) is tempered by, arranged and affected by other ‘things’ around it (the material world), as well as with other people and text.

The critique of the metanarrative is central to postmodern thought. It depends on several interrelated principles each derived from poststructuralism. Berkhofer (1995) list these as ‘denaturalization’: the recognition that categories once thought to be natural: race, sex, and ethnicity are complex cultural constructions. His second principle is ‘demystification’: this reveals the role which socially constructed systems of structured inequality shape human interactions and cultural production. It demonstrates how universal qualities such as reason are often rendered in terms that use colonial values, for example, as a normative standard. The third, ‘dehierarchization’: exposes how binary systems establish hierarchical systems of classification that reinforce asymmetrical power relations within particular cultures, for example, studies of tourism that challenge the privileged status of the tourist. The fourth, ‘dereferentialism’: among the most controversial claims of the postmodern, de-referentialism challenges the claim that language provides an unmediated access to an external reality. The fifth principle ‘deconstruction’ essentially involves working with each of the above principles. It is described below.

**Deconstruction**

Language, at some point, was made the privileged object of thought, science and philosophy (Kristeva 1982:3).
.. the most fundamental of all shared aspects of being human; language itself, contains, in terms of its performance, vocabulary and syntax – a series of deep structural buttresses of domination (Derrida 1976: 46).

Deconstruction is a tool of poststructuralism. It was initially developed by Jacques Derrida as a technique for uncovering the multiple interpretations of texts. Influenced by Nietzsche, Derrida suggests that all text has ambiguity and because of this the possibility of a final and complete interpretation is impossible. Deconstruction, in the Derridean sense, is thus a way of reading texts with the intention of making these texts question themselves, exposing the contradictions and ambiguities that they have managed to suppress (Newman 2001). Butler (1993) describes the work of deconstruction when she writes that it is now possible to ‘resignify the very terms that, having become unmoored from their grounds, are at once the remnants of that loss and the resources from which to articulate the future’ (1993:11). This marks a fundamental departure from positivism, because a poststructural methodology, utilising a material-semiotics reveals the fundamental presumptions underlying social principles. However, its effectiveness in asking awkward questions is limited by its initial association with language. To counter this I address the problem of a solely Derridean deconstruction in regard to (textual) agency, and propose instead to perform transgressive deconstructions of the wider concept of performativity comprising a methodological application of ANT to the four broad domains of ‘becoming’ (see Figure 2) in the backpacking network, which includes close examination of discourse, materiality and embodiment in backpacking practice performed in space.

Thus it is here where my thesis philosophically departs from deconstruction (for alone – this would amount to a logic of conflict and contradiction between a material semiotic approach and linguistic deconstruction). Instead I develop a logic of connectivity. There are still implosions of the former textual logic of deconstruction, but I also present a tangible ‘real’ (the body and materiality) one which articulates backpacking identity.
The posthuman and materialist approach I adopt in this thesis constitutes more of a critical postmodernist stance, than Berkhofer’s (1995) critique, thus I am skeptical of the radically deconstructive displayed here in Figure 1. (see Cornells 1998 article Moving Beyond the Great Story: Post Modern Possibilities, Postmodern Problems, in which he highlights some of the limitations of Berkhofer’s earlier work on poststructuralism as linguistic critique). Importantly then, I include Figure 1 not only to reference the original poststructural critique but also to remember its limitations. I shall explain: Derrida (1981:19) writes ‘everyday language is not innocent or neutral, it is the language of Western metaphysics’. Poststructuralism specifically targets language and fuses meaning between the signifier and signified - and thus implies - a complex interchange between referent and source. It signals the dissolution of the boundary between language and (its) object (for instance, the guidebook and backpacker). A second poststructuralist concept
with application for my thesis is the notion of intertextuality, that is, how ‘every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it’ (Kristeva in Culler 1981:105). Intertextuality is also important for matters of (human) identity in which the meanings and intentions of one entity (or individual) are appropriated by, and fused to, those of another.

Matters of Identity

The concept of identity points to the configuration of attributes and attitudes that persons gravitate toward and perform (Davis 1992). Identity, however, has also been viewed as fixed or given. In response to this the ‘identity politics’ of minority groups in society, including indigenous peoples, and LGBT communities have raised the issue of whether a fixed notion of identity is at all desirable, and pushes the idea that identities are fluid and changeable; that it is possible to acquire new ones (transgenderism, for example). The concept of identity has been used by sociologists especially, in a number of different but related contexts (Turner 2000). Following George H. Mead’s work in the earlier part of the twentieth century, in which his symbolic interactionism sees the self as emerging out of the mind, the mind as arising out of social interaction, and patterned social interaction as forming the basis of social structure (Mead 1934), identity has since been understood as a negotiation (Turner 1993, Marshall 1998), between self and Other. Thus, someone who is a backpacker, for instance, has their identity confirmed in a constant negotiation between his or her sense of being a backpacker and others definitions of what that means. Of course this lies under a humanist veil and I can only follow Mead’s (1934) version of identity in terms of a conceptual framing (in its historicised sense), not in its working mechanism, that is, one with sole emphasis on the subject.

Richards and Wilson (2004) in their book The Global Nomad reflect on the findings of the ATLAS BRG survey of 2002; in terms of self-definition they point to the extent to which many of their mail recipients considered themselves travellers as opposed to backpackers, they illustrate how identity (or self-designation) revolved around factors including nationality and age, whereby certain nationalities (South African, for example) older respondents and those with more travel experience were more likely to call themselves travellers (Richards and Wilson 2004). Again this was a quantitative mailing survey
which was able to gather a large volume of information on backpacking travellers, it was not meant to deconstruct identity practices, it does however, point to many interesting leads in terms of identity performance.

Goffman is first to focus on the performance aspect of identity, in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. But, as I describe in detail, in chapter 3, Goffman’s performance theory has been criticised for presenting identity simply as a series of masks for different audiences (Turner 2000). This concept of identity is not particularly when I claim that identity is (or can be) embodied and materially embedded (see chapters 5, 6 and 7). Indeed, I argue that backpacking identity is not really a performance, in the strict or dramaturgical sense of the word, but a performative assembly (Butler 1993). Thus I focus analytic attention away from early *performance* theory and into the *performativity* of material-semiotics. I include Figure 1 *Identity: from static to process*, to support my analytic shift.

Identity is about both similarity and difference. It is about how subjects see themselves in representation, about how they construct differences within that representation and between it and the representation of others. Identity is about both correspondence and difference (Hetherington 1998:15).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional stance to identity</strong></th>
<th><strong>Poststructuralist/deconstructive</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. recognition of common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group; or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation (Hall 1996:17-18).</td>
<td>1. a process of construction, a process never completed, always “in process” (Hall 1996:17-18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. can be ‘won’ or gained, sustained or abandoned (Hall 1996:17-18)</td>
<td>2. With its determinate conditions of existence, ‘identification is in the end conditional, lodged in contingency. Once secured, it does not obliterate difference… Identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption’ (Hall 1996:17-18).</td>
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Table 1: Identity from a traditional and poststructuralist view
(Adapted from Hall 1996:17-18)

Stuart Hall (1992, 1996) suggests treating identity as a process, to take into account the reality of diverse and ever-changing social experience. Thus ideology is understood anew as shifting articulations rather than interpellation – precisely the grounds for applying my methodological and theoretical approach to backpacking identity research.

**Postmodern hybridity**

Deconstruction claims to be the view from everywhere and nowhere, it fails to recognize its own ‘relationality’ in the world (Bordo 1998). The question stands then, how might I, the researcher, negotiate an infinitely perspectival, destabilized world? First. I employ an
ethics of relationality to liberate deconstruction from this infinite regress. In other words, deconstruction’s abstract textual theory must give way to a concern for ‘relation’ if I am to analyze real cultural and social issues surrounding backpacking identity and performance.

Logocentrism assumes that knowledge is found in language; and if that beginning is no longer a foundation any more how can I advance? Once I begin to question language everything becomes unstable. Thus how can I perform research in a (postmodern) world where truth appears ephemerally and at its conception begins to crumble? These issues I raise and provide modest answers for in Chapter 4 ‘methodological framework’. Suffice to say, whether I take the view that backpackers are constructed in or by language or whether I believe that the subject in becoming is really obscured through language I assume, in the first, that some association exists between language and being. Thus I change the locus of investigation here, and ask instead what kind of view point on language do I have to employ, in order to argue that it is not the only means of constructing reality but a primary locus of meaning-making? Nightingale and Crombys (2001) insights are useful, they write: ‘…the imperfect fit between language and materiality, world and word, creates uncertainty, flexibility and indeterminacy, which, in the course of its deployment and situated use, means that language actually co-constitutes reality’ (ibid:706). They continue by stating: ‘The play of linguistic meaning and signification is shaped and constrained by embodiment, materiality, socio-cultural institutions, interpersonal practices and their historical trajectories (all of these structured by, and reproducing structures of, power) such that language does not independently and thoroughly constitute our world’ (ibid:706). With this critical observation in mind I turn to material-semiotics.

Thus, I perform a theoretical and methodological investigation of backpacking identity with actor-network theory, which itself uses deconstruction, performativity, semiotics and materiality. I do not position this framework against other theoretical domains (structuralism, symbolism) by arguing that it is more or less progressive. I believe all such domains are evolving and disparate and have multiple shapes and emphases. Rather, I use what I term a logic of hybridity with which to think about the challenges, re-imaginings, suggestions and reflections on backpacking identity. This hybridity is shown in the various domains that constitute backpacking identity, below in Figure (2).
Figure 2: Domains of becoming

Legend
The force of deconstruction
The force of relationality

I designed Figure (2) to conceptually present the major domains of ontological construction that together constitute backpacking identity, and those which this thesis grapples with. These include: discourse (the sets of discourse and specific texts), materiality (the material effects and fabrics of backpacking social worlds), corporeality; how identity is embodied (performed in and through the body), and then ‘space’; that identity is always ‘spaced’: backpacking identities are allied to the particular sites in
which they perform and are performed. I need to take the concept of identity further, indeed to the Deleuzian conception that there is no identity, as such. Indeed Deleuze essentially implodes the term identity because of its inherent ‘fixed’ inadequacy. Thus continuing on the poststructural path of dismantling modern beliefs including such things as unity and gender (for example) he replaces the concept of identity with his notion of multiplicity (and becoming). Cecille Voisset-Veysseyre (2011) in her article *Toward a post-identity philosophy* explores how Deleuze re-writes identity as multiplicity, advocating a post-identity philosophy. Although I negate the term ‘identity’ (in the Deleuzian way) and now endeavour not to use it in the thesis, (note it is variously replaced with references to ‘being’, ‘ontology’, ‘performance’, ‘multiplicity’, ‘relation’, ‘becoming’) there are times in the thesis that I do refer to the term ‘identity’, yet unless otherwise stated (as in the historicised/modern understanding of the term) I use identity or, preferably the plural, *identities*, as something in ‘becoming’.

Figure 2, is also a diagrammatic proviso of my thesis, and perhaps outlines this post-identity philosophy as it pertains to an analysis of backpacker-becoming. The domains in Figure 2, are hybrid, complex and interconnected (see red lines – the force of relationality). I do, for the purposes of clarity and structure (in the thesis) devote specific chapters to each of these domains (see my work in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8), but these discussions are by no means exclusive, the contours of each chapter touch, morph and collide with the others.

**Re-reading Derrida**

In this section I would like to draw attention to the complex relations between Jacques Derrida’s and Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy. They both (in a fibrous sense) offer a connective tissue for discussions of backpacker-becoming. The latter, perhaps, in a more literal manner (of ‘becoming’, that is).

‘There is nothing outside the text’ (Derrida 1976:158).

Gunkel (2003) writes that this is one of the most misused and misunderstood statements written by Derrida. Terry Eagleton also points out what he takes to be a widespread misreading of Derrida’s infamous statement. ‘What this really means’, Eagleton explains, ‘is not that everything is language or discourse but that nothing can be conceived *without relation* to something else’. Thus what Derrida points to is, even though many social
processes are materially inscribed, logic assimilates them to language and discourse. Everything I do, each performance I undertake, and each ‘thing’ I engage with, each text that inscribes, is at the same time transcribed and translated by others and, in this case me: the researcher. This is essentially a definition of relationality. Derrida explains:

That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed, or have been naive enough to believe and to have accused me of believing. But it does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this ‘real’ except in an interpretive experience (1976:36).

In *Structure, Sign and Play* Derrida acknowledges that he has arrived at an impasse. A philosophical conundrum: he can no longer work within the Western philosophical tradition, yet he is unable to move beyond it. What Derrida points to here is the crisis of representation, the inability, so to speak, to represent the real. At this impasse he is forced to question ‘what is real?’ Derrida proposes that instead of searching for the real, it is to better study the difference between the imagined real and that which is represented. This, he supposes, is the only place to start. Bearn (2000), Patton and Protevi (2003), Mader (2004) and Schwab (2013) each draw out the complexity in relations (similarities and contradictions) between the works of Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze together with Felix Guattari (indeed like the wasp and the orchid, they form an assemblage sometimes referred to as ‘Deluezeguattarian’ philosophy).

Upon reading Jacques Derrida it is clear there are affinities with Gilles Deleuze (and Felix Guattari), I believe these affinities help support the agenda of, and indeed *bind* this thesis. That is, it is their affinities (not their contradictions) that reflexively underpin the utility of both their philosophies for understanding backpacking identity.

*First,* Jacques Derrida views the experience of the present as never a simple experience of something present over and against me; there is always another agency there. The present therefore is always complicated by non-presence. Derrida calls this minimal repeatability found in every experience ‘the trace’. Thus repeatability contains what is no longer present *and* what is about to come and is not yet present. Deluezian-becoming can be found within Derrida’s notion of repeatability. *Second,* the argument has disturbed the
traditional structure of philosophy, which involves a linear relation between foundational conditions and founded experience. In traditional philosophy an empirical event such as what is happening right now is supposed to be derivative from or founded upon conditions which are not empirical. In traditional philosophy there is always a foundational first principle or origin. Yet, in Derrida the origin is immediately divided, the separation, the division, and the empirical events have always already taken place. In Of Spirit, Derrida calls this kind of origin ‘origin-heterogeneous’: the origin is heterogeneous immediately (Derrida 1989:107). This conceptualization has affinity with some essential features of the deleuzeguattarian rhizomatic (the relation). Third, if the origin is always heterogeneous, then nothing is ever given as such in certainty. Whatever is given is given as other than itself, as already past or as still to come. Thus, always ‘becoming’. What becomes fundamental, therefore, in Derrida is this ‘as’: ‘origin ‘as’ the heterogeneous’. The ‘as’ means that there is no knowledge as such, no final perception. Indeed, the origin is no more. Every experience then is always not quite on time or, as Derrida quotes from Hamlet, time is ‘out of joint’. The perfect moment (of course, which never was) is no longer here. Later in his life, Derrida refers to time being out of joint as ‘anachronism’ (1994:94). Anachronism for Derrida is the temporal end of a space-time dimension in which he refers to the other side as ‘spacing’ (espacement); where space is out of place. Jacques Derrida does not reduce meaning to language alone. Fourth, if the origin ‘as’ heterogeneous is there, it must be also be the origin as distributed, the origin as rhizomatic, as multiplicity. Crucially, there is everything outside the text. There are profound (and deep) conceptual synergies between Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and like the literary aspects and materials aspects (of the guidebook) they cannot be separated (again, despite their affinities, always in the final, I turn to the more acute posthumanism of Gilles Deleuze).

The meaning of ‘meaning’

The word ‘meaning’, though a widely underscrutinised concept, I take to mean (in a sociological sense) the responses, significations, intentions, displacements and shifts in reality, and in specific terms for the purposes of this research; the interpretive (material, discursive and embodied) processes that underlie backpacking activity. Thus I embrace a fractalized notion of meaning similar to that explored by poststructural authors Gilles
Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari tend to look at *meaning* in reality as the interface at which force fields or performative densities collide. Meaning in a given performance situation; the social and cultural work done by the performance – its performativity or affective strength is the effect of all these forces working relationally together and differentially constitutive (see ‘connectors’ in Figure 1). Thus, affectivity depends on the amount of productive tension and slippage. One overwhelming success of poststructuralism has been its radical reworking of the concept of meaning. It has systematically unsettled the stability of meaning and deliberately interrupts referentiality (Chow 2002). According to Chow if meaning had never been entirely stable even in pre-theory days, what poststructuralists provide is a metalanguage in which it (meaning) can now be defined anew as a repetitive effect produced in ‘a chain of signification in the form of an exact but illusory correspondence between signifier and signified.’ Thus whilst referentiality still exists, or more precisely operates, it is the shifts of movement within this operation that I am now interested in. This is termed relationality. The meaning of the now historicised concept of identity has no meaning. Thus the meaning of identity for Deleuze is multiplicity.

**Relationality**

The word ‘locate’ comes from the Latin verb loquor, to say, tell or indicate. Locate also means to placate from the Latin placer, to satisfy, be agreeable, or resolve (Cooper 2005). To locate something is bound to the logic of representation. Thus rather than ‘locate’ the subject – I wish to ‘relate’ backpacking (or backpackers) into a wider network of multiple operations (both human and non-human). Edourd Glissants (2006) book *Poetics of Relation* is useful: ‘When we speak of a poetics of Relation, we no longer need to add, relation between what and what? This is why the French word *relation*, which functions somewhat like an intransitive verb, could not correspond, for example, to the English term *relationship.*’ Reminded of Sartre’s comments in *L’etre et le Neant* ‘the form doesn’t exist as pure exteriority’. It is the *relation* that makes the world, and it is through a lived world, one of touching, feeling and being that there is a human reality (see sensory experiences in Khao Sarn Road, Bangkok, chapter 7).
Similarly Deleuze’s rhizome describes how context conceived as a root like network has ontological power. The notion of becoming in a Deleuzian sense is because the being of an entity - what it is - is not an essential characteristic but is determined by the practices in which it is encountered, grasped, and comprehended. This has Heideggerian philosophical roots: that being is not essentially mind or matter, but varies with the historical and societal context. It is relational. Heidegger (1927/1996) argues that ‘it is not the case that human being ‘is,’ and then on top of that has a relation of being to the ‘world’ which it sometimes takes upon itself” (ibid:53). Rather, the ‘totality of involvements’ of ‘world’ exerts a ‘constitution’ on human being, and ‘discloses’ entities. Thus, his ‘fundamental ontology’ in Being and Time, is a precursor to any ‘networked’ analysis of human ‘being’.

Posthumanism

The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) trace the philosophical histories of the subject. They write that in modern philosophy everything revolves around the legislator and the subject. That is we as humans are subjected (see section ‘modern disdain’). Under the analytic scrutiny of humanism objects (the things around us) appear secondary to what they oppose; the subject. Posthumanism, however, shifts the focus of attention to the intertwineament of human and non-human actors. It de-centres human consciousness; and thus what it is to ‘be’ in the world. In recent years critical theorists have discussed the significance of something refered to as the posthuman condition (Pepperil 1995, Halberstam and Livingston 1995, see also Grosz 1994 and Harraway 1996). The posthuman condition is explained as the new ways in which the subject (the human) is configured (thus their performance of identity) in postmodern times (Barad 2003). I thus strive toward commiting my efforts to their new posthuman ethics by exploring the ontological possibilities that lie inside and outside of humankind, especially by exploring the social performance of the artefacts that surround backpacking. Deleuze and Guattari write: ‘Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been’ (ibid1987:3/4). Thus always under the philosophical guidance of Gilles Deleuze I develop an approach to the ontological politics of backpacking (backpacker-becoming) through the dimension of both sense and material effect. In terms of my thesis Deleuze’s project is both decisive and assenting. Just as
Deleuze is critical of the supposed axis of a constituting consciousness or single body from which relations emerge (quite unlike the earlier reading of Derrida, in which: *nothing exists outside the text*), he also argues that the transcendental project; the striving to think of social life in general, needs to be carried beyond its human territory (Colebrook 2004). The subject of traditional liberal humanism, on the one hand, inhabits a condition, neither framed by time or space, where, on the other hand, Seaman (2007) writes: ‘Posthumanism rejects the assumed universalism and exceptional *being* of Enlightenment humanism and in its place substitutes mutation, variation, and *becoming*’ (ibid 247) original italics. The critical difference between Kantian and posthuman (postmodern) philosophies is that the former can be characterized as an expansion of consciousness, in which humans assume total control of their worlds) whereas the latter is best described as an intensification of the sense of being. Expansion presupposes the subject’s power over the material world, while intensification implies the ‘reduction’ of the subject to its own materiality (Trifonova 2004).

**Settling on the post-human**

The idea that reality is a wholly cultural or discursive construction empties the body of material agency, or renders it a passive surface of inscription upon which culture writes (Grosz 2006:2)

This thesis is premised on a relational ontology, supported by ANT (which appropriates Deleuzian thoughts). Thus Bruno Latours’ Deleuzian inspired ANT accounts for the social as assemblage in which the ‘body’ (among other entities or actants) affects and moves. Corporeal feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz suggest that we might separate the cultural and material or corporeal as a way to understand performativity, but their interrelation nevertheless precedes that separation (ibid 2006). Thus in my activation of backpacking bodies and things I displace the centrality of the human subject. I am then able to analyse the shifts in meaning (the transactions or translations) between backpackers and the things around them (including, among others the guidebook and the backpack). The shift from a representational to a performative understanding of the social characterizes a posthumanism that has been particularly inspired by poststructuralism, but is not wholly subject to its laws. Stressing that the human being is
not at the centre of consciousness challenges many traditional epistemologies because activities such as representing or the work of my thesis are not seen as distinct from intervening or constructing; rather, they are viewed as specific ways of intervening and constructing. In this view, epistemology collapses into ontology and the sciences are reformulated as practical activities aimed at (re)building the world by adding new elements with new capabilities and new relationships to it. Knowing (and thinking about knowing) are ‘turned into particular styles and methods for connecting and cooperating with specific actors (human and otherwise)—thus shaping reality, or doing practical ontology’ (Jenson 2004: 248). Furthermore:

The human, long presumed by traditional Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment humanism is a subject (generally assumed male) who is at the center of his world (that is, the world); is defined by his supreme, utterly rational intelligence; does not depend (unlike his predecessor) upon a divine authority to make his way through the world but instead manipulates it in accord with his own wishes; and is a historically independent agent whose thought and action produce history…His power and superiority inhere in his human essence. Yet in a posthumanist world, this human is an endangered species (Jenson 2004:248).

**Actor-network theory (ANT)**

Actor-network theory is a ruthless application of semiotics. It tells us that entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities (Law 1999: 3).

Actor-network Theory (founded by Michael Callon, Bruno Latour and John Law) is a theoretical framework and deconstructive toolkit used to consider the infrastructure and operation of (social) networks. The original advocates of ANT, including Callon (1986) and Latour (1987) argue that knowledge is local and constructed by a network of actors. A network is often described in terms of nodes and links. In ANT the nodes are actors, and an actor is any entity that interacts with other actors or serves as an intermediary between actors. ANT avows that both humans and non-humans (objects) are actors, since all interactions between humans are mediated through objects of one type or another (Law
It is true that ANT requires more than a cursory reading in order to decipher its working mechanisms. Yet in order to capture its essence, however, I find the key principle of ‘translation’ (a focus on connectivity or relations within the network) a fascinating matter and an extremely useful tool (see Callon 1986; Latour 1991, 2000). Van Der Duim (2007) demonstrates the benefits an application of ANT can bring to tourism studies, citing ‘translation’ as a way to consider interactions in the sphere of tourism. The complex, networked nature of actors is captured by ANT’s notion of hybrids. Landscapes, objects, people and other things can each perform as hybrids because they are simultaneously real, discursive, and social. It assigns agency to both human and ‘non-human’ actors (for example backpacker artefacts such as the guidebook, the backpack). Law (1999) proposes the most contentious idea of actor-network theory, that ‘non-human’ actor’s or ‘things’ ‘carry a semblance of agency’. Central to ANT is intervention into the ongoing debate about structure and agency, ‘one of the key fault lines that runs through social theory’ (Korczynski, Hodson and Edwards Introduction 1994:12). In backpacking tourism, aside from the textual performance of certain artefacts (guidebooks and backpacks, for example), the ‘materiality’ of the networked circumstances is crucially performative. Critically, Latour states that ‘there is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist’ (1994:45-46).

I apply the notion of a hybrid identity which deals with the affect of the encounters and relationships between people and things in the context of the philosophical notion of boundary (the meeting place of self, other and thing). I do so through analysis of my own experience as well as through interpreting the experience of others. I (re)consider backpacking identities through cultural, linguistic, material and aesthetic means, and whilst doing so I attempt to note their ongoing transgression and transformation. I argue that backpacking (as a construct) is a meta-synthesis (an actor-network) perpetuated by the (re)production of norms in material and narrative form. Thus, I employ the performative toolkit of actor-network theory (ANT) one that views the world as a set of performative moments and transactions between people, lexis and things. ANT is intimately ontological. It represents the most recent theoretical and methodological moves in sociology, anthropology, geography and philosophy. When considered together these moves reveal multiple approaches to a common theoretical concern: the dissolution of the
subject/object distinction. Reflecting, therefore, the current modal shift in the social sciences and liberal arts known as the ontological turn.

**People and things**

A defining feature of ANT is that society and technology are not separate spheres, instead they are intimately linked. It places emphasis on the interconnections and co-constructions between humans and non-humans and highlights the relational materiality of the surrounding world (Law 1992). This perspective serves to transcend dualisms and illustrates the operation of a ‘hybrid’ world in which each of the elements constitute reality. Former distinctions between the social and material are now outmoded (Callon 1986; Law 1992; Pickering 1995). Law (1992) proposes the most contentious idea of actor-network theory, that ‘non-human’ actor’s or ‘things’ ‘carry a semblance of agency’. Pickering (1995) prefers to understand this kind of ‘non-human’ agency as ‘material performativity’ in which things act or ‘do’ things. In this understanding agency is only assigned to humans and it is *performativity* that provides the agentic capacity for the material. These developments have since served as a catalyst for investigations into the socializing nature of things (Van der Duim 2007). John Law and Bruno Latour, as key proponents of ANT, confer performativity to objects insofar as they realise (bring about) social actions. They argue that ‘entities take their form and acquire attributes as a result of their relations with other entities’ (Law 1999:3). Such interactions are complex and, without doubt, contested. Importantly, the associative effects emanate from both human and non-human actors. Fundamentally, therefore, within ANT people, texts and things are each seen to act. In tourism, aside from the textual performance of certain artifacts (guidebooks and backpacks, for example), the relational ‘materiality’ of these objects is crucially performative.

ANT has powerful roots in both structuralism and poststructuralism. It conceptualises artifacts as embodied actions and knowledge. The relativity of subject positions has been the organizing feature of many theories, but what is new here is that material objects are also seen as being created and having meaning in relation to other objects. Actor-network theory, therefore, can be understood as the semiotics of materiality: ‘It takes the semiotic insight, that of the relativity of entities, the notion that they are produced in relations, and
applies this ruthlessly to all materials- and simply not those that are linguistic’ (Law 1999:4). Actors, then, are network effects; they take on some of the attributes of the entities which they associate with. The analytical focus shifts from the former (modern) preoccupation with the agent to networks, from persons to persons and objects to objects, or persons to objects. It opens up the social sciences to things that are outside of ‘the subject’. Both micro/macro and agency/structure theories are rejected. These continua are seen as modern dualities that are discarded by poststructuralists and postmodernists. The engagement of the new theory is centred on seeing social processes as performing entities. The focus (on agency/structure) is gone and replaced by a lens on the network. As Latour explains, ANT is not a theory of the social but rather of the space of fluids circulating in a non-modern situation.

We may conceive of only basic formal units of substance (actants) which enter into relationships (networks) by way of encounters (trials of force) wherein questions regarding the powers and identities of these self same units come to be temporarily settled by reference to the overall compound nexus of relationships within which they are now embedded (Brown and Capdevilla 1999:34).

ANT plays an important role in the renewed attempts of social science to go beyond the human, to annihilate subjectivity, to return to an acute awareness in which actors vary for one another rather than account for one center of reference. It proposes a theoretical shift in emphasis away from the centrality and primacy of the human subject. Instead ANT regards the human subject as simply another actor in a network (Somerville 1999). It does away with subjectivity as the primary means of knowing.

To open us up to the inhuman and the superhuman (durations which are inferior or superior to our own), to go beyond the human condition: This is the meaning of philosophy, in so far as our condition condemns us to live among badly analyzed composites and to be badly analyzed composites ourselves (Deleuze 1991:28).

Thus this methodological approach conceptualises ontological genesis as an amalgam of complex heterogeneous components comprising of backpacking practices, which includes
artefacts like guidebooks and backpacks, and the infrastructure through which backpackers and their associated objects move, the other people involved, other tourists and locals and last, but not least, the cultural nuances and informal practices that also shape the formation of backpacking identity. The focus of action lies in the sociology of translations between these different components or actors. By analysing the moments of translation this approach deconstructs the social practices and contextual influences that contour the programming and assembly of backpacking ontology. Crucially my goal was to develop and apply a methodological application of ANT by using it to trace the historical emergence of backpacking ontology, which enables me to view backpacking in the making (how and when ontologies are formed). Equally important then, has been the onto-epistemological stance on knowledge. That knowledge is produced locally, it is distributed and as I view backpacking knowledge as one ‘in the making’ I follow Lyotard’s postmodern observation that ‘knowledge is never a final state of affairs’ Lyotard (1984:67).

Johannesson (2005) comments that ANT is rarely applied in tourism research in observing that its understanding of networks fit extremely well with the cultural and economic networks of tourism. I also believe that this lack of interest on the part of the tourism academe may stem from historical apathy toward relationality - in a discipline founded in positivism and embryonic fixations with the ‘bounded’ characteristics of destination – case studies, for example.

Rather than focusing on dialogue between individuals, as some poststructuralism does, actor network theorists bring in individuals, things and text into the socio-cultural process. It is therefore modes of production, rather than culture itself (an abstract overarching principle) that conditions the social world. Actor-network theorists view networks as the best metaphor for ethnographic representation because they believe that both cultural products and social relations have taken on this form. They believe that reflexivity within the ethnographic text is best represented through an understanding of how the social is networked. In this sense a distant forebear for actor-network theory can be seen in Marxism. Marx argued for a world conditioned via praxis, or a synthesizing of subject and object, in that its formative activity upon the world was simultaneously a moment of human self-transformation. Marx believed that the world is thoroughly socialized and socializing, that is, ‘intersubjective to the core’ (Ulin 1991:75). Differing, of course, from
Marx’s view of the world in many ways ANT is based on no stable theory of the subject; in other words, it assumes the radical indeterminacy of the actor. For example, neither the actor’s size nor its psychological make-up nor the motivations behind its actions are predetermined. In this respect ANT is a break from the more orthodox currents of social science. This hypothesis has opened the social sciences to ‘non-humans’ (Lee & Brown 1994).
The reflexive networks of ANT

Actor-network theory challenges linearity (in which knowledge is carried linguistically and expressed in propositions and theories) as meaning emerges in spatial as well as textual mode. A backpacking assemblage involves other backpackers, artifacts and their contexts; the value of knowledge is now determined by the network. Thus actor-network theory helps me to understand the genesis of my project. A combination of me as actor, other backpackers and material components constitute ‘symmetrical anthropologies’ (Latour 1993). I can ask questions such as ‘How did I come to interpret backpacking this way?’ ‘How did I influence it, what was my specific role as researcher? And, importantly, in the case of the research where does identity work take place? Moreover, I can ask who or what ‘does’ the work? ‘Why do some backpackers act in this way?’ What ‘things’ are they carrying with them? These are not questions I ask to determine a specific ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘one line’ answers, but they allow for a rich interpretation of backpacking tourism. Thus I draw upon ANT to reflexively investigate the role of the researcher, and the backpackers I research, into the mutual production of a research subject. To do so, I review how certain use of concepts effect how the (different) histories of backpacking produce the contemporary research subject; the backpacker. I then utilise concepts from ANT to move beyond conventional and discursive analyses. Thus I am lead to the following question. How should I address my privilege as an economically provisioned Western male in a patriarchal system? First I began to urge myself toward a process of self-analysis. But this is problematic; it rests on an over-determined concept of the self. Instead I turn to the idea of a situated self and explore what this means for identity politics. I include not just the activities of actors in backpacking, but also my own activity as researcher, as well as those of the wider academe in which I am framed. Thus I use the concept of translation to explore the role of multiple actors in the processes of social construction that produce backpackers as a subject of academic study, which is related to, but distinct from, the ‘social’ subject produced in the setting under study. I also follow the leads of others, primarily Clegg (2001), in a reconceptualization of reflexivity, which moves beyond the common view of reflexivity (individuals who struggle to understand their role in their research) towards an understanding of reflexivity that involves all areas of the practice of research.
Actor networks theory’s concern with the elements that constitute the social (hybrids) embeds a methodological rigour which refuses to reduce explanations of social activity singularly to the natural, social, or discursive realm (Pels 1995). The careful analysis of practices of exchange which maintain and produce new categories shifts the analytical focus away from just the human actors, whose reality is already guaranteed. The new object of analysis becomes the very processes (exchanges or translations) by which each of the elements (both human and non-human) and their relationships are constructed. Thus, at this stage of my research journey I suggest that the research project is reflexive when the work engages with the position of other backpackers and does not position backpacking a priori. I am fascinated by and strive toward revealing the inner logic of ANT’s methodology realized by specifying the interpretative, reflective turn in its philosophical underpinnings. This means creating writing with the awareness that this process operates in a world of other representations that might equally serve to shape the final product – a framework for the ontological emergence of backpacking and each of these would also do so with their own social, political and critical agendas. Thus my final research project resembles an attentively constructed tapestry. Accordingly then, if it is written articulately and includes reflective accounts, the reader may well consider my research and writing, at times, as reflexive. Thus reflexivity is not an afterthought, but is built into my methodological framework. Reflexivity could be said to be an essential feature of ANT. From its inception the idea behind my research was to develop a methodology with a critical lens

Limitations to ANT

I am aware of the methodological shortcomings of actor-network theory. I also find the very idea appealing - that ANT recognises its limitations. I read Laws’ own hesitations over some of its premises. He writes: ‘There are four things wrong with actor-network theory, the word ‘actor’, ‘network’, ‘theory’, and the ‘hiphen’ (Law 1994:21). By supplanting the word actor (with its human supposition) with the word actant (both human and non-humans) a deeper engagement with the operations of ANT goes in part way to resolve this.

ANT attempts to piece together evidence about the properties of nonhuman elements. In simple terms, if artefacts do not speak for themselves (Grint and Woolgar 1997) then
defining the properties of an object must be a human act (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis 1994), making the so-called ‘non-human’ realm in fact fundamentally social. The boundary between the human and non-human is therefore an outcome of the boundary setting practices of the participants including the ANT analyst, not the stable starting point of the analysis (Rachel and Woolgar 1995). But this I do not take as a break from its ontological premise. With applied methodological rigour and an embrace of my own performance as researcher I demonstrate that this concern is negotiable through certain reflexivities, an appreciation of affect and an acute attempt to never speak for the things I find around me.

Another area of concern for practitioners of ANT is that because human and non-human categories are collapsed ANT, the complex character of human action might be displaced or worst ignored (Munir and Jones 2004). Moreover some research suggests that humans deserve an ontologically distinct category especially for for their ability to use language and other symbolic forms to generate and interpret meaning (Whittle and Spicer 2008, Collins and Yearly 1992). To this end I have developed an analysis in Chapter 4 to allow for discussion (in hybrid form) for the peculiarity of the guidebook as written and read text, as well as performative artefact.

Walsham (1997) worries that ANT studies are too local, ignoring the wider social environment and that ANT could encourage a devaluation of humans. Grint (1996) although optimistic about the promise of ANT, also point out difficulties in identifying the interests of various actants and in particular an ambiguity as to whether scripts are intrinsic to or imposed upon nonhuman actants. I share these same concerns. I come against them time and time again. I had some methodological anxieties over my application, I wondered whether ANT might diffuse categorical fixity, or, would it expose irresolvable distinction between categories such as backpacker and tourist? I suggest as much this was a concern it was also exciting. I still believe it is this critical transparency that enables me to retain a sense of awareness in how I perform my research, or better still, how backpacking is performed? Latour suggests that the ‘empty space ‘in between’ the networks, those ‘terra incognita’, are the most exciting aspects of ANT (ibid 1999).

ANT has been characterised as a ‘program of methodological provocations that constantly challenge traditional categories in the social sciences, introducing new sets of terms for
their reconceptualising’ (Miettinen 1999:171). There are a several founding characteristics. To begin with there is the sociology of translation understood as the shifts in meaning that occur between two or more entities. Secondly, there is the principle of generalised symmetry, the process of assimilation from the effects of these translations. And third, the articulating principle that the ‘actor-network’ is one of ongoing construction. ANT is thus an attempt to provide the tools for explaining the way realities or local worlds are constantly reconfigured. What distinguishes it from other approaches is its explanation of society in the making, in which both people and material forms play a key part (Callon 2001). The term actant, (instead of actor—which Latour deems is too caught up with the subject) implies that it is not just humans that act; non-material entities can also act. Both can be referred to anew as actants. Thus Latour writes:

…Actantability is not what an actor does… but what provides actants with their actions, with their subjectivity, with their intentionality, with their morality. When you hook up with this circulating entity, then you are partially provided with consciousness, subjectivity, actoriality, etc…To become an actor is… a local achievement…Even something as seemingly human and individual as intentionality is defined in network terms as ‘a circulating capacity…partially gained or lost by hooking up to certain bodies of practice (Latour 1999:18).

Most generally the idea of the network implies a series of transformations and translations. A more nuanced sense of network arises in Latour’s argument that a network is not a society or an anonymous field of forces but the summing up of interactions through various kinds of devices, inscriptions, and forms into a very tiny performative locus. Thus I will outline how, under the remit of ANT the conceptual lens for my backpacking research shifts from structuralism to processual deconstruction, and to the associated politics of where, how and why boundaries and becomings are produced and facilitated. ANT is perfectly suited for the challenge of fusing together disparate and stratified ways of backpacking doing. Furthermore, the thesis opens up a more space (epistemologically/theoretically) for re-working the former categorical distinctions in backpacking research.
Figure 3 highlights (metaphorically-in-motion) the interrelated weavings of human and non-human matter(s) that constitute the performative social network. I created this diagram to figuratively demonstrate the pushing and pulling and forces bearing on and leading to, interaction.

**Figure 3: ANT a performative science**

![ANT diagram](image)

**ANT and agency**

If people and objects are performed, everything is uncertain and reversible (Law 1999:4).

Objects are not what they were made to be, but what they have become (Thomas 1991:4).

There are many theories that attempt to deal with agency. The traditional schools of thought attribute agency to biological essentialism that it is more inherent behaviour – a biological given. And later *still* to the body (in a performative sense – not essentialist
mode). There is the semiotic construction of agency – found in the symbols, texts and signifiers in and around people (discourse). Agency also emanates from the social – or attributed to the cohesive matter of sociality – i.e. the material realm. In the logic of ANT humans are at the same time natural, social and discursive. This simultaneity heralds people as always and already real, biological and semiotic entities (see Law 1999). ANT provides the methodology and the means to deal with this new articulation of entities (neither subject or object).

ANT’s most distinctive attribute may be in its concern with material entities or artifacts. The claim is that material artifacts exercise something which resembles agency, but this proves to be a peculiar form of agency, one entirely devoid of intentionality (Brown and Capdevila). The key to artifacts is their lack of meaning; it is this that gives them a will to connect with other elements of a network. It is this very blankness that leads the network and its elements to seek to connect with the artifact. To put it another way, by inciting connections an artifact ‘drives networks to incorporate and fold around actants’ (Brown and Capdevila 1999:40). Humans can be seen in much the same way. That is they perform their own functional blankness… ‘on the basis of what they do not present, do not say… and this very blankness provokes the will-to-connect to ever greater excesses’ (Brown and Capdevila 1999:40). Thus material artifacts play a key role in constituting networks and subjects. Law and Heatherington (2002) discuss how things such as home decorations are performative; they act, they participate in the generation of information, of power relations, of subjectivities and objectivities. Thus non-humans are active participants in a network, in social relationships. Of course, material artifacts lack what defines human actors - intentionality. Helen Verran summarises:

This interpretive frame avoids any separation of the material and the symbolic in proposing worlds as outcomes of mutually resisting/accommodating participants, where participation goes far beyond the human to encompass the non-living as active in routine (and novel) actions, which constitute the world (ibid 1999:143).
Modern disdain

Tourism is a modern phenomenon. Its epistemological legacies are not easily shaken off despite today’s postmodern furore. (Backpacking) tourism is characterised by its modern foundations, colonial ideals; modern alienation (escape) and the search for the (exotic) other. To summarise modernity’s intent Deleuze and Guattari (1987) list ‘organism’, ‘signification’ and ‘subjectivisation’ as three ideals of modernism: (1) you will be organised, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body – and (2) you will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you are just deviant and (3) you will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement (adapted from Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The subversion of these ideals in poststructuralism marks the transition from the modern to the postmodern subject and is therefore pivotal in my re-imagining of backpacking identity practices. Importantly with their notions of ‘becoming’, the ‘rhizome’ and ‘assemblage’, Deleuze and Guattari displace these modern ideals and, in doing so, change the status of the human subject. In sum, their concepts challenge the idea of human centricity, the mind/body split, normative behaviour and the ‘fixed’ subject.
A performance studies approach to backpacking

All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn’t – are not easy to specify (Goffman 1959:72).

My performance studies approach to backpacking contributes to a growing field of tourism inquiry with special focus on the critical analysis of performance and performativity. The use of performance as a mode of analysis for tourism in general, and backpacking in particular, has become an important centre of attention in recent literature (Edensor 2000, 2001; Coleman and Crag 2002; Ateljevic and Doorne 2005). Performance based studies are essentially inter-disciplinary inquiry into social phenomena that consider performance both as a target of study and a technique of analysis. Nearly fifty years have passed since Erving Goffman, in his book, *The Presentation of Self In Everyday Life* described performance ‘as a basic point of reference’ (1959:12). Goffman states that ‘a performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence, in any way, any of the other participants’ (ibid 1959:13). Goffman essentially uses the metaphor of performance to attempt a description for how the social world and its components function. More recently, Richard Schechner has defined the essence of a performance based application to social inquiry, ‘Performance studies do not study texts, architecture, visual arts, or any other item or artifact of art or culture as such. When texts, art, architecture and anything else are looked at, they are studied “as” performances’ (2002:2). In more intimate discussion with touristic phenomena Barbara Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (1994, 1998) is widely celebrated for her role in bringing performance to tourism. As Franklin (2001) writes, ‘Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s book, *Destination Culture*, makes the case for the centrality of performance studies to the analysis of tourism’ (2001:211). Hazel Tucker also points to the complex tourism performances involved at the meeting point between host and guest in something termed the ‘interactive gaze’. Historicising Urry’s visual gaze, this recycled and interactive gaze, has particular material and constitutive capacities (see Tucker 2009).

By telling a non-linear story that moves between, across, and through various theoretical, experiential, and methodological positions and examples, this PhD will in some ways be a kind of ethnographic enterprise itself. I question the separation of the tourist and
backpacker by disputing other norms and, like others, I challenge their historical categorisations. In this performance ethnography, I engage with my own experience, thoughts, and feelings as they relate both to my position as a tourism scholar, tourism researcher and my backpacking embodiment. Before describing other backpackers I attempt to situate and recognise the role that I play as the final (though reflexive and undergoing constant construction) processing apparatus. I believe, along with Geertz, Clifford and Marcus that ethnography is understood as an anthropological pursuit concerned with knowing cultures, and yet also like them, of writing itself - I made most of my observations through notes jotted down in my journals, collated and edited largely after the fact, yet I made observations about my presence and my body in the field. Thus I was concerned with what was happening to me, how it was happening and what I was doing, thinking or saying that arranged and interpreted my surrounds. I do not seek to provide definitive answers to each of these but I do present some key issues that explain why I raise these as matters of concern.

The performative

Writing has nothing to do with signifying or representation, per se. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come. Writing is performative (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:46).

Performativity provides an account of language that is more than just representative. It suggests that language ‘does’ something. While this function of language may seem counter to what might be the traditional way of knowing language; that it mirrors reality, I ask has this always been the case. Perhaps the performative is a way of viewing language that once was, or more appropriately – always has been. Thus, I wish to argue here that performative literature fulfils a function of language reminiscent of ancient forms of language, in which words free themselves from their abstract function of phonetic representation to become material objects. They are also things that hurt, abhor, disgust, obstruct, conduct, construct, provide meaning to human existence; objects that not only act (or are performed), but also cause material effects. This use of language is ‘performative’, completely different from a ‘constative’ character; one that is symbolic. This distinction is a critical one for my thesis, not only, to demonstrate how performativity
returns the character of backpacking discourse and language to the construction of reality, but also on the wider level in showing how certain language always achieves this. To understand the performative effects of backpacker guidebooks I provide an account of language first offered by John Austin (1962) in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin defines the performative as ‘derived, of course, from perform, that a speech utterance is the performing of an action - it is not normally thought of as just saying something’ (1962:6-7). It was for too long the assumption of philosophers, writes Austin (1975:1), that the business of a statement can only be to describe some state of affairs, or to state some fact, which it must do either true or falsely. He proposed a distinction between constative utterances, which make a statement, describe a statement of affairs, and are true or false, and another class of utterances that are not true or false and actually perform the action to which they refer: performatives. A performative, therefore, is defined as a statement which performs the action that it describes, for example, ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’ refers to the act of marrying as well as producing the state of marriage (and the power relations therein). Other examples of performatives in Austin’s work are ‘I sentence you…’, ‘I pronounce you…’, ‘I promise you…’ Austin’s speech act theory emphasizes how speech is not only descriptive but also performative, through the idea of ‘illocutionary’ acts. Words are performative if they do things, if they perform an action (Petrey 1990). Sanders (2004:164) provides an example of a Biblical performative from Genesis 41:41 when the Pharaoh says to Joseph ‘I give you authority over the whole land of Egypt’, which in saying it accomplishes the transfer of authority. Performatives are effective because they bring characters, actions and places alive (see my analysis of guidebooks in later chapter).

Butler’s path braking formulation of performativity argues that subjectivity is enacted through reiterative performances over time: ‘displacement is that which is excluded or marginalized by the construction of a subject position, its enabling cultural condition’ (1993:7). She argues the theorisation of the speech act is tied to the frailty of the promise: ‘The body is at once the organic condition of promise making and the sure guarantor of its failure’ (Butler 1993: 45). For Butler these practices cannot be a human act or an expression, and it is certainly not a question of wearing a mask; it is the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible. More simply put, Butler defers the emphasis on individual agency, arguing instead that behaviours are part of regulatory fictions, which are pre-scripted to some degree, although not prescribed.
Another view of performance as a dramaturgical metaphor has been part of sociological discourse for many decades. Goffman contends that a complex system of theatrical performances is enacted by intentional agents in order to function in a given social context. Essentially that there is a manipulative and centred self, who chooses to hide or reveal behind ‘masks’. The intentionality of this type performance is an essential difference between Goffman and Butler. There has been strong resistance to thinking about the performative in solely linguistic terms. In an attempt to move away from Austin’s focus on the linguistic aspects of speech-act theory, and to develop the extra-linguistic dimension associated with performance, the poststructuralist works of Jacques Derrida (1986) and Judith Butler (1990,1997a,1997b) provide an account of performativity with emphasis on action as well as speech. Butler (1990) takes the performative into the embodied realm with a path-breaking theorization, utilizing the analogy of gender, and culminating in a confluence of the performative with performance. The performative has thus been radically reconceptualised from an anthropological perspective, most fervently expressed in Butler’s (1993) outrage that the act precedes will. The performative now crosses over into the social with emphasis on the effects of language in constituting normalized subjects. Moreover, the concept of Butler’s performativity is an attempt to find a more embodied way of rethinking the relationships between linguistic performatives and individual re-enactments (agency). Rather than either essentialism located in bodily difference or a kind of free floating, fluid performance of identity, Butler suggests that people perform sedimented forms of social practices that become so routinised as to appear natural ‘…action accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices’ (Butler in Kokofsky eds. 1995:205). In these terms the performative relates to the actionable quality of the utterance. In this regard what is uttered constitutes a social act in, and of, itself, ‘a perspective by which the entire epistemological abyss between ‘world’ or ‘reality’ on the one hand, and ‘language’ on the other hand, collapses’ (Noy 2005:150-151). Performativity is the vehicle through which ontological effects are established (Bulter in Osbourne 1996:112). The performative dimension is a result of the repitition of norms and importantly these norms do not only exist in language. Indeed Butler not only shows ‘how it is that certain signifiers come to mean what they mean, but how discursive forms articulate objects and subjects in their inteligibility’ (Butler in Laffey 2002: 432)
The point is, as soon as performativity comes to rest on a performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, of ideological interpellations of emotional and political effects, all become discussable… when performativity materializes in that risky and dangerous negotiation between a doing(a reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions that frame our interpretations) between someones body and the conventions of embodiment, we have access to cultural meanings and critique. Performativity, I would suggest must be rooted in the materiality and historical density of performance (Diamond 1996:5).

The performative manner of language and discourse has developed into significant subject matter in sociological and literary studies especially (Butler, 1993, 1997b; Parker and Sedgwick, 1995). As Larsen writes:

Butler (1993) puts a different approach to performance, or rather *performativity*, forward in her work on the construction of gender and sex. In contrast to Goffman’s dramaturgical approach, Butler deploys a linguistic definition of performativity that works not with an agentive and manipulating subject but with a subject that is produced within constantly recycled performances that become so routinized as to appear natural: Identities do not preexist their performance (ibid 2005:419).

Another influential post-Austinian discussion of the performative has been Derrida’s critique in ‘Signature Event Context’. Derrida dispels the implication that performatives are the result of singular, intentional acts, and emphasizes their discursive features of iterability and citation. The consequences of this critique are manifest primarily in the status of the subject. The legacy of discursive continuity where fictive and real are co-extensive, characterized by the conditions of writing effects how personhood (or subjectivity) is understood. Fictive speech acts and real cultural practices are inseparable activities. This has particular implication for my analysis in chapter 5, whereby it is argued that the imprint of the guidebook is inseperable from backpacking.

Together, this feature (of discursive continuity) along with, iterability, and identity construction absorb into a new performativity and mark its growing influence across the
social sciences. Moreover, the shifts in the concept of performativity ‘pose questions about how to think about the constitutive force of language, the nature of discursive effects and literature as an act’ (Culler 2000:503).

Culture and performance

The work of British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner is credited for ushering in the performance turn in the study of culture (Bell 2008). Turner’s (1986) concept of cultural identities clarifies the relationship between performance and culture. Rather than representing culture, he suggests, performances are culture (see also St John 2008). Thus, it is misleading to posit culture as an explicit entity from which performances emanate. Instead, Turner (1986) argues, cultures are these very enactments; how people act in the world constitutes their society.

Each culture, each person within it, uses the entire sensory repertoire to convey messages: manual gesticulation, facial expressions, bodily postures, rapid, heavy or light breathing, tears, at the individual level; stylised gestures, dance patterns, prescribed silences, synchronized movement such as marching, the moves and “plays” of games, sport and rituals, at the cultural level (Turner 1986: ).

He argues to understand a culture; an ethnographer should study the actions, performance and work of that culture. In this logic the various ways in which backpackers act is their reflexive identity; the ways they create who they are is, in Goffman’s words, the ‘presentation of self in everyday life’. Turner (1986) notes that cultural performances: ‘are not simple reflectors of expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting designs for living’.

Performance is an implementation of an action in the world which is a presentation of a phenomenon; that action is related to a representation (for example, a text, script, scenario, or book), using a semiotic system (language); finally, a performance springs
from and is presented to a ‘significant’ culture which recognizes new phenomena in it (Crease 1993).

A performative theory of culture is concerned with how people portray their identities. In other words, it considers social enactments. This includes not only what are typically conceived of as ‘performances’ (pretence, facade, mimicry, parody) but also and depicts situated behavior (interactions, rituals, social roles, bodily comportment). This approach to cultural identity discards the qualities that also define the categories, if not, the validity of performance, that is, those markers that separate performance from the intricacies of day to day life; specific incidents, distinction, or eminence; in short, the allure of status. Instead, it focuses on how, at a local and networked level actions determine, ontologically, who people become. With the theoretical assistance of ANT I note how these actions, whether emanating from backpackers or non-human sources fabricate social spaces. I pay attention to the ways in which different actions are framed in different vectors of becoming (see Figure 1) or deeds which ontologically separate one possibility from another. Thus in the following chapters I study and present the reciprocal connections of backpacker and things that scaffold properties of identity which, perhaps because they defy analysis in positivist terms, have generally been taken to be devoid of ontology.

The ongoing methodological challenge of performance studies is to refuse and supercede this deeply entrenched division of labor, apartheid of knowledges, that plays out inside the academy as the difference between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, conceptualizing and creating (Conquergood 2002:153).

My own understanding of backpacking is, therefore to some extent, dependent upon acceptance of those limits that confine backpackers to acting out a particular performance of backpacking. Backpackers are formally coerced by means of constitutive silences and narrative insistence, by the subtle rendition of backpacking in the guidebooks and their relationship with enacted backpacker normativity, and in this sense, a performance that will situate itself neatly and harmoniously within the framework always and already offered. Judith Butler’s definition of the subject comes to mind: The subject has ‘no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality’ (Ibid 1999:173). Butler does not reduce the subject to machinic reproduction, quite the contrary.
Rather the subject comes into being in each new production. This has direct Nietzschean underpinnings:

‘…there is no ‘being’ behind the doing, acting, becoming; the ‘doer’ has simply been added to the deed by the imagination – the doing is everything.’ (Nietzsche 1956:178-79).

Thus with a poststructural deficit of foundations, the concern for me now is to focus on the repetitions of discursive assumptions that facilitate specific relational practices embedded in moments of socialising that constructs identity between subject and object. From this perspective, the categories of ‘tourist’ and ‘traveller’ do not put backpacking under ontological risk but rather they provide backpacking with opportunities to assert its own ontological existence.

The difficulty of my methodological task, therefore, cannot be overestimated. In other words, I need to develop a research model drawing on new philosophies and studies of social performance capable of integrating the sensation and affects of backpackers and their material worlds to situate knowledge about backpacking at the site of production. This entails critically reflecting on my former backpacking experiences, my time spent as an ethnographer, and reflexively negotiating epistemological and ontological foundations throughout the research process. Few scholars have been able to express backpacking identity formation. However, I believe that this attempt distributes the analysis of complex identity performance within backpacking culture and aspires to a research approach as postmodern hybrid: a mixture of performative biography, ethnography; intimate journal extracts; a combination of visual and textual methodologies; literary deconstruction, and material affectivity, under the nuanced guidance of a critical posthuman social constructionism and the theoretical assistance of performativity and ANT which together deliver a pluri-vocal text (yet one that recognises its own limitations – the backpackers I interviewed were Western, for example) about the (im)possibility of momentarily fixing backpacker identity (and backpacking social performance).
Chapter 4: Methodological Framework

Introduction

This chapter outlines my methodological approach to the thesis. John Tribe (2001) reflects on definitions of methodology and writes ‘…methodology is more a matter of considering the nature of the research question being posed and considering, from a range of possible methods, which might be an appropriate approach or combination of approaches’ (ibid 443). He also adds ‘this implies that the researcher has some breadth of knowledge about the extent of possible methods and can survey the landscape of methods from a vantage point with an overview. It implies that the whole process of research is opened up to critical reflection’ (ibid 443). In sum, Tribe’s notion and application of methodology necessitates reflexivity in research. Thus, methods are a developed routine for approaching research question, ‘they can be classed as techniques’ (Tribe 2001:443).

The period of intellectual discourse in which many subjects formed as distinct disciplines, the enlightenment is marked by a distinct preoccupation with epistemology and its methodological extensions. From key advocates of modern scientific method such as Descartes (1637/1993), to logical positivists the truth lay in the method. Cartesian truth is achieved only after the research has adopted certain procedures, which, once assumed require no further justification. For Descartes, these methods involve detached, objective research starting with precise hypotheses, detailed in his Discourse on Method. Similar to Descartes, logical positivists view truth as the product of proper methodological activity, the logical positivist mantra thus follows - the meaning of a statement is its method of verification (Quine 1953). This has been rigorously challenged in late modern times. A poststructural methodology involves escaping the former confines of method-use and instead focuses on the ontological process of how I approach my research. In other words, it is a matter of deconstruction which in turn is helped by methodological practices of positionality and embodiment in the research process. In this sense, my methods are now methodologically-oriented, that is practical extensions of my adopted theories and own assumptions. There must also be a degree of flexibility in my research. It is contextually
driven and therefore the questions and observation inevitably changed. The subject matter ‘the ontogenesis of backpacking’ remained the same, yet the way I challenged and interpreted differed across the various research settings. A social constructionist perspective is congruent with a critical and reflexive methodology. Indeed a clear methodological aspect of social constructionist research is that it re-writes the positivist claim that researchers discover knowledge. Gergen and Gergen (1991) highlight this in the following:

The foremost feature of ... social constructionist research, is the sharing of power between researchers and subjects in order to construct meaning. ‘Subjects’ become ‘participants’ . . . (Gergen & Gergen 1991: 84)

I must, therefore, inhabit a critical zone – one in which I question my own methodological assumptions and therefore the assumptions of the philosophical underpinnings to my methodology. I also wish to avoid radical forms of social constructionism which tend to deny any significant degree of individual agency, in which the subject is seen as tamed: a victim of circumstance. I critically open and re-open the epistemological and ontological bases. I now turn to ontology.

**Ontology**

The epistemological point of departure in philosophy is inadequate (Butler 1992:8).

What does it mean to ‘be’ a backpacker? How does a person become a backpacker? What is my role as a researcher? How is research performed? How is meaning generated? What provides backpackers with being? How is backpacking identity organised, constituted and performed? These are each questions of ontology; these (meta) concerns lay behind my research questions. Earlier I describe how tourism knowledge is situated in epistemological frames, the social conditions of its operation. Epistemology is the consideration, in philosophy and elsewhere, of knowing: when knowledge is valid, what counts as truth, and so on. I argue that backpacking knowledge is embedded in the world and distributed among people and artefacts. This is also an epistemological claim. Yet, in
order to find out just what such an epistemology entails, I must consider this claim ontologically. Ontology is an explicit specification of a conceptualization of being, what is, what exists, what it means for something - or somebody - to be (Packer and Goicoechea 2000). The term is borrowed from philosophy, where ontology is a systematic account of existence. Like many words ontology has different meanings in different contexts. Increasingly philosophers and social researchers concentrate on the ontological dimension of social theory (Laclau 1998). I believe questions of ontology are paramount in determining how distinct theories of backpacking travel have taken shape over the past forty years.

One of the most natural, yet most bewildering questions which modern philosophy deals with is the ontological issue of ‘what is real and what is not?’ This is essentially what Jean Baudrillard attends to. His ‘order of simulacra’ and the related notion of ‘hyperreality’ (discussed above) are efforts of a postmodern critic to cope with (and perhaps discard) the problem of representation (Mattessich 2002). Of course, these ontological matters are not new. In Western history among the first ontological debates to emerge were those in ancient Greece. Heraclitus, for example, denied there was any substance to reality and claimed that it (or its major property) is change itself. Plato’s favoured notion of reality (consisting of ideas, forms, concepts and thoughts), resulted in the long held view, which regards a particular thing as an illusion while the concept of the thing becomes the permanent reality (so the specific thing – the real itself - became the replica). Aristotle, however, did not agree; for him the thing was primarily real; from the thing derived the notion of the thing in abstract. Since this time many more ontological theories have emerged. Judaeo-Christian mediaeval ontologies have used the notion of layers of reality to reflect a hierarchy in which God constitutes the ultimate reality. The enlightenment provided its own ‘modern’ ontologies among which Descartes framed his epistemological belief that everything is doubtful save doubt itself. And since doubt is still thinking, the famous cogito ergo sum was born (Walsh 1985). Descartes’ rationalistic emphasis on thought was so intense that in his pervasive ontology the mind became a reality quite distinct from the other reality, matter. This duality haunts philosophy to this very day. Later came Immanuel Kant’s transcendental idealism which, though primarily an epistemological concern (that is, trying to answer ‘what can we know?) was also ontological (that is, what is out there?) essentially viewed any reality out-there as unknowable, because access, outside of rational thinking, was not possible. The ambitions
of ‘unified science’ was to force everything into the framework of scientific rigour and formal logic, thus a logic only produced in arcane conflation of basic reality with hypothetical worlds (Beaugrande 2004).

…a primary goal of ontological inquiry, as I conceive it, is to provide as complete and encompassing account of the broad nature and structure (of a relevant domain of) reality as possible. Of course all knowledge obtained is inevitable partial and fallible, including ontological insight. But a goal of philosophical ontology is to articulate a theory of the nature and structure of reality that is as encompassing as possible of actual configurations experienced (Lawson 2003:120).

It is hoped, therefore, that I add to the debate about backpacking performance by extending the discussion of identity beyond epistemological matters to include ontological concerns. Constructionist and socio-cultural accounts of tourism each rest on ontological assumptions, but these often go unnoticed. This is due in part to their relatively unarticulated character and in part to an anxiety, traceable to the logical positivists, that discussion of ontology is merely metaphysical, untestable, and therefore unscientific or even meaningless. I reintroduce ontology as a valid, meaningful, and necessary topic in research on meaning making. A related concern, therefore, is to explore the ways that backpacking tourism expresses historically specific notions of Western identity. Patti Lather reflects on ontological concerns in her study of women with HIV:

The effects of that rhizomatic and deconstructive method were ongoing and wrenching, and my obligation to take into account this method and the data it produced forced me to continue to theorize my own life and, in the process, to reconstitute my subjectivity (Lather 1995:41).

I am not dealing with the emotional data that Patti Lather did in her study, but in the same vein my research did cause me to ask some important questions of myself. ‘Who am I?’ ‘Who am I to perform this research?’ Lather frames this conundrum as the ‘desire for self validity’. Ultimately, I faced a significant ontological question. How can I ‘the coloniser’ critically research, those who colonise; backpackers? Put in other words, as I explore Western backpacking identities, how does my ontology come into play, how does it effect
the research? Of course, positivist distance is thrown out of the window, yet this does not mean that I dispose of methodological rigor in my study. On the contrary I address reflexivity through my research (see chapter 3). My initial strategy for reflexivity is a simple one that has been much rehearsed within contestatory methodological practice, namely, the attempt to radicalise myself. The task is to challenge an assumption that has been naturalised and therefore no longer even questioned as an assumption, that is, my epistemological stance, my ontological orientation and my ethical position; even in acknowledgement they reveal something of the incredible power inherent that my position as researcher contains. However, this task becomes an insidious one when I pose a question that underwrites all of the others. That is, when I question the relationship between truth, representation, subject and object. Inspired by posthumanism I set about to re-question and re-situate just where the moment of truth takes place; it is precisely because of this that posthumanism has incurred the wrath of critics from all camps.

Social constructionism

At the centre of the modern/postmodern world view lays the realist/antirealist debate. The first – realism, that an external world exists independently of representations and the second - antirealism that it is not possible to explore a reality independently of the knower. Put simply, this is Western philosophy’s ongoing and central tension. These are, however the fundamental and extreme assertions. There are a myriad of positions within the realist and antirealists camps. Broadly speaking I employ a social constructionist approach. The performative is a central feature of this methodology and naturally includes attending to my performance as a researcher. Thus social process is key to social constructionism. The traditional sense of objectivity, authority and validity of knowledge is challenged as my positionality (who I am, my history, nationality, sexuality, corporeality and so forth) and the questions of how I engage with participants, why I performed this research, and so on, are inseparable from the interpretation and consequentially the ultimate research outcome. There are, of course, key methodological underpinnings to this philosophy. First, I believe the backpacker is constructed, and secondly that this is only possible in a social context. Third, this is achieved through practical activity and formed in relations of belonging and identification. Fourth, this pulls the backpacker in certain and temporary ways, and finally these lead into an initial quest that calls for the deconstruction of identity. Whereas much research treats identity simply as self-concept, as knowledge of self, that is, as epistemological, I hope this construction
of identity formation addresses the fluid character of human being and the way identity is closely linked to interaction, becoming and thus is fundamentally ontological.

The world does not exist outside its expressions (Deleuze 1993:132).

**The body in social constructionism**

In discussions of the social construction of the subject, the fact that the very being of the ‘self’ is dependent not just on the existence of the Other, though also certainly this, but also on the possibility that the embodied self within which the subject sees, feels, knows and recognizes - is also subject to a critical interlocution.

If the way we live is always entirely embodied, then “you” can never be “just about you,” precisely situated in place (“where”?) and time (“when”?)… It means both that you are never isolated, and that there is more to it: “you” is always connected to other situations and dimensions, embedded in something brighter than “you” in your places, times, and timings (Caspao 1997:123).

Butler seems to be more and more troubled about the politics of performance: ‘The reach of...signifiability cannot be controlled by the one who utters or writes, since such productions are not owned by the one who utters them. They continue to signify in spite of...’ (1993c:241). Yet in their performance backpackers are not simply vehicles of discursive regimes, but material bodies differentially positioned in space and time – their bodies demonstrate the power but also the fragility of prevailing norms. The specificity of these performances reveals that bodies can both reproduce and fail to comply with discursive regimes of backpacking.

Among the objections to social constructionism include its dismissal of complex bodily materiality; the concerns are it offers little room for bodily resistance. It is, therefore, important to question whether materiality (and the materiality of the body) exposes such social construction as a dangerous fiction. Yet, it is also necessary to ask whether these are
worthy objections or do they amount to a misreading of social constructionism – the latter can be argued. Grosz’s and Butler’s return to the body can be understood as a reaction to the inadequacies of some forms of social constructionism. Before them lies the passive body, socialised and conditioned in culture, the body erased as an active site. Simply put, social constructionism advocates the primacy of the social or discourse as constructive form over preexisting matter which is either pre-significative or non intelligible. Judith Butler and Elizabeth Grosz are critical of this position for various reasons. Furthermore Butler’s theory of gender performativity is intended as an improvement on social constructionism. While she accepts the premise that gender is socially constructed, she urges this same construction involves the materialization of bodies through the repetition of gender norms.

What I would propose in place of these conceptions of construction is a return to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter (Butler in Armour and St Ville 2006:153).

Two important points need to be emphasized about this radicalization of ‘construction’. First, construction is not only an interpretive activity that attributes meaning to pre-existent matter but is instead a process of materialization. Second, the category of matter, or more precisely, the matter of human bodies, is not just a product of the activity of the subject but itself a re-iterative (performative) locale. Hence, the alternative account of agency Butler proposes involves an examination of ‘the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, its enabling cultural condition’.

I turn now to Butlers’ ideas on agency in which performance resides in the processes of materialisation. As Salamon (2000) suggests there is immanent need for clarification. She writes ‘Social construction is not the same as a social constriction, or social role, or social control, or cultural expectation. It does not mean not real or unimportant. Social construction is not synonymous with performativity though it is importantly connected to both. To claim that the body is socially constructed is not to claim that it is not real, that it is not made of flesh, or that its materiality is insignificant. Immediately she follows with a succinct question and answer ‘What, then, is meant when we say that the body is a social
construct? It means that our bodies are always shaped by the social world in which we are inescapably situated’ (ibid 2006:281). The body is as much an historical sedimentation of ideas as it is a moving, twitching, felt and ‘sensed’ assembly. This is the power of social constructionism. In sum I suggest that theorizing backpacking identity performance requires a middle course between essentialism and constructionism, one which I believe the platform of ANT allows. That is, that both these theories should be taken into account. And moreover, that social constructionism is not reduced to text, nor set aside from the body, but that social constructionism provides the theoretical apparatus through which bodies and meaning are intertwined and configured.

An ontology of becoming

Like Gilles Deleuze, before him, Bruno Latour (1997) an actor-network theorist (see chapter 3) invokes a networked ontology; an irreductionist and relationist ontology in which actors are not conceived of as fixed entities but are new ontological hybrids, world making entities. The old distinction between things and representations, between material and texts dissolves: both have the same ontological status - the backpack, the backpacker (but still different identifications). Society, argues Latour (1997) has a fibrous, thread-like, wiry, stringy, capillary character; it is a global entity - a highly connected one - which remains nevertheless continuously local. Neither essentialist or deterministic, but an ontology allied to the possibilities within moments of social performance. This is a definition of ‘ontology as becoming’. I settle on this Deleuzian version of ontology in which people and things are in a process of becoming; striving to be what they are not (yet). Ultimately then, ‘backpacking-becoming’ entails both personal and social transformation. In short, it involves ontological change. In terms of research focus, then, I am interested in the actors of backpacking (and their identifications); the qualities and attributes of people and things that perform in backpacking. Thus any essentiality becomes performativity; the ability to perform this will (a type of agentic capacity).

Deleuzian ontology is an ontology of ‘becomings’ (which Deleuze refers to as lines of flight), these mark the possibilities of difference (yet they are not deterministic). In this sense backpacking identity is traced before, but backpackers themselves are not yet constituted by specific identities (akin to the Derridean notion of the ‘trace’). The different
possibilities (of securing identity) do, however, provide the material that will be actualised into those identities (May 2005). In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972) work *Anti-Oedipus*, ‘intensity’ is produced by the synthesis of the relations of attraction and repulsion. The same idea of relation is also apparent in *Difference and Repetition* (1968/1994). In this sense I (me, the researcher) do exist. Moreover, it is not possible to separate me from the conditions of my production; I am a *fieldworker* in the sense that I *work* the field. Yet the ‘me’ is but a tracing of ‘me’ that sweeps through the research and concludes a sense of ownership from a world made-up of performances, mine included. This coalescence leads to something called viscosity. Saldhana (2006) writes that ‘viscosity refers to the becoming-sticky of bodies relative to each other and certain spaces through certain behaviours and physical and cultural conditions’ (ibid: 173-174). Later, in the thesis, I extend the notion of viscosity to both things and bodies; as a posthuman trope I argue it coagulates the social.

**Methodological effect**

My methodological goal is to explore constituents of becoming across vastly different spaces and social terrains that constitute or in the very least influence backpacking. To explore the process of ‘becoming a backpacker’ I use methods to track the emergence and energies of practices, texts and artifacts that occur across space and time. The aim is to provide detailed information on which particular transactions within backpacking contribute to backpacking identity formation and more importantly, *how* this is achieved. Importantly then, I rest with ANT. I firmly believe there is no fixed (human) self. The unit of analysis must be broader than the (human) individual, and thus, in the first, through Derrida, I attend to the content of language. This requires an interpretive logic of inquiry, in which the unit of analysis is the interaction. Constituent power is continuous and everyday. Yet, as Negri (1999) notes, ‘once the exceptional moment of innovation is over, constituent power seems to exhaust its effects’ (1999: 327). The event of the performative moment is often miniscule. It requires a methodology capable of appreciating both the mundane and the spectacular, with an analytical lens able to scrutinise both. Thus drawing on ethnography and discourse analysis, I attend to the turns taken in backpacking to show the negotiated accomplishments of everyday interaction and the ways participants move in discourse and transform one another.
In particular, I am interested in translational moves of eminence, position and intimacy that beset backpacking with a dynamics of desire and identification. Also influenced also by ontological hermeneutics (see Packer 1997) my analysis extends to the way objects are indexed and contexts invoked, disclosing the constitutive causality of social context. This enables study of the performative modes of activity that comprise an ontology, more specifically exposes the artefacts and sites of backpacking identity nodes and relations of production, distribution, and exchange of artefacts and the processes of becoming from paradoxical and contradictory heterogeneous elements that constitute backpacking.

My intention is to provide a critical arrangement of backpacking ontological emergence. In this process I distinguish epistemological emergence; where emergence is merely a trace or functional description created by a particular actor or form, from those instances of ontological emergence. By this I mean the effects of other actors or ‘things’ with performative energies not necessarily reducible to any of the intrinsic qualities of the different actors but emergent through their relationality. The emergent backpacking ontology is the combined effect of those energies (or performative densities) within the backpacking network which exert a causal influence (a shift in identity) on other actors in the network consistent with, but distinct from the performative energies of the individual actors.

Thus I outline a research methodology that embraces individuality, yet recognizes that individual backpackers are also found within a broader set of socio-spatial and cultural understandings of whom they are and how they come be in the world. There exists a tension, therefore, one that comes within the theoretical composition of world. This move requires not only an epistemological shift, but a shift from epistemology. I focus on reconceptualizing the ‘settings’, not only as the social, political, or economic factors that condition backpacking but as pivotal material semiotic domains with cause and effect. Reconceptualizing the environment into a material semiosis makes it epistemologically possible to make connections between varying levels of analysis, namely, between individual accounts of my research and observations, the stories of the backpackers involved and the cultural, social and historical worlds from which these accounts emerge.
Qualitative research

The flowering of new ways of theorizing, investigating and understanding human/societal experience, activities and actions invokes new ways of interpreting and expressing the polyphony, multi-vocality, textuality and situatedness of participants in a qualitative research inquiry (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001:78).

My research is a critical qualitative assemblage. I wish, therefore, to provide a brief overview of qualitative research. Qualitative research is an umbrella term that includes several philosophical interests; among others these include the interpretive, the critical and the postmodern. The idea behind qualitative research is that that meaning is socially constructed through interaction with the world. Reality, in this sense is not something that simply exists out there and therefore instrumentally measurable - as is it is held to be in positivism. On the contrary, it is fluid and only known to the individual (or the encultured group) whom come to know it. Qualitative researchers are therefore concerned with contexts, and this case – I am very much interested in the material minutae of the social world that ‘holds’ backpacking together. Thus, following Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) lead I strive to develop a critical research project with a strong emphasis on a rigourous self-reflexive energy – one which particularly questions my own presence in backpacking culture as ‘backpacker-researcher’. First I draw upon on Denzin and Lincoln’s earlier definition of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers studythings in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenain terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials case studies, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic momentsand meanings in individuals’s lives (Denzin and Lincoln 1990:2).
Thus qualitative research is a journey taken by both the researcher and the researched. Throughout this research journey both myself and the participants characterise the research process in that we both construct meaning through our relations and activities. The idea of co-construction is implicit in actor-network theory. Both Denzin (1994) and (Lather 1991) agree that qualitative researchers now contend with a dual crisis, one of representation and legitimation. In other words, I must face the question, how do I (re)present my research? Coupled with the challenge (in lieu of the crisis of representation), is what I (re)present legitimate and received by others as such? The personal is therefore, integral to qualitative research.

Research is not only an outward endeavour; it travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions and practices (Snowber 2005:346).

**Scaffolds and frames**

First and foremost, my PhD is a critical academic enterprise. I need to strengthen my affiliation with relevant academic researchers in the social sciences in general and in the field of backpacking research, in particular. To this end, as noted above, I work to turn the artefacts of backpacking into an appropriate site for an investigation of backpacking practices and identities, and more specifically of central objects for ethno-methodological studies. Thus, I designate the social network of backpacking and its objects (primarily the guidebook and the backpack) as performative sites prior to the inquiry itself. This inevitably adds to the already methodological complexity, due in part for the need to acknowledge the inescapability of my own previous backpacking trips. I must also question the intersubjective nature of social inquiry (note inter ‘subjective’ deriding the possibilities ‘inter-object’) and strive toward the desirability, for the purposes of (de)ontological security, of reflexivity. This sets the stage, moreover, for the relevance of my research to a second, crucial audience; that is, some of whom remain anonymous, my Ph.D reviewers. My starting place with respect to this audience is to work at making backpacking, so familiar to them, novel in such a way that they might enjoy my writing as though encountering it for the first time. The main observation is that the production of backpacking social order through common activities (practices involving humans, non-humans and the material-semiotic world) has, as both a primary resource and an ongoing,
practical problem, the work of bringing various performances into productive relation with specific circumstances of action. For this I turn to actor-network theory (see later this chapter).

The first part of this chapter highlights some limitations of former methodology used in tourism research. Second, I attend to the specifics of utility and usability for my chosen methodology. In the past much backpacking research sought to elicit socio-cultural information by employing social theories that are methodologically reductive and therefore limiting in effect (see my review of symbolism in chapter two). Typically the resultant methodology is based on human centric models of the social and although many deploy rigour and reflexivity in the research process this has been procured by means that are intersubjective. Thus, in order to explain power relations in the social world, and then to research the outcomes that follow from intersubjectivity alone essentially amounts to an account of the social that is solely premised on human actors; in which pre-existing social matters of class or nationality, for example, determine and shape human lives. This, of course, is true to a degree, yet is only critical of part of the picture. Put in other words a wholly intersubjective lens denies the transitive between subject/object any real effect in human societies. To counter this, I explore two distinct but intimately related methodological approaches that fall within the general rubric of poststructuralism – performativity and actor-network theory. I do so, fundamentally to reject the now fictional premise of Cartesian human centricity. This approach allows me to situate backpacking within a larger context and reflect on specific ‘mediating roles’ and ‘to formulate appropriate practices of intermediation’ (Gartener and Wagner 1996:187).

Material Culture

Studies of material culture are concerned with the material construction of identity and the sociality of objects (Appadurai 1986, Miller 1987, 1998). I adopt actor-network theory (ANT) a specific theoretical and methodological approach to studies of material culture, in which the concept of ‘performativity’ is the key operating mechanism of reality. Performativity and the ‘translation’ of that performance are seen as the ‘processes of
materialization’; the ‘artefact effects’ (Buchli 2002). The specific goal of my research is to enhance an understanding of the material practices of backpacking tourism; to see them as ‘effects of power’ circulating in networks of human and non-human entities. In the past few decades, theoretical approaches that serve to stabilize the identity of ‘things’ into functional form and use, have given way to more complex notions of identity constituted by the performance of both humans and ‘non-humans’ and the material world (see chapter 6). The material turn in tourism studies is traced to postmodernist and poststructural discourses, both of which are linked, in turn, to the dissolution of the boundaries between the signifier and the signified. Yet culture and the social are so central to narratives of modernity, that it is very difficult for me to escape the modernist formations of these domains which disavow an exploration of materiality. Thus it is hoped that an application of ANT might help with this task. Over twenty years ago Daniel Miller wrote that material culture ‘has consistently managed to evade the focus of academic gaze, and remains the least understood of all central phenomena of the modern age’ (1987:217). Since this time, however, the study of materiality has gathered momentum, the introduction of concepts such as ‘relational materialism’ (Law 1992), the ‘cyborg’, the ‘hybrid’ (Haraway 1991), ‘actor-network’ (Latour 1992) and ‘assemblage’ (Dant 2002) attempt to collapse the distinction between the social and the material. Indeed, these academics write with the charge that the social is material and vice versa. Markussen writes ‘Performativity is a theory of how things - identities and other discursive effects - come into being’ (2005:329). Key to Latour’s actor-network perspective is his notion of translation: moments in social performance where participants ‘take detours through the goals of others’ (Latour 1999:89). The reference to ‘others’ refers to other people, texts and material artifacts or ‘non-humans’ in the social world. Material artefacts do not merely echo the society in which they are found, they translate and displace the contradictory interests of people and things (see Law 1999). Translations in the realm of backpacking include the many shifts in meaning and intentions that result from repeated compromise between backpacker’s and the material world of ‘things’. By de-emphasizing traditional subject-object controversies, ‘material performativity’ describes how social arrangements in backpacking are shaped by interactions with material objects. Performativity is a term that describes and even replaces the term ‘postmodernism’. It marks a new epoch in which subject, sign, and thing come together in ways that create an aesthetic experience of transcendency - a place where meaning is created.
Constructing a new grammar

Objects are really something ‘beyond’ the material support of images, and something more than what a picture can ‘bring into view’. Thus whilst still modernly conceived in relation to a perceiving subject ‘objects’ cannot be thought beyond that which either carries an image or which can be referred by it. There is, indeed, an absence of appropriate vocabulary to study the associations between humans and non-humans (Johnson 1988). In the process of co-constructing (it is a relational project with others before and around me) a new grammar for understanding backpacking identity formation, my posthuman (or put simply, material) framework theorizes the interplay between backpacking materiality and sociality. This methodology reconfigures the ontological boundary between subjects and objects just as my epistemology no longer separates the real and the imaginary (for example, I do not separate backpacking guidebooks and fictional texts such as Alex Garlands backpacking novel – *The Beach*; both suture the subject with ways of being) and then, as I do this, new vocabularies emerge as crucial sites of understanding (see gloopiness or viscosities in chapter 8, for example).
Methodologically, the relationship between researcher and researched is different in each of the paradigms, with the most significant rupture occurring between the first and second stage, that is, between positivism and interpretivism.

### Table 2: Research Paradigms

(Adapted from Lather 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVISM</th>
<th>INTERPRETIVISM</th>
<th>CRITICAL THEORY</th>
<th>DECONSTRUCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reality is objective and “found”</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and constructed</td>
<td>Reality is subjective and constructed on the basis of issues of power</td>
<td>Reality is ultimately unknowable; attempts to understand it subvert themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth is one</td>
<td>Truth is many</td>
<td>Truth is many, and constitutes a system of socio-political power</td>
<td>Truths” are socially constructed systems of signs which contain the seeds of their own contradiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse is structured and transparent, reflecting reality</td>
<td>Discourse is dialogic and creates reality</td>
<td>Discourse is embedded in (and controlled by) rhetorical and political purpose</td>
<td>Discourse is by nature inseparable from its subject, and is radically contingent and vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is true?</td>
<td>What is heuristic?</td>
<td>What is just?</td>
<td>Is there a truth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can we know?</td>
<td>What can we understand?</td>
<td>What can we do?</td>
<td>What constitutes truth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the world</td>
<td>Understanding the world</td>
<td>Changing the world</td>
<td>Critiquing the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication as transmission</td>
<td>Communication as transaction</td>
<td>Communication as decision making</td>
<td>Communication as challenging the nature of communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflexivity in research

Reflexivity is close to a Nietschean perspective consciousness in which all facts are interpretations and all points are seen as subjective (Narazuk 2011: 81).

I use reflexivity in a specific way; to acknowledge that the methods I use to describe backpacking – are to some degree – constitutive of the realities that they describe. In other words, the actor-network approach, the participant observation, the interview encounters depend on particular and situated engagements within backpacking tourism. These are not arbitrary; they are generated from their own methodological camp. At the same time, however, I do not wish to claim that I present a thoroughly reflexive project. I question whether this is at all possible? Better said, I am prompted by the implications of reflexivity and to this end situate my research on a reflexive path. A reflexive methodology is certainly in more keeping with my theoretical perspectives. Thus I now wish to address the difficulties I faced in assuring reflexivity; and the inability, at times, to meet some reflexive goals.

The socio-linguistic construction of reality implies, in turn, the social and material embeddedness of inquiry itself. Thus the research process includes me who reflexively becomes both an inseparable part of the research itself, and the subsequent description. Pink argues that ‘reflexivity should be integrated fully into processes of fieldwork and visual or written representation in ways that do not simply explain the researcher’s approach but reveal the very processes by which the positionality of researcher and informant were constituted and through which knowledge was produced during the fieldwork (ibid 2003:189). Spivak also underlines this point describing how representations, in terms of groups of people (cultures) are intimately linked to positioning (socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographic, historical, institutional). Spivak demands, therefore, a heightened self-reflexivity. In this section I illustrate the advantages and limits of my performance of a hyper, self-reflexive performative researcher.

Ateljevic et al (2005) address the matter of reflexivity which, they argue, has received rather limited attention within tourism studies. By drawing personal academic experiences they identify a range of ‘entanglements’ that influence and constrain research designs, textual strategies and ability to pursue reflexive knowledge. The entanglements they
identify include the following themes: ‘ideologies and legitimacies’; ‘research accountability’; ‘positionality’ and ‘intersectionality’ with the researched’. They are specifically determined on taking reflexivity out of the self, and into the whole research process.

I am also wary of claiming to write reflexively in light of works that proffer to adhere to the principles of reflexivity when those reflexivities used are flawed or ambiguous. Feminist researchers have encountered this problem, through the manner by which some male researchers locate themselves reflexively in their writing and in their research on gender, for example. Indeed, Probyn (1993) states that academic’s are engaged in the process of fetishizing the other. Highlighting this problem further England (1994) cites Bondi (1990) when she states…‘the new post-modern venture is a new kind of gender tourism, whereby male theorists are able to take package trips into the world of femininity, in which they get a bit of the other in the knowledge that they have return tickets to the safe, familiar and, above all, empowering terrain of masculinity’ (ibid 1990 in England 1994:247).

By this I refer to, especially, the approach to locating oneself in the research process. This it seems has come to mean many different, conflicting and contradictory things. In much feminist work, for example there has been the tendency to recognise the positioning of the researchers gender, sexuality, class – and although these acknowledgements are critical to some research, they have almost become a routinised way to claim reflexivity in the research process. It must be said parenthetically that reflexivity may be misunderstood for being conflated with self-centeredness in a ‘degenerate [postmodern] society wallowing narcissistically in empty self-preoccupation’ (Myerhoff & Ruby 1982: 7). If, for example, a researcher writes their gender and sexuality into an article and states that this, of course, has some bearing on the outcome of the material gathered and interpreted. The ambiguity arises when it becomes unclear how, where and if at all, this has had any real effect on the interpretive process in the specific conditions of that research? Thus, I suggest another way that I have employed reflexivity in my research and this has been to recognise the difference in being that organised my research position during my time spent in Thailand in 2007 and the position of the people I interviewed and observed. To this end, I move forward to my discussion on the interplay and difference between tourist and ethnographer.
I do not believe that reflexivity can be performed at all times. Rather, I suggest that an ethics of reflexivity is re-imagined within each relation as researcher and respondent settle differences of ethical concern by mutual problem solving and acknowledging the theoretical frameworks and agendas via deconstruction when the narrative seems politicised. During the interviews I attend to the silences by situating the difference of the other – whether this was overt verbalisation or subtle bodily reaction. Thus a critical part of the organization is the incorporation of strategies to facilitate this reflexive process, inclusion of extracts from my research note books and discussion of our feelings on the process of the research I undertook (see Chapter 8 section 8.61 The researcher’s body), as well as, importantly, in asking the participants if they mind if I take notes during the interviews, this was not always the case, as it is generally off-putting and distracting for both of us, however, this was especially helpful when I came to transcribe – as my reminders pointed to things often left unsaid in the interview narrative. There were times during the interviews when I was able to quickly jot down some inferences toward bodies, composure and emotion.

The division of labour between theory and practice, abstraction and embodiment, is an arbitrary and rigged choice, and, like all binarisms, it is booby-trapped. It’s a Faustian bargain. If we go the one-way street of abstraction, then we cut ourselves off from the nourishing ground of participatory experience. If we go the one-way street of practice, then we drive ourselves into an isolated cul-de-sac, a practitioner’s workshop or artist’s colony. Our radical move is to turn, and return, insistently, to the crossroads (Conquergood 2002:154).

Reflexivity, in its various guises, occupies a central place in applications of actor-network theory, feminist research, ethnographies, and most post-modern/post-structural approaches to research. It often assumes different forms and raises different questions (Marcus 1994). A major form is associated with self-critique, playing on the subjective, the experiential and the idea of empathy (Marcus 1994). Another type of reflexivity is one that emphasizes the diverse field of representation and has been termed as the ‘politics of location’ This type of reflexivity acknowledges that interpretation exists in a complex matrix of alternative representations and ‘derives its critical power and insight from this awareness’
(Marcus 1994:571). Its focus is upon reflexive awareness of the historical connections that already link it to its subject matter; such representations become an integral part of field work (Marcus 1994:571).

The disruption of the composed form of theory by multiple voices has forced many social scientists to accept the fact that disciplinary and theoretical practices both create, and are formed by, not only subject positions but object positions also. My goal was to reach beyond the subjectivist account of reflexivity, though this is still essential in demonstrating co-constitution in the production of my research. I began to feel that the concern with reflexivity deserve their own doctoral study. However, I hope that at least an attempt to *ethically* deploy some of these complex ideas surrounding reflexivity and in particular my re-negotiation of the ‘politics of location’, into a ‘politics of relation’, gives a critical edge to my research project. Indeed, Schneider writes: ‘radical reflexivity in ethnographic work is more or less rare. It just goes too far’ (ibid 2002:462). He later remarks how he attempts to do ethnography differently to ‘consider reflexivity’s promise’ (and limitations)’ for socio-cultural criticism (ibid 2002:462). I follow Laws understanding of reflexivity, see Table 3, on the next page:
Reflexivity as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word or form implying subject’s action on him/herself or itself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verb indicating that subject is same as object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The idea that one is part of what one studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rigorous and consistent application of the spirit and methods of critical inquiry to themselves and their own grounds; hence associated with the inquiries of late modernity that are sometimes said to have started at the time of the Enlightenment, and in particular their extension to themselves. Sometimes this leads, or is said to lead, to comprehensive skepticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The self-monitoring and self-accountability associated with the idea that persons and organizations both need to and should monitor their lives and their projects; and also with the idea that the speed of change in modern times means that traditions or plans are, or will rapidly become, inappropriate. Sometimes this leads, or is said to lead, to confession or self-indulgence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The analysis of the generation of subject and object positions, and in particular the suggestion that they are mutually constituted.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3: Reflexivity in research**

(Adapted from Law 2000:8)
Ethnography

In view of the fact that my ethnographic study focuses on the construction of the subjectivities of backpackers it necessarily examines the construction of my own subjectivity that folds into the subjectivities of other backpackers in multiple and complex ways. In the first, the research participants, the backpackers I interviewed, were at times, the same backpackers I had travelled with, it is thus partly through them that I learnt to be a backpacker. I had listened, followed and took behavioural cues from their attitudes and shared experiences. At the same time I was also completely different, I had also backpacked for many years, and I had a different agenda; one of research and as a result I am reconstituted by other discourses and practices. I was identity and difference, self and other, knower and known, researcher and researched. Foregrounding this doubling of subjectivity became crucial to my theorizing and my methodological practices. As my identity gave way I resolved to always consider what this folded subjectivity permits as I perform qualitative backpacking research in a postmodern fashion. Thus, in order to cope with this potential chaos I turn to Deleuze’s dual concepts of the fold and the rhizome. It was inevitable that a dominant feature of my subjectivity me as researcher would both shrink and expand on different occasions. My subjectivity performed within these and other shifting boundaries. Lather (1995) writes of a ‘situated embodied’ transgressive validity (ibid: 41) that emerged from her study of women with HIV AIDS. With Lather, I began to understand that validity in my study must be situated within the construction of subjectivity my own as well as my participants’ since that was the focus of my research.

Ethnography is the product of interaction between an anthropologist and the research subject rather than a dispassionate documentation of objective reality (Feinberg 2005). For my ethnographic research, I spent four months in Thailand in 2007, although I travelled fairly extensively within the country, two main locations provide the theatre within which I ‘ethnographed’ – Khao Sarn Road, Bangkok and Koh Phang Nan Island (at Haad Rin and Thong Noi Pan Yai beaches). I must add at this stage – the reasons for researching in Thailand, amounted to logistic concerns of my PhD candidature in New Zealand as well as some other academic activities as a postgraduate student. My reasons for choosing Thailand also amount, in some ways, to the same reasons that many backpackers visit there in such numbers (cheap accommodation, favourable exchange rates, a specific
backpacking history and infrastructure, and so on, please see below). The reason I stress this matter is that I might have performed this research anywhere, it was never meant to be oriented to a specific place. But, of course I do not believe, despite some postmodern rumours, that we have quite escaped place yet (see chapter 7 on backpacking spaces) and to this end I step carefully between not wishing to present a case-study, and not wishing to be universal. In order to do this successfully I argue the case for a performative ethnography – one with emphasis on the researcher as much as those researched; the focus being on participation as much as, and possibly, more of, observation. In this sense I am able to deliver a text developed out of my ethnography, performed in a place – Thailand, but that simultaneously allows for reflection on my prior travel experiences whilst recognising the immediacy of the locale, situated interactions and a ‘body-in-place’. Thus I studied the minute and spectacular controversies; what was being ‘done’ in backpacking and the configuration of it. I wished to consider the transactions and exchanges, between myself, other backpackers and the things around them, and also with their conversations and encounters with others. Performativity was studied in the amount of energy, movement or change captured from a particular, albeit, sometimes, miniscule interaction. I could then consider the ‘where’ and the ‘how’ in terms of meaning-generation. Thus a central aim for me in my research was to follow backpackers moving about in their worlds and importantly follow their actions rather than have them speak into preconceived categories. As such a performative ethnography struggles between trying to see what is happening and then putting it into an interpretive framework (Feinberg 2005). The struggle is also manifest in the difficulty of arriving at conclusions whilst not losing sight of the possibilities of constant change, and also the struggle between identifying trends, and not losing sight of individual activity.
Figure 4: Map of Thailand

Legend

Route travelled during research
(duration 9 weeks)

Bangkok (resident for 8 weeks)
Crang (2005) draws attention to the typically bounded nature of anthropology’s ethnographic inquiry, that is, research bound to a site, performed within a ‘field’. He claims that anthropology’s contested answer has been to allow the field to fragment into multi-site ethnographies. Indeed, I visited multiple sites (see figure 4 above) that together form the locales within which the ethnography took place – KSR, the beaches of Koh Pnang Nan, and parts of northern Thailand – but the bounded (territorial nature) of these sites are interrupted with an autoethgraphic signature that comes before this research, and always reflexively situated. Thus, as Crang suggests, I might better follow in the vein of the more plural practices of some qualitative methods in geography. Crang cites Hine (2000) when he suggests how a new geographical sensitivity is utilised to move from a notion of field as bounded site to field of relations:

‘Ethnographers might still start from a particular place, but would be encouraged to follow connections which were made meaningful from that setting. The ethnographic sensitivity would focus on the ways in which particular places were made meaningful and visible. Ethnography in this strategy becomes as much a process of following connections as it is a period of inhabittance’ (in Crang 2005: 229).

Thailand is a popular destination for backpackers. I point to a number of reasons for this; the development, expansion and relative accessibility of jet travel; cheaper multi-destination and round-the-world airline tickets; favourable exchange rates for backpacker travelers and comparative safety and stability, the natural beauty of Thailand, its tropical allure and variety of social and landscapes. Each accounts for massive growth in backpacking tourism. Cohen (1973) notes that cheaper airfares combined with cheap accommodation and overland travel had the most influence on the development of drifter tourism. Suvarnabhumi airport just outside Bangkok is a major entry and departure point for backpackers, and Khoa Sarn Road (KSR), is an incredibly popular backpacking enclave in central Bangkok, acting, among other things, as a significant attraction on its own (see chapter 6) as well as a spring-board for internal tours and onward journeys into nearby countries. I arrived in Thailand in July 2007, I had no set itinerary upon arrival, my priority at this stage was to socialise, meet backpackers, and when possible travel together. I spent a few days, like most backpackers, orienting myself in the KSR area and then headed down, as part of a group of four backpackers, toward the Malaysian border. I then spent several weeks travelling as a
backpacker in the Islands of the Gulf of Thailand, including Koh Tao, Koh Pnang Nan, and Koh Samui. Each of the islands characterise their own sort of backpacking; Koh Tao is seen as more laid-back and is extremely popular for diving; Koh Samui is easily the most developed in terms of tourism infrastructure and is also on the mass-tourism trail (Airtours, for example, have regular flights to Manchester UK); and Koh Pnang Nan, though swiftly catching-up to Koh Samui in terms of tourism development, is viewed as the more traditional and backpacking-oriented destination. It was in Koh Pnang Nan that the first Thai full moon party started on Haad Rin Beach in the late 1970’s. These are now held each Lunar month. I find, it depends on which beach, or what part of the islands that backpackers spend their time on, that differentiates between any notions of being off the beaten track and being in a commercial location, that is, it is not which island backpackers are on, or place that they are in, that determines this, but the precise location that they spend time and reside on those islands or in those places.

I moved between different accommodation and different locales when I felt interactions within backpacking might improve and when the opportunity arose to travel onward with backpackers that I had met (for example, by using the lunar schedule on Koh Pnang Yan and when I left with a group of three backpackers from Chiang Mai). I remained in Thailand for the duration of my visit but did cross the border into Cambodia for a day; this was both necessary for visa purposes and proved revealing for I became aware and observed the popular border activity of buying and exchanging guidebooks, and experienced the same moments of anxiety that the other backpackers experienced when are backpacks were stowed in buses, handled by staff, customs and locals. After spending nearly two months in southern and eastern Thailand, I returned to Bangkok and moved northward to Chiang Mai, from here I travelled with three other backpackers along the Myanmar and Laos borders. I then returned to Bangkok for the remainder of my research where I found a room ten minutes walk to the Koh Sarn Road district; the room was cheap, available for weekly rent and in an apartment block popular with long-term travellers (Cohen 2009) and English language teachers. I used this time to familiarise myself with Koh Sarn Road, looking particularly at how this space affects, affords and performs identity (see chapter 7).

To engage in backpacking travel is conceived as worldly. To be ‘worldly’ is to be other to those who are not, locals or the people you left at home. This opposition between ‘local’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ has been challenged in part, by Clifford who points out that: ‘the notion that
certain classes of people are cosmopolitan (travelers) while the rest are local (natives) appears as the ideology of one (very powerful) traveling culture’ (Clifford 1992:108). In this sense I struggled to come to terms with who I was whilst in Thailand. There was a time during participant observation in which I let others decide who I was. And although this appears ethically obscure I believe this research anxiety must be experienced in order to address my own presence. Thus whilst I argue that backpackers are an outcome of the effect of guidebooks, backpacks and other artefacts; Latour’s ‘sociology of translation’ also applies to the interview scenario. Backpackers statements are equally an outcome of the effect of the micropolitics of the interview; because of their socialising effects interviews have a tendency to re-inforce already dominant performances of identity. Thus in their dialogues about guidebooks some of the backpackers engage in a testimonial discourse with the ideal backpackers that are presented. Whilst in some of the interviews a few of the backpackers attempt to gain knowledge about themselves and use the experience to assess their own experiences; they metamorphose guidebooks into tools for sharing their identities with others. The backpackers in my study thus help to cultivate a notion of backpacking as ‘relational possibility’. At the start of my conversation with the person travelling I asked whether they were backpacking. This facilitated a way to ascertain their self-identification, and also, at times, proved a fruitful opening for rewarding conversations about their reflections on what backpacking is (or might be). In their efforts to perform a critical ontology of themselves, they perform a critical ontology of their culture, thereby suggesting a possible re-articulation of backpacking in and through reflection of self/other in the interview encounter. In the thesis, I problematise the idea that backpackers are not tourists. In practice backpacking can be especially touristic. Thus within the ‘network’ (the material-semiotic becoming) backpackers still ally their identities within a powerful binary operation. Some clearly identify themselves in opposition to tourists, when, for example, I heard phrases such as *I’m a backpacker not a tourist* or *backpackers don’t go there*. This highlights complexities; in backpacking identity, as well as in the operation of binary negation within a ‘networking’ analytic approach. In the plate below, a vehemently touristic practise is evident. In the plate I can see performance, photography, notions of authenticity, sameness/difference, exotic Other, West/East compounded in the image taken and in tourism itself (see below).
The backpacker above is visiting a village north of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand shares a moment with a local child dressed in some traditional clothing. She is arguably unaware that the child is not ethnic Hmong (the dominant tribal group in this part of Thailand). My Thai friend and interpreter Serb Tantonong informs me that ‘many children here are the children of lowland Thais and together with their parents they have moved to the (tourist) village to earn money. It is very normal for Thais from outside this region to work here and send money home’ (conversation with Serb). It is commonplace for backpackers to seek out such places the small group that I travelled with wanted to see the ‘real’ Thailand. I did too! Backpacking is still imbued with the same authenticising (scopic) drive as tourism, it is just a little ‘dirtier’ at times.
Writing people/writing culture: ethnography

Marcus and Fisher (1986) describe ethnography as interpretive anthropology ‘the explicit discourse on the doing and writing of ethnography itself’ (1986: 16). With this in mind Geertz refers to positivist accounts of social phenomena as ‘author-evacuated productions’ (ibid 1988:141). In Geertz’s view, it is not only the anthropologist who interprets; the anthropologists construct their interpretations based on the interpretations of their informants (1973:15). The result is that the anthropologists, their subjects, and the cultural ‘text’ they produce are fully immersed in subjectivity and relativism. Anthropologists are not merely recorders of cultural facts; they are the constructors of cultural realities. In this sense, Geertz argues, ethnographies are ‘fictions’ (1973:15).

Thus, as much as I am concerned with ethnography I also (re)turn to graphy: to ‘writing’. As a participant observer my note taking binds together the practices of observing and reading. The ethnographic practice of taking notes on that observed, amounts almost to a definition of ethnography itself. In addition to the fact that writing much of this thesis in my office resulting from my time spent as ethnographer derives from the observations I jotted down as notes, the processes by which my observation were transformed first into text and diagrams and then into reading, is itself suggestive of how the social is made intelligible by being read. Yet I argue that a smorgasbord of backpacking ontological becomings exists, and treating culture as text has serious implications (see chapter 5 Materiality) thus because of the challenge in capturing an inherently distributed subject matter (the ontogenesis of backpacking); it is extremely important that I continue to explore innovative methodological approaches to examine backpacking identity as it emerges in complex settings, in turn, to inform the methods employed (and thus the overall research practice - including my ethical choices and responsibilities). For this I turn to performative ethnography. Indeed, the exploration of performative research practices is in its nascent stage, with most of the major work appearing in the last two decades (Gergen and Gergen 2010). Ethnography is an epistemological enterprise; it is the means through which social scientists convey their knowledge of others. Yet it resounds with ontological affliction.
Research Methods

Ethnographic method comprises the array of methods I employed within my study; these include: 22 semi-structured interviews that vary in length from ten minutes to one hour with backpackers, the subsequent transcripts were later combined with a diary of notes taken from shorter conversations with the many backpackers, Thai locals and other travellers that I spoke to, and sometimes travelled with (see later for example when Serb my Thai friend visited Chiang Mai with me and acted effectively as my interpreter). The semi-structured approach involved me in multi-tasking; to provide the interview themes as stipulated below, to pose questions, but more importantly to ‘join’ the conversation, share my thoughts if I was asked questions, and prompt discussion if necessary. I recorded not only the answers, but the way in which they were said (this included noting down the body language or non verbal expressions of people). The interviews I performed did not involve a fixed schedule of questions, but a set of issues that were identified to be important in shaping the information flows surrounding backpacking identities, these included: reflections on the use of the guidebook (and wider discourse, ideology), reflections on the backpack, reflections on other backpackers, other people (including Thai locals) and places. The next method employed is participant observation. Thus interspersed with the narratives of backpackers included are my own observations, thoughts and feelings, also written in narrative form, towards backpacking; the research process; the place and the ‘relations’ that constitute myself as both researcher and backpacker. The next method is a visual one - photography. I include a series of photographs (plates) acting as material that constitutes my research; it intends to do more than support. My end goal, therefore, is to seamlessly integrate the socio-cultural records gathered during my time in Thailand alongside the arguments being made in my own interpretive narratives from both the ethnographic experience of researcher/backpacker in Thailand, as well as my reflections on being a backpacker on many prior trips regarding the same artifacts of knowledge. One particular (lengthy) trip from which I draw my reflections from is a thirteenth month ‘round-the-world’ backpacking trip that I had completed in 2004/5. This occurs in an integrative sense; one that favors a combination of discourse analysis and auto/ethnography. Hence, in the following section I present a discussion of this performative ethnography complimenting the related ‘turns’ to materiality and embodiment (the body in backpacking) that I discuss in detail in chapters
I advocate a move to performative ethnography in which performance itself is seen as ethnographic practice. Thus a performative ethnography seeks to examine the shifts in my own ontological relations, as well as the ontologisations within the backpacking network, of which I am now part.

Instead of the urgency of modern research methods, those requiring sampling, measuring and appropriate response, my poststructural methodology accounts, or rather allows for a distributed response from this networked field of self/other/researcher/backpacker/tourist/thing/place/image - a result in part of the implosion of the referent, the unreality of the hyperreal, and the collapse of space and time (see folding of space later). The call in performative ethnography is simply (and profoundly) to engage in the seductive risk of success and failure (my concerns over time, resources and schedules) that participant observation involves, specifically found in those contentious moments that might create worse problems but might also bring forth difference. The promise of ontological realisation in which new formations (and knowings) of backpacker identities might also create something else. Like I describe in Chapter 7 this hybrid postmodern framework involves an engaged commitment to spacing out real-world backpacking politics.

**Autoethnographic methods**

In this section I will synthesise my reflections on the first part of my methodology (ethnography) and then relate my methodology as a performative autoethnography. Ethnography, the anthropological analysis of culture is, and has been, fairly strongly embedded in social science research, where the researcher takes a cultural approach and lives as or among the people involved, and adopts participant-observation methods (see Reed-Danahay 1997). In this ethnographic vein, the researcher seeks to address the formal links between the performance of identity (behavior), value systems (sometimes) and the culture itself. An increasingly popular branch of ethnography that offers ‘highly personal accounts where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding
of a particular discipline or culture’ (Holt 2003: 2), is now referred to as autoethnography. Different from the stance of positivism, in which researchers employ methods that actively divorce themselves from the field of study, ethnography (the affect the research has on the body), and especially autoethnography (the researcher as affected and affecting), where also the researcher has become the essential tool of analysis, autoethnography torments the individual (the crisis of identity), and yet can, at times prove, fantastically emotionally evocative, sensuous and personal. It is however, precisely because of its rigorous engagement with (self) reflexivity, that it is still a highly nuanced, insightful and serious approach.

My autoethnographic method comprises of image interpretations of the photographs that I took while in Thailand (I often reflexively situate myself in the analysis and interpretation of the image); analysis of my research notes; extracts from my travel journal (as well as reflections on those notes), together this enabled a combined analysis of a personalized account alongside the narratives of the backpackers I interviewed. Scores of encounters and discussions with other backpackers, tourists and locals, and prolonged travel relationships with backpackers (both during the ethnography and after), each work to facilitate the material used to examine the nature of interactions (or socialisation as the construction of identities) within backpacking travel. Consequently, it is through both my journal extracts and narrated reflections on my performance of backpacking in which I seek to determine first how backpacking identity is performed and how other artifacts performed in my experience as backpacker-researcher. It is through these means that the constitution of identities in backpacking are observed, felt and experienced. Methodologically, my research follows in the vein of similar interpretive tourism studies including Morgan and Pritchard’s (2005) auto-ethnographic research in which they utilise their own personal narratives to consider the meanings of souvenirs. Chaim Noy (2007) also employs narrative in his auto-ethnographic research on the experience of a family holiday in Israel. In research specific to backpacking Muzaini (2006) claims the position of ‘auto-ethnographer’ and demonstrates how this elicits ‘a more nuanced understanding of particular aspects of backpacking culture’ (2006: 144). Auto-ethnography is a form of research and writing that connects the author-researcher to the culture involved, ‘connecting the personal to the cultural’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000:739). I subscribe to this critical and reflexive lens operating within auto-ethnography one that accentuates the relationship of the researcher to the researched. For example, Reed-Danahay (1997)
describes auto-ethnography’s shifting emphasis on graphy (research process and writing), ethnos (culture) and auto (self). Performative ethnographies such as this thus involve detailed attention to the interplay between self and other, a ‘form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context’ (Reed-Denahay, 1997: 9). This allows researchers to use themselves to get to the culture (Pelias 2003). Ethnography, writes Van Maanen, ‘rests on the peculiar practice of representing the social reality of others through the analysis of one’s own experience in the world of these others. Ethnography is therefore highly particular and hauntingly personal’ (1988:ix). Ethnographic accounts in the current tourism literature that explore aspects of backpacking tourism include, among others, Elsrud (2001), Sorenson (2003) and O’Reilly (2006). In his book, Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel, Edward Bruner (2005) a pioneer in the field of ethnographic tourism studies, explores the interrelations between the tourist and the ethnographer. In this collection of essays and in his other works (Bruner 1995) he demonstrates the insights that performative modes of ethnography provide emphasis on ethnographic participation over observation.

This performative autoethnography is a hybrid form of ethnographic backpacking, my writing is a boundary-shifting enterprise in chorus performing my histories of being a backpacker behind the concept of backpacking as an ethnographer; the act of autoethnographic representation brings together postmodern ethnography and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of the fixed self has been called into question. The project then is to mix or better fuse the dual nature of ‘autobiographical ethnography’, which is really also the zone of contention in this thesis relating to my history as a backpacker prior to the research and the practice of representation as an ethnographer. Thus whether I detail from the biographic reflection or the ethnographic side of the hybrid-form, a hybrid (auto) ethnography both celebrates and yet undermines conventional ethnographic practices by collapsing self into other (Reed-Danahay 2002). Indeed, Reed-Danahay sees autoethnography as a form of a self-narrative that places the self in a social context. Citing Murphy (2001) and sharing some of the same concerns Crang (2003) draws attention to the risk of constructivist ontologies becoming too self reflexive and thus resulting in an infinite regress.

Importantly, this hybrid ethnography (a performative autoethnography) differs from both autoethnography and ethnography. In the first I am slightly sceptical of autoethnography
for its anticipation of a coherent self as being separate from, or before, the culture-in-text, this coupled with the fact that deconstructive performativity involves a limitless deferral of self and of singular meaning (Gannon 2006) posits auto-ethnography as problematic for my inquiry. Thus although different from both auto-ethnography and its traditional forebear - ethnography, performative ethnography celebrates the performative elements within ethnographic conventions. In my study I am also the researched - the backpacker. Thus a performative ethnography attempts to situate the socio-politically inscribed body as a central site of meaning making (Spry 2001). Moreover, in fostering an alliance between discourse analysis and performative ethnography I wish to develop the intra- textual practice of interpretation, that which Albright describes as ‘one that would privilege neither the autobiographical voice nor the dancing body, but rather take the intersection of these textual and bodily discourses as the site of analysis’ (1997: 125). Following Huxley’s (2004) observation that ‘traveling the world has now become a recognizable facet of Western youth culture’, my ethnography highlights the various ways in which backpackers perform in these journeys, constructing (Western) backpacking identity. As such the research does not work to determine a generic behavioural type for backpacking. Quite the contrary, I speak of my experiences from my research and also acknowledge the inescapability (methodologically) from earlier backpacking trips in which I reflexively situate myself within the wider field of Western backpacking identity, discourse and motivations that serve to frame my subject position recognised as gay, white, male, European, working class, educated and, accordingly, relatively privileged. In performative ethnographies the voice of the researcher is no longer silenced nor is the researchers’ subject position ignored. It is through the emancipation of me and the recognition of my subject position that posits performative ethnographic accounts necessarily into the frontier of the interpretive paradigm. Consequently throughout the thesis, but especially in chapter 8 Analysis of backpacking identity production, I elaborate on those problems which are often overlooked by methods that rely solely on verbalizations of informants: interviews, textual analyses and some narrative studies. A performative take on ethnography has to solve the problems of the self; it is a voyage into my history and thus my mark on the world that I am a part of. It engenders an appreciation therefore, that ethnography puts something into words which did not previously exist in language.
Through my performative ethnography my ‘doing’ of backpacking becomes more than a glimpse into backpacking social lives, it is a patiently pursued ‘staging’ that informs my oeuvre into the culture. Becoming my subject, as an inventional strategy, is key to the crucial dissolution I make between being the researcher and being those researched. In this process of becoming I began to see the artifacts of backpacking from within, as well as from my own reflection and through interaction with other backpackers. In this sense, then the guidebook is now more than a technical object of knowledge (this is actually a construct), and becomes a material-semiotic actant (see later section) with whom I collaborate with to produce knowledge. Most notably my methodology features a hybrid nature that circumscribes a new vision of backpacking; one that facilitates a capacity to encourage new ways of thinking about backpacking social worlds. This hybridity between researcher and researched, ethnographer and backpacker forces connections that rethink the imposed and acceptable structures of positivist methodologies. But still, in my hybrid form I am also imbricated with different discourses and different agendas from those who I am researching, other backpackers, and thus at the same time hope that this impossibility implodes. I too am also and at the same time backpacker. I hope, therefore, to produce a text in which the generalities of theory and the specifics of individual experience intersect and co-construct the thesis.

The ontological constitution (the politics of identity) that I am engaged with is fundamentally informed whilst being a backpacker, that is before, during and after my time spent in the field, whereby the competing roles of researcher and backpacker through my period spent in Thailand, that is observing backpacking as both researcher and backpacker, are acknowledged and incorporated into the research design. Researching backpacking from this dual backpacker-researcher position reflects on how claims to representation are contingent on the social role taken by the researcher. Thus the implication of this hybrid research role re-writes the former insider/outsider status of modern research and opens up the discussion of reflexivity anew. Performative ethnography is concerned with what culture does to the body, and what the presence of a body does to a culture. It stresses contingency and situated knowledge as opposed to fixivity and disembodied knowledge. It collaborates with the world being studied and describes the interactions between the researcher and his or her area of study, and those
studied. It is indeed in Denzin’s words an ‘evocative epistemology that performs rather than represents the world’ (ibid 1997:5).

The function of participant-observation remains problematic, for no matter how self conscious it becomes with respect to experience, participant-observation will continue to create the very conditions of misrepresentation that indigenous and ‘postmodern’ ethnographers wish to avoid... Since participant-observers are both inside and outside the cultures they represent, their subject position reproduces the constitutive ambivalence of ethnographic authority; thus the intersubjective relations that build rapport must be suppressed in the production of ethnographic knowledge. When this intersubjectivity is foregrounded and re-valued, the opportunity opens up of de-legitimizing the classical ethnographic attitude in a transformative and destabilizing ethnographic imagination, in which the participant-observer concedes willingly the constructed and provisional nature of ethnographic knowledge and inscription (Castle 1997:271).

Thus at the same time as ethnography comes to know itself, it discriminates again by knowing that which it can never know – the world experienced by others. Therefore, I make an attempt to overcome this cunundra (if that is ever possible) with a performative auto-ethnography that combines ‘the empirical imperative of ethnographic authority with the subjective imperative of autobiography’ (Castle 1997:272). Through this type of performative auto-ethnography, I enact a central transparency and power over my epistemologies. In critical self-reflection, I discover my own partiality, and celebrate this as part of research. This openness allows me to come to my own conclusions on the legitimacy of the interpretation, and to conceptualize the research within its embedded and personalised context.

My becoming a backpacker does not; of course, mean that I abandon ontological concern. I worried at times I might become too heavily infected by dominant backpacking narratives to the point where I might be unable to realise that I am infected by this narration. In other words, there was a danger of becoming an overdetermined subject, disciplined; lost even in the labyrinth of daily backpacking realities. I countered this in several ways, first I kept a research diary, and though I did not write strictly thematically I
used this as a notebook to jot down incidents and moments in which I was challenged by the everpresent multiple options of forming an identity. Secondly, I was reminded constantly that I had a research agenda from which I could never escape, this I found reassuring but also paralysing. Third, I remained in contact with my supervisors, university department and colleagues, as well as with family and friends. This grounded my experience as it required reflection on my own performance and satisfaction in my research progress. Furthermore, based on the implications of being both a tourist and a researcher; the relations between participants: backpackers, and backpacker/ethnographer: me, I argue that in cases of conflict regarding basic ontological orientation, differences between us (ethnographer and participants) become heightened and marked, and at other times, uncomfortable, tested and ‘stretched’.

**An implicated social body**

My research constitutes an affective embrace of an implicated social body. My understanding of the world is informed by my sensuous experience of it. By the environment in which the interviews are performed: by the immediate locale itself. Thus now my question becomes, is it possible to ignore the effects on researchers bodies and, in turn, the way I make sense of the interview, the encounter, the responses? In short I believe this is never possible. Yet I am now left with an equally baffling problem how do I discern the sensual effects of my surroundings and interpretative affectivity? For example, how does the sand running through my feet, picked up, held and let go through the hands of my participant differentiate the responses I might get to the same question posed over a veneered desk in a meeting room in the University Library? How does the welcome cool breeze and backdrop of a tropical beach and coconut palms feed into the language used by some my respondents when asked to reflect on *how* and *how often* they used their guidebook? (To the swinging of hammocks in the lantern-lit thatched beach huts; to the incoming tide, to which both my body and that of the participant turn, feeling the water lap our feet to the beat of a full moon party on the next beach, differ from emailing the same questions to a list of returned backpackers?) Thus, I ask myself is this contextual sensuous space of my research the literal ground of my knowing? The comportment of bodies has much to do with what and how backpackers know, and that this knowing is
thus mapped beyond languages alone produces ontological possibilities that have previously been uncoded. I develop discussion over these concerns in chapter seven.

**Visual Methodologies**

The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled (Berger 1972:7).

In the following chapters I display photographs taken during my time spent in Thailand. I question the representation and interpretation of places and objects vis a vis the photograph and to this end I articulate a postmodern and poststructuralist stance on the photographic intent. Following Rose’s (2003) warning ‘there’s a need for careful, empirical research that explores the dynamics of image, audience and space in ways that remain alert to the power relations that inhere in all of these’ (ibid 2003:76). In a similar vein Michael Crang warns: ‘…the issue of representational knowledge has been challenged tout court - and the visual seems perhaps inescapably bound to the representational (2010: 208). This, he continues, is not entirely fair - and cites notable works in human geography and related fields that have employed visual methods that do not seek to frame reality in a fixed sense, but rather use imagery for different purposes to elicit responses, for example, from research participants. Crang (2006) advances Rogoff’s earlier idea that ‘geographies of vision enable us to unpack the fantasies and desires for stable places in a world of global flows and dislocation, rather than enact a disembodied and despatialized viewpoint (Crang 2006: 501). I engage, then, with the epistemological and ontological status of photographic images in the context of travel research before specifically discussing the ‘value’ of the photographs that I use here. Photography has been used as a tool of social documentation since its inception (Furman, Stzo and Langer 2008). Rose writes that photographs are not simply mimetic of the world they show (ibid 2000). Elsewhere Schwartz (2006) writes photographs exact visual agendas. Earlier Schwartz (1996) shows how photographs participate in the construction of ‘imaginative geographies’. She writes: ‘Like travel writers, photographers dramatize distance and difference, and in their work can be found the tropes of Western colonial and Orientalist discourse’ (1996:29). By directing attention to places they filter reality and establish the itineraries of travel. Once incorporated into the cycle of pre-texts, itineraries and
representations, travel photographs became an integral part of the construction of imaginative geographies (Schwartz 1996, Jenkins 2003). Moreover modern tourism is ‘intrinsically constructed culturally, socially and materially through images and performances of photography, and vice versa’ (Larsen 2006:241). Larsen writes ‘…the ‘nature’ of tourist photography is a complex ‘theatrical’ one of corporeal, expressive actors; scripts and choreographies; staged and enacted ‘imaginative geographies.’ (2005:417). Ideas of embodiment and performance have been crucial in destabilizing the visual hegemony of images, cameras, and gazes in tourist studies (Larsen 2005:416).

In order to synthesise my textual and photographic methodologies I position the photographs that I use alongside my own observations, and those of other backpackers. The photographs and texts intensify each other, at other times they also present contrasts and paradox that highlight the complicated nature of the relationship between backpacking material infrastructures, and the backpackers struggles to find meaning within the context of these material conditions. It is intended that the combination of textual and visual methodologies engenders a multivocal description of backpacking identity practices.

Photographs must be understood as social events and more than detached documentary science. Photographs, in fact, represent unique social events between photographer and subject. At the moment when an event is recorded on photographic film, or digital disc, a complex social transaction is taking place. The photographer has wittingly or unwittingly maneuvered the subject to be captured by the camera. Sociologists refer to this moment in space and time as a transactional frame (Howe 2004). Interpreting this frame involves further transaction between viewer and image (Furman et al 2008:27).

The act of being photographed makes one acutely aware of one’s body and its appearance; cameras make one act (Larsen 2006:250).

With Larsen’s observation in mind I tried to avoid photographic instances which were rehearsed. This, however, is not always possible (see Plate ‘flashpackers’ and backpackers’ partying). Interestingly the exaggerated performances of the backpackers in
these twos photographs highlight how the body is choreographed via the camera. Larsen develops the idea of tourist photography as a positioning and experimental performance connecting the performative and the symbolic. He writes: ‘Its ‘dramaturgical landscapes’ bridge physical spaces, fantasylands, and media worlds. Performances of tourist photography are a fusion of presence and absence, actuality and imaginations, the dreamed-of and lived-in orders of reality’ (ibid 2005:431). My photographs mark a performative meeting ground between self and other (researcher as backpacker, researcher as voyeur) where an embodied position enacts and performs politics of bodily display, and the intimacy of a situated backpacking experience, it also illustrates (in visual coda) my own affinities and relations with other backpackers. The photograph is traditionally assumed to translate and access worlds, this is no longer credited. Received through a performtive lens, however, my analysis of the photography confronts the normative constraints before (and as much) as interpreting the subject in view. In Larsen’s recent (2008) article Practices and Flows of Digital Photography: An Ethnographic Framework he revisits traditional photographic theory and reconstitutes photography as such, ‘a hybridized, embodied performance’ (ibid:141). The ethical emphasis is now the challenge and responsibility to recognize the power relations between the researcher and the researcher and also how these critical insights are disturbed by the ontological similarities and differences of myself as both researcher and backpacker and the participants in my study as backpackers.

Participating with time, space and people

After spending several weeks with two French backpackers and one English backpacker (each of whom know of my research, to varying degrees) I travelled with them as another backpacker (albeit one with a research agenda), sharing accommodation, getting to know each other, making and adjusting our travel arrangements so as to continue together for a while longer, I now come to believe it is the demand of the interaction, the materiality of the locale as much as those individual markers of social class, gender, and nationality that
influence the performance of backpacking identity. This is where I am confronted by the work of hybridity theorists such as Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1996b). Like contemporary actor-network theorists Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall also argue for notions of identity as hybrid, yet bring a certain spatiality to the table. They see identities as constructed from multiplicities enacted within particular spaces and places. Thus, backpacking identity is not necessarily fractured and haphazard, as some postmodern theorists would have it. Identity is hybrid, multiple and complex, it contracts and expands as backpackers move between people and things within spaces of affiliation. I believe one of the main conclusions I come to from my participant observation is that much of backpacking identity seems to be tied to the affiliation with their immediate surroundings. This leads me, theoretically speaking, to return to the material rationale embedded in my posthuman methodology.

My participant observation illustrates how materiality interrupts the seamlessness of identity politics, of politics based on other alignments with material type and form. It illustrates the way that lists of identity categories (tourist, traveller, backpacker, local) cannot simply sit alongside each other or even depend on each other for their own existence, but instead are co-constitutive, they are each others existence, text and person, environment and culture, subject and object; mutually influencing each other in the formation of identity. The active ingredients of backpackers’ social lives feature the elision possible between multiple worlds: backpacking is not simply a fusion of subject and object; instead, it lives in both worlds simultaneously; that is the locus of backpacking identity, its ontogenesis implicates the subject-in-the object, tourist-in-backpacker, coloniser-in-nomadic. It implicates the non-human thing in the human backpacker, and also resonates with modern authentic identity in the violence achieved by the construction of former categories. Thus my drive toward such symmetry eliminates the ‘AND’ the adjunctive, as well as the dialogic versus, and replaces it with a becoming ‘IN’ (see earlier section Backpacking ‘IN’ tourism, Backpacking ‘versus’ tourism…).

I can now make more precise my initial claim of embodied researcher. I was brought up wary of tourists. For the family who raised me, (as tourists themselves) were also the very invaders which I so attempted to distance myself from. I classified them (and me) alongside missionaries, most other Westerners, expats, some English language teachers
with all those modern intruders who wished to appropriate, or in the least change the lives of the people in the places that were visited. What I am saying is vitally important for it recognises that I could never polarise between myself and other for I was one in the same time tourist and ethnographer, indeed the archetypal tourist as ethnographer. The tourists I encountered on a daily basis were problematic in that they were uncomfortably like me; I had come to observe and so had they. Was I titillated by the differences I saw, regardless of how I deconstructed those very differences. Did that matter? I told myself, however, that I had come to work and study those who were observing. Yet they themselves are being observed, this was why the ‘tourist gaze’ does not configure as a definitive theoretical modus operandi in this thesis. Through the power of the lens the other becomes spectacle when at the same time those behind the viewfinder are equally gazed upon, and that means there is also me being gazed at. How is it true that the backpackers I am interested in merely enjoy this experience? I do not understand them as flaneurs, but very much embroiled in the sentience of activities that constitute their identity, their ontological experience. I was intertwined with their experience. The ontological (and research) concern here then was how was I, the researcher among them? (see Lee and Ingold 2006 for their understanding of the pedestrian ethnographer).

I worked hard to fit in; I prepared to share the hardships of backpackers, their finances; their vernacular, their (dis)position. I simultaneously endeavoured to conform to their customs, yet remain critical of them; value their values, yet question them, embrace this particular way of being yet strive also for critical reflection (not distance) in order to evaluate their doings. I rented an apartment three blocks away from KSR still in the inner Bangkok suburb of Banglampoo. I shared my corridor with other backpackers, English language teachers and some visiting students and academics largely involved with Thammasat University.

Over the course of my time spent as a backpacker I did see some backpackers taking photographs without asking, and there were others, I found, that patronized locals for their differences, while some were simply demanding in their quest for the comforts of home. I imagine this is as much a product of genuine cultural ignorance rather explicit rudeness, though at times it was clear that this was sadly the case. I believe that much of backpacking behaviour is an affect that is beset whilst immersing themselves in their new worlds to notice the lifeworlds of others – the tourist syndrome perhaps. My idea was to
abandon the authority that other forms of research backpacking might assume and throw myself into and among this culture. It is has been argued that the ethnographer begins to see the culture as it is, from the inside, not as a collection of oddities but as a meaningful, livable, complex whole. Yet participant observation in the classical ethnographic method does not mean active participation, which would change the culture; ethnographers rather try to efface themselves, to become invisible, in order, as far as possible, to observe the culture in its inviolate condition, as if they were not there. I doubted, however, that this was possible. In the very least it would be contrary to my methodology which recognises that there is not only a research presence, a voice, but a body that affecting the relationship between ethnographer and their inhabited worlds. Moreover, the ethnographer is embodied in their world. Ethnography is in its own way also a form of appropriation, signaled when the (realist) ethnographer talks of ‘their subject(s), their respondents, their time in the field.

My existence as backpacker was always fraught. In other words, I questioned my own identity as a backpacker. I was something other to backpackers, a backpacking academic or an academic backpacker? I raise this as an ethnographic concern over the performance of my participant observation. This is why I opt for the hybrid form of this ‘autoethnography/ethnography’. Ethnography creates a methodological impasse; it often finds what it searches to see. I too reflect a hunger for knowledge of a cultural system, this backpacking milieu, but it is a hunger tempered with an intention to ask myself both why? And in what ways do I affect the outcome of this research? My interest in cultural systems is better understood as a search for the sources of cultural coherence, the roots and channels of performative energy. Ethnography is an effort to understand other cultures, to write culture, the irony, however, of ‘going native’ is that the ethnographer is especially and exceedingly modern when the researcher travels into another culture as an ethnographer.

This chapter has discussed my understanding of ethnography and introduced my reflexive framework. In the following chapter I consider the social intercourse between backpacking and guidebooks.
Chapter 5: Discourse and Guidebooks

The journey is universally recognized as a narrative in our culture. The narrative potential of travel lies in the fact that we recognize in it temporal and spatial structures that call for narration. The different stages of travel—departure, voyage, encounters on the road, and return—provide any story with a temporal structure that raises certain expectations of things to happen (Mikkonen 2007:287).

Introduction

This chapter explores the performance of backpacking guidebooks in backpacking identity construction. It is important to note, before I continue, that it is necessary for the purposes of this thesis to also venture outside of text to locate meaning in backpacking. Thus it is not possible, to solely reside in the literary realm in order to deconstruct backpacking identity production. This is why I methodologically attend, in an intergrative sense, to the Derridean deconstruction and the Deleuzian assemblage. But first, regarding the former, in this chapter I wish to express an interest in the performative role of language and follow the view that discourse comprises sets of statements that bring social objects into being. In using the term backpacking discourse I refer to the networked collections of texts that attempt to define backpacking. Lupton defines discourse as ‘a group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be identified in textual and verbal communications, and can also be located in wider social structures’ (1992:145). Thus, discourse analysis tries to understand the processes whereby reality comes into being. Importantly discourses do not exist alone but survive within a matrix of multiple discourses, thus analyzing any one discourse necessarily requires an analysis of the intertextual matrix. For example, the category of backpacking is found within the discursive practice of ‘tourism’, a historical practice that positions the mind and body in particular ways associated with particular
understandings; particular modes of behaviour are favoured and others denied. Hence in chapter 8 I present an analysis of the inscriptions and inscriptive performance of backpacking bodies. From a poststructuralist stance a discourse is always spoken about in relation to a discursive subject matter, such as ‘colonial discourse’. For example, mass tourism discourses about are regularly organized around family notions of heterosexuality, nationalism and community. Backpacking discourses are often structured around independence, rites of passage, and notions of discovery; explorative and personal. Travel discourses, in general, are constructed around difference (the Other) and the subsequent consequences of the experience of encountering difference. In short, that is to say that each discourse differentiates unique ways of how to interpret the behaviors in which travelling individuals engage. Exploring backpacking discourse is fruitful because it can trace ontological genesis historically, thus locating how particular sets of knowledges and behaviors became classified into categories. But the task is also monumental, so although when I refer to backpacking discourse it comprises texts as disparate as advertising literature; brochures and leaflets; fictional literature; backpacking novels and semiotic productions in various imagery my primary focus is on the guidebook. In my inquiry into the ontogenesis of backpacking identity this is especially important. The discourse analysis employed here – sits as one component architecture in my larger methodology. As van Dijk states, ‘in any practical sense, there is no such thing as a ‘complete’ discourse analysis: a ‘full’ analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages’ (ibid2001:99). Thus as such I framed my discourse analysis to include an analysis of the operation of performative narratives identified in guidebooks that I have used while backpacking (both emergent in the methodological practise and unfolding of my autoethnographic research, and in a prior sense - through a body of literature (a backpacking discourse) that is suggestive of these narratives. The performative narratives are also explored through the reflections of other backpackers (on these same narratives) collected while performing my ethnographic research in Thailand.

Guidebooks and performativity

I propose that backpacking guidebooks are ‘performative’ (Austin 1962); they ‘do’ things. The beginning of all Lonely Planet guides, for example, refer to a prior state of affairs, but also perform a situation via the (re)presentation of an original story.
The story begins with a classic travel adventure: Tony and Maureen Wheeler’s 1972 journey across Europe and Asia to Australia. Useful information about the overland trail did not exist at that time, so Tony and Maureen published the first Lonely Planet guidebook to meet a growing need. Lonely Planet South Pacific (2003:13).

Backpacking journeys navigate through intricate material and textually mediated spaces where many signifiers and objects construct semioticised and ‘sensuous territories’ (Deleuze 1998). In addition to backpacker guidebooks there are various other media available. These include technologies such as the internet, email and blogging. Backpacker norms are perpetuated in these media as well as through people and places. Adkins and Grant (2007) for example, in a recent study, focus on internet backpacker notice boards as a site for the cultural dissemination of meanings of travel and mobility that refer to backpacking experience. I am concerned with the performative effects of one such source – backpacking guidebooks. This part of my analysis spans two chapters and considers several important aspects: the contents of backpacker guidebooks, their textual organization, and the performative conditions under which the narratives are written and read.

Thus I present an understanding of backpacking that illustrates the performative effects of travel guidebooks. This involves a discussion of two major performative dimensions to backpacker guidebooks; the linguistic and the material. My thesis is structured respectively. First, in order to discuss the linguistic performance of backpacker guidebooks, I engage with the ‘literary performative’ (Austin 1962) and adopt Judith Butler’s (1990) notion of performativity – the power of discourse to produce effects through re-iteration. Second, I attend to the material performance of backpacker guidebooks. I subscribe to discussions in the current literature, from actor-network theory in particular, and studies of material culture, in general. However, before I attend to their materiality and embodied reception I study guidebooks as discursive units.

A powerful identikit of backpacking is produced and sustained during backpacking journeys. A prevalent discourse for many Western backpackers are the major guidebooks
that they use, the *Lonely Planet* for example. Consequently, the discourse analysis approach examines the various modes of performative writing within backpacker guidebooks to explore the meaning of backpacking in relation to the construction of backpacker subjectivity. Many methodological procedures in social science consider written material as straightforward representations of reality. Discourse analysis, however, indicates that certain texts have important performative and manipulative capacities which inform social practice. Hannam and Knox (2005) provide a detailed review of discourse analyses as applied in tourism research and differentiate between the various types deployed. Some recent examples of tourism research incorporating discourse analysis as a methodological approach include the works of Atelyevic and Doorne (2002) and Stamou and Paraskevopoulos (2004). A recent article by Tegelberg (2010) uses discourse analysis to analyse guidebooks, specifically the Lonely Planet guide to Cambodia.

I later situate the significance of the ‘performing guidebook’ within wider discussions regarding backpacking material practices but first I necessarily engage with discourse in order to deconstruct the language of backpacking guidebooks. To this end, discourse is seen as a significant, but not final, modus operandi for the social realm. A discourse-performative lens does not serve to collapse backpacker sociality into textuality. Rather, it helps to explain how the textuality of guidebooks informs backpacker sociality. The performance of backpacking is ultimately reconciled in individual backpacker’s, a performance configuration in specific, corporeal and material conditions. Yet, these unique performances are also achieved in negotiation (both conciliation and reaction) with motivating a priori ideological constructs of backpacking and the incessant reproduction of backpacking in discourse and material form.

It is, in part, my first contention that literature and more precisely the textual activity of backpacking guidebooks provides some introduction of change and then upon (contested) receipt, offers some socio-cultural durability. The textual activity of guidebooks includes the production and reception and negotiated relation with the narrated norms available. Again, it is important to note that I start this chapter from a wider perspective that also appreciates that backpacking is composed of intricate embodied performances that produce unique differences for individual backpackers as they move about the world. Nevertheless, these performances are also discursive and materially engaged. Through
written and oral narratives backpacker’s learn what to do and discern from other’s how to do it. I therefore propose that both socialising and reading are performative moments and each are viewed, equally, as sites of interest. In the logic of hybridity my discourse analysis is never divorced from my ethnographic praxis. Indeed I argue this is not possible. Both perform the other. There were moments in my interviews that lend themselves to the use of speech act theory to analyze how particular words enable or restrict the discursive construction of backpacker identity, in backpackers’ narratives, for example, and similarly there are times when embodied performance is the ontological template.

Thus my first objective is to deconstruct the textuality of backpacking guidebooks into rhetoric; to reveal these guidebooks as social practices. My task, therefore, is to disclose the type and functions of particular discursive constructions of backpacking in backpacker guidebooks. To this end, deconstruction is applied to backpacking guidebooks to examine how they work. This identifies key literary devices that backpacker guidebooks employ in order to appeal to and organise backpackers. In studying the passages of backpacker guidebooks I find they contain detailed thematic narratives. Among others these are listed as follows: not to be a tourist, money, time, risk, care-free, independence, arduous, intrepid, appearance, health, and environmentally-sensitive. I consider these as normative values used as important identity-makers.

Yet the textuality of guidebooks also performs in other ways. First, there are the performative effects of narratives - available in backpacker guidebooks that help constitute the subjects (backpackers) that they control. A process of guidebook deconstruction reveals that discursive norms (of backpacker-becoming) are presented to backpacker’s in narrative guise. Second, the use of the literary performative ‘you’ within backpacker guidebooks: the familiarity of the second-person singular pronoun has notable performative characteristics and in terms of ‘backpacker-becoming’ is incredibly effective.

**Narrative-performativity**
This performative element follows in the vein of Chaim Noy’s (2004) discussion on the persuasive genre of narration. Although the primary concern of this performative value lies with literary narration, not with the interpersonal narration that Noy describes during his interviews with returning Israeli backpacker’s. However, the argument continues to build on the claim that narration is central to social performance. Backpacker guidebooks are a traveling media that serve, in part, to fix notions of backpacking identity. They provide a sense of what it is to be a backpacker. This leads to some fundamental questions. How do guidebooks achieve this? How do they perform backpacking, and how do they affect backpacker realities? One of the key literary operations within backpacker guidebooks is to produce narratives (or stories) about backpackers. Moreover, these same guidebooks monopolize the production of narratives about backpackers. The books exercise various narratives in order to specifically address backpackers. These narratives are identified as how not to be a tourist, money (to have less, to budget and barter, to be frugal), time (to really see the world), risk (Elsrud 2001), care-free, independence, arduous, intrepid (see Cloke and Perkins 1998 on adventure and performance of place), appearance (casual/natural), health (to face and overcome illness), environmentally-sensitive (to be ecologically responsible). I had travelled as a backpacker on various occasions prior to my ethnographic research of 2007 and I kept several of the guidebooks that I had used. I highlight some of these performative narratives and evidence them below:

The restaurant at Cozy Nook is an oasis of good Karma…Lets Go India (2004:191)

Folks can be found Blowin’ in the Wind at Dylans… Let’s Go India (2004: 192)

…Take the plunge… Throw Yourself… Soak up some calm…
Hurtle, bounce and splash… Lonely Planet New Zealand (2006:622)

Unleash your inner hippy in this sunny, artistic and very eco-minded patch of paradise. Lonely Planet New Zealand (2006:493)
…for a taste of what is possibly a more remarkable landscape…it’s worth driving the potentially treacherous 113 kilometer side road…to Telegraph Creek. The Rough Guide to Canada (2004:995)

At Lonely Planet, we believe that all travelers’ have a responsibility to limit their personal impact on the environment. Lonely Planet Auckland (2006:51)

Devote your next day to whatever gets your heart racing - be it Bungy Jumping, skydiving or white water rafting. Lonely Planet New Zealand (2006:624).

Thus, the backpacker guidebooks that I have used interpolate thematically organized ontological dictums on how to be a backpacker. As a result I find myself temporarily arrested in a lexical matrix of values, norms, rules and assumptions which define the way that the world is. A narratological deconstruction of the guidebook that I used exposes what is absent but implicit. This narrative schema exists within the pages of these books, one which imparts narratives but seldom explicitly names them.

At some point on the road you’ve seen them – the ugly tourists. They step on the culture like a consumed cigarette and return home convinced of their superiority. There are various shades of this syndrome ranging from clueless to callous, and the effects on the local culture are more insidious than strip mining (Lonely Planet: Southeast Asia on a shoestring 2004:4).

**Performative narratives**

Studying a guidebooks literary form (narrative) gives insights into their associated performance and the construction of backpacking identities; it contributes to an understanding of how backpacking-becoming is produced. The mechanisms at work in guidebooks are products of wider cultural forces that affect the people who use them. At the very centre of the performative narrative is an organising frame which is often
presented in the form of an original scene or idea. These scenes work by reducing backpacker identity to a few givens; an analysis of them brings me closer to the very beginnings of backpacking itself, (the idea that backpackers should overcome arduousity, dirt and grime, the idea that backpackers travel on a budget). Within the guidebook the originary scene causes readers to identify, in a certain set way, with the archetypal backpacker who is protected in this inner frame. Thus originary scenes radicalise presence, marked by the use of what Gans calls ostensive signs. These are straightforward naming signs that are used to assign present objects or identities; in Gans (1997) understanding of the originary scene the first ostensive sign creates knowing by deferring mimesis. In the particular instance below, the ostensive sign is a budget conscious backpacker.

One of the research participants reflects on how he is frustrated by the guidebook:

...having nothing else to go on what do you use? I did use it (the Lonely Planet) for orienting within the town, getting to places, but stopped using it for recommendations for eating, its always full of idiots, or like overrun, like why do I need a book to tell me where to eat? (James UK)

James continues to reflect on how he sees other people using the guidebook, indeed he infers that the guidebook has a ‘divine’ status:

People quote it (the guidebook) as gospel, people quote what’s written down, they are reciting what’s written down, you know? You use that book, you trust it, it’s your friend (James UK) Author in italics.

I thought about the following questions with regards to how backpackers react to this framing; who responds to particular narratives and how? Who is the narrative of use to? Who does it claim to be of use to? Who does it call for? What practical action corresponds to it? What sort of actions result from it? What sort of responses support or contest it? In what situation is it spoken? By whom? Intertextuality is not denied in this narrative framing. The frame however attempts to separate the text from the material conditions in
which the guidebook is read; that endlessly shifting, infinitely open realm in which identity is formed.

*Lonely Planet* headings are used in a strict hierarchical structure that can be visualised as a set of Russian dolls. Each heading (and its following text) is encompassed by any preceding heading that is higher on the hierarchical ladder (2005:12 *Lonely Planet New Zealand*).

**The literary performative ‘you’**

The power of language is implicit in subject construction. Judith Butler writes:

Indeed, many ‘revolutionary’ movements seem to share a curious linguistic code based on the intrinsic morality of pronouns. The ‘we’ is always positive, the plural ‘you’ is a possible ally, the ‘they’ has the face of an antagonist, the ‘I’ is unseemly, and the ‘you’ is, of course, superfluous (ibid 1997: 90-91).

Travel guidebooks frequently use the second-person singular pronoun ‘you’ in their literary address. Backpacker guidebooks also employ this writing style. The use of the singular pronoun ‘you’ in this genre of guidebooks often appears in the form of captions containing stories about backpacker’s. Using the second-person singular pronoun has notable coercive abilities (see Aqvist 2003 for a comparison with first-person singulars). Explicit performative sentences in backpacker guidebooks which adopt the second-person singular, integrate collective, individual, subjective and embodied practice. The use of the performative pronoun ‘you’ is an effective device in backpacker guidebooks especially, because it appeals to backpacker’s sense (and ideological constructs) of independence and individuality. Any literature written in the second-person singular is part of the emotive and creative capacity of language, one that is particularly affective. Extracts from backpacker guidebooks that use the second-person singular ‘you’, characteristically invite, persuade and seduce backpacker’s into the specified narrative. Such performative sentences extrapolated from backpacker guidebooks are typically suggestive, metonymic and citational.
You pile out of the bus to collect your dust-smeared backpack, ears ringing with the chatter of the insecure fellow you’ve sat next to for four hours. You check into your oddly familiar, historic yet refurbished hostel, claiming the top bunk in your dorm and hoping the bed below won’t be occupied by a snorer with the lung capacity of an asthmatic bear... Later, you decide to find a good pub where you can take the first step towards tomorrow’s hangover, though first you have to lose the guy who hasn’t stopped complaining about how this place is so ‘boring’ compared to the primeval African jungle he recently hacked through with a blunt pair of scissors. *Lonely Planet, Australia and New Zealand* (2005:18-19).

Paragraphs and passages in backpacker guidebooks replete with the literary ‘you’ are distinctly performative. This is a technique that attends to and incorporates different backpackers, structuring their presence, and collectively drawing them into specific performances of backpacking. Kakandes describes this literary effect as ‘the irresistible invitation of the second-person pronoun’ (1993:140). The use of the second-person singular pronoun takes backpacker’s on a journey to self; of backpacker-becoming, as well as individually navigating them through the world. In short, that which seems to be the least consequential feature of backpacker guidebooks, the literary-style, turns out to be among their most effectively performative.

Welcome to your new life. The birds are singing the sun is getting stronger; you climb out from under your mosquito net and head down to the shared toilet at the end of the hall. The mirror is too short, the sink is too low and the whole room needs to be sprayed down with bleach. But this is your second week on the road and you’ve stopped noticing grout. *Lonely Planet, Southeast Asia on a shoestring* (2004:56).

These captions also function as performative stories because they act to sanction an ideological core in a performative narrative. Bordieu’s (1991) focus on the socially embedded aspects of language highlights the importance of the reception of backpacker guidebooks. That is, how they are received by backpackers. Bordieu writes that the efficacy of the performative utterance resides with ‘...the social conditions of the
institution of the ministry, which constitutes the legitimate representative as an agent capable of acting on the social world through words. (1991:75). The re-iteration of culturally and historically legitimized icons such as the Lonely Planet allows such travel advice to become expertise, which in turn heightens the performative effect of this particular guidebook series. It is now thirty-five years ago that one Lonely Planet publication Across Asia on the Cheap (Lonely Planet.com) established touring routes and offered travel advice. Now titled Southeast Asia on a shoestring, this guide is famously known in backpacker circles. In other words, this particular guidebook can speak because it is authorized to do so.

Performative narratives in backpacker guidebooks provide a framework for ‘backpacker-becoming’; they encourage backpackers to behave like backpackers, to act like backpackers. To the extent that, the ideal sense of what it is to be a backpacker is always there, linguistically framed in the guidebook, regardless of whether or not individual backpackers perform this ideal. Crucially, however, linguistic performatives are localized and temporal. More importantly, they are contested and re-organized in the performance of each individual backpacker. This illustrates a fundamental paradox of backpacker’s identity, one which is narratologically proffered, but always embodied, materially engaged and capable of change. Backpacking is performed within this discrepancy: a subject produced, as Judith Butler would have it, between the doing and the thing done, (between the performance of backpacking before them (the guidebook) and the performance of individual backpacker’s – a being realized in the moments between the ideal and the actual). In practice backpackers achieve meaning in the contextual minutiae, or moments, in which they are received and understood. In these formative moments of backpacking journeys individuals display unique performative corporeality, one that contests the parameters framed by complex discursive and material processes; backpacker’s are never in passive receipt of guidebook dictum.

Later editions of this same guidebook deploy, and undermine, representational regimes by inscribing other subjectivities and norms into a new, more fractal ontology. These reproductions of backpacking occupy different registers of signification from those in the earlier editions. First of all, these new translations of backpacking travel historicise institutionalized senses of backpacking. For example, flashpacking is formed around the complex of notion of hedonism and thus reconstitutes backpacking around a whole
different set of identity performances. As a story of subjection, however, it still exposes the continuous workings of textual normativity on the backpacker subject. Second, the simultaneous inscriptions of non-normative desires form a counter-discourse produces a new knowledge of backpacking; somatic knowledge that can be named. Thus the attempt to represent what cannot be contained within the binary, normative model of backpacking identity (backpacker versus tourist) requires and produces the denaturalization and destabilization of backpacking itself. The semio-somatic approach is manifest in the deconstructive interrogation of the notion of ‘backpacking’ within the framework of a quest for the ideal traveller which of course turns out to be an impossibility. The narrated journey is thus paradoxical and delusional: the guidebook shows the cultural conception of backpacking as a fixed ontological destiny opposed to the fluidity implied by poststructural identity politics, this is therefore a function of subjection, since the guidebook projects an ideal and one that many backpackers find impossible to fulfil.

Backpackers are traversed by many other discursive roles, social dynamics and material performatives. It is therefore difficult to ascertain the effects of specific linguistic directives. Indeed, Austin (1962) was careful to point out that a performative utterance is not necessarily effective. The literary performative has a predilection toward failure. The delivery and reception of didactic language in backpacker guidebooks is not determinate or necessarily successful. The meaning of ‘Start your day with Blackberry pancakes at Vudu Café before heading up Shotover St to book your adrenaline charged activities for the next day’ (Lonely Planet New Zealand 2006:231) is only prescriptive or binding in particular circumstances, in the right context. Verbal performatives and the performance of them are incongruous; a performative statement does not unconditionally pre-determine that this will be the literal (the physical or real) outcome. Performatives are dependent on the context in which they are read and performed. Austin’s framing of context consists of felicitous circumstances, whilst Butler implicates embodiment, that is, both their notions contest the efficacy of linguistic performatives.
Narrative assimilation

The attributes of these narratives are also contained in the ‘real-life’ interactions, they sometimes connect; a backpacking schemata emerges. A socio-semiotic analysis identifies the narrative infrastructure which enables, as well as constrains, further actions, just like narrative enables and constrains the characters involved. In the genre of backpacking guidebooks, the role of ‘hero’ shifts from Tony and Maureen Wheeler (the founders of the Lonely Planet series) to individual backpackers. The reflexive understandings (between discourse and sociality) offered by social-semiotic analysis reveals the organising trajectories of these types of narratives.

Welcome to your new life. The birds are singing the sun is getting stronger; you climb out from under your mosquito net and head down to the shared toilet at the end of the hall. The mirror is too short, the sink is too low and the whole room needs to be sprayed down with bleach. But this is your second week on the road and you’ve stopped noticing grout. *Lonely Planet, Southeast Asia on a shoestring* (2004: 56).

The narrative functions of the guidebook are structured along a travel pattern between being a backpacker and being a tourist. Thus *not being a tourist* is one of the overarching themes of backpacking tourism and the narratives in backpacker guidebook is a main discursive axis from which it portrays places, designs subjectivities, and details social lives. The narrative tactics of the backpacker guidebooks are, therefore, better understood alongside my constructionist theoretical stance toward reality. This basic device of performative narratives frames the individual reader-backpacker it pressures them to assume a sense of belonging via an illusory centre. This is a fundamental feature of performative literature.

Words and feelings

Guidebooks organize social life by creating a repertoire of semiotic models through which culture is explained by way of narrativity. These narratives impart feelings of solidarity,
belonging and ultimately amount to submission to the dominant norms which no longer need to be enforced by the physical presence of another person, that is the guide. Thus, the guidebook introduces both textual activities as an indispensable discourse, and the consumption of this discourse for creating socio-cultural durability. Sorenson suggests ‘the alternative guidebooks serve an important function in the backpacker culture, as the only fixed structure with the ability to hold and transfer information from one cohort to the next’ (2003:857).

The narrative structure of the guidebook participates in and tends to reproduce a normative symbolics of identity. For instance, I read the stories of adventure as paradigmatic of a dominant colonial ideology. I argue that the narrative pattern follows this desire and (re)produces adventurous experiences.

Backpacking identity (the real) is not represented in writing, it is partly ‘performed’ through writing precisely because a decentred poststructural subjectivity cannot inhabit a solely literary domain. And yet, backpacking is perhaps never so fully troubled as it is within the originary scene. The first encounter between self and other? It is not merely that knowledge fails there to provide power, or to articulate difference, but that vision, which is culturally coded as backpacker and which indeed helps constitute it, turns back against the category itself causing paralys and exclusion. Judith Butler writes the body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it where a lifeless recipient of wholly given pre-cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the prevailing cultural conventions which when met will signify the body. Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of performance. Backpacking journeys involve text and embodiment, so the body acts its part in a corporeal space; enacting interpretations within the confines of its own somatic jurisdictions.

Paradoxically, then, the guidebook narratives perform the inevitability of a predefined linguistic grammar by repeatedly returning backpackers the originary scene and beyond to imaginary travel in the proto-linguistic universe of the ‘backpacker in becoming’. The words of the guidebook are gradually transformed into pure feeling and sensation. Just as reiterated and translated words dissolve into the (present) embodied reality, the guidebooks conditioned narrative gives way to the different conditions of the ‘here and now’. Grammar and syntax both affect but are infected by a backpacking corporeality.
Thus the guidebook collides into a material semiotic realm where all borders symbolic, linguistic, cultural corporeal—are blurry active and flexible as presubjective language effects a first, intimately corporeal, organization of desires and presence. Yet at precisely the same time, the conventional backpacking subject in the guidebook disavows this incoherence and indulges in an ideal specularity as the basis for self and all subsequent identifications. At once sustaining backpacking and profoundly alienating any difference the guidebook prefigures and supports the subject’s entry into the symbolic order proper, an epistemological dungeon of categories, rules and names.

**Hypertext**

One of the ironies of our culture’s fascination with virtual technologies is its fondness for consuming books and articles that proclaim the death of print culture—or its disappearance into the matrix (Markley 1996:1).

In this section I consider whether processes of backpacking identity construction alter with the distributed knowledge (meaning making with links) of hypertext. Backpackers use information and communication technologies (ICT’s), this includes the internet, email, blogging, mobile telecommunications and portable Mp3 players, laptops, hand-held devices (smartphones for example, including iphone, Samsung and Blackberry). One of the most popular forums for backpacking information and virtua-social interaction is the internet. Electronic hypertexts are written and read in distributed environments; thus the backpacker gazing into the PC is necessarily constructed as something different to the conventional backpacker reading a guidebook, the latter is subject to more complex networks then printed texts open up. To be positioned as a hybrid participant is inevitably in some sense to become hybrid so electronic hypertexts, regardless of their content, tend toward hybrid subjectivity. Although this subject position may also be evoked through the content of print texts, electronic hypertexts necessarily enact it through the specificity of the medium. Connections to multiple links and possibilities text is hyperlinked by the reader on every reading. In that sense, hypertext, which positions itself as somehow better than normal text (*hyper* meaning ‘beyond’), is misleading, because rather than being *more* associative and connective than ‘normal’ text, it actually *narrows* the field of association by cementing certain ‘chosen’ connections. By reifying these curated associations,
hypertext heavily curtails the interpretive process of reading a text. Another way to put it is that a hypertext will always be more prescriptive and rhetorically charged than the equivalent text stripped of links (Syverson 2007).

[The structure of the rhizome is] such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a central agency (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).

The argument for referentially disjunct rhizomatic texts as the appropriate scene for a deterritorialisation of language has been made most forcefully by Deleuze and Guattari between reader and writer that produces a mobile and ethical subject envisioned in Anti-Oedipus.

a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things… between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end.

Can the form or content of a text be rhizomatic (an assemblage of multiplicities) in which there are no fixed points or positions, only multiple possibilities? Does hypertext produce nomadic thoughts; the antonym of linearity; thoughts that erupt from and interrupt the narrative? It does seem that hypertext does mark of shift from linear positivist-historicist trajectorys; it also initiates and demands new reading practices. But I ask is hypertext truly rhizomatic? Can it really be a text never finished, never total; one that is ‘perpetually in construction or collapsing’. I thought the answer might lie within essential differences between hyper and traditional text, but this is not the case.

Following this philosophy, I question whether hypertext normalizes the subject-as-assemblage and consider that it also (re)produces the subject-as-limited. However through its mutable nature, it is more possible for the hypertext user to bring about changes that would be impossible with print.
Such changes imply that backpacking represented within the virtual space is always already mutated, joined through a flexible, multilayered interface with the real backpackers body in the internet cafe on Khoa Sarn Road, for example. Hypertext does make possible subversive activities (in terms of authorial intent) yet these possibilities are also normalised.

To explore these complexities, I propose regarding the transformation of the guidebook into an electronic text as a form of translation, which is inevitably also an act of interpretation.

**New materials/new connections**

One of the good things about using the internet (in internet cafes) is the way in which you meet other backpackers, they are not just places to go ‘on-line’, I’ve met many other travellers this way (Jenny, UK).

Thus the material practices involved in using electronic media, do not implode (in a radical post modern sense) but re-inscribe the social relations between people and text. Jenny points to the social aspects of using internet technologies during her trip, she pushed me, first, to think of the lonelier practice of reading a book. But then, is this really the case? In chapter 5 I find that because of its material-symbolic presence the guidebook performs (and co-constitutes backpacking). It *identifies* backpackers and in this sense is particularly social. The guidebook is part of a material-semiotic realm.

You know there’s links to other sites, its not just backpacker sites that turn up, if you type in Khao Sarn Road or whatever, you get a load of hits that tell you all different types of accomodation and activities available, and local information that you might not get from other sources (Jenny, UK).

Hypertext claims to dethrone the authoritative narrator, by using internet resources that deliver variations on normative backpacking identity and behaviour from a narrative point of view, in this sense establishes a postmodern aesthetic for travel guides.
All *Lonely Planet* guidebooks follow roughly the same format...We always start with background, then proceed to sights, places to stay, places to eat entertainment, getting there and away, and getting information – in that order (*Lonely Planet Thailand* 2012: 4).

Hypertext manages to escape the more explicit linearity of printed books. Hayles (2000) suggests there are possibilities for the construction of readers as nomadic entities. This is curtailed in the linear operation of a guidebook. Electronic text is less durable and more mutable than print, and the active interface is not only multilayered but itself capable of sophisticated acts. By exploiting these characteristics, the author constructs the distinctions between author and character, reader and represented world, as permeable membranes that can be reconfigured (Hayles 2000).

Without nuanced analyses of the differences and similarities of print and electronic media, we will fail to grasp the fuller significance of the momentous changes underway as the Age of Print draws to a close and print—as robust, versatile, and complex as ever—takes its place in the dynamic media ecology of the twenty-first century. For this we will require a more workable sense of materiality than has traditionally been the case with theories of textuality that invoke it only to dismiss it as something to be left behind through the labor of creating the ideal work (Hayles 2006:96).

**Material practices of reading**

Literature was never only words, never merely immaterial verbal constructions. Literary texts, like us, have bodies, an actuality necessitating that their materialities and meanings are deeply interwoven into each other (Hayles 1999:107).
The Bible is the most sublime of all books…but it is after all a book…It is not at all in a few sparse pages that one should look for God's law, but in the human heart where this hand designed to write (Lettres a Vernes Jean Jacques Rousseau in Derrida’s On Grammatology 1976:17)

The discipline of literature is no longer restricted to literature (Van Oort 2004). Arguably Katherine Hayles’s book How We Became Posthuman (1999) defines the conceptual shift between the ideal and the material.

Plate 4: The practice of text
- maps and guidebooks

I took the photograph above after observing how this backpacker moved to the side of the pavement - away from the road and next to a cafe, she did so to stand-still while she cross-referenced her tourist-map and guidebook. Several important matters unfold here (and are captured in this image). First, as she reads, she moves and then moves to a different place (away from other pedestrians on the street), and second somebody joins her to offer assistance. The activity is both corporeal and symbolic. Her corporeal difference and the object invites another (human) over to her. The guidebook and the map are collaborative artefacts. Literary practices have always been ritualised they are used as part of larger governing enactments. Thus it is useful to return to older ways of imagining what
literature is and, indeed what ‘relations’ to it have been. This encourages forgotten ways of thinking about how not just guidebooks per se, but how the practices of those guidebooks impacts on backpackers social lives. This is one possible way of destabilising the binary oppositions of materialism and idealism. Indeed, the very practice of buying a book is an economic and material act (and not a textual one). One backpacker comments:

One of the nice things about guidebooks is the colour pictures, you don’t get them in the copies for sale in KSR they sell photocopies of the guidebooks, but that’s good as well – they’re a lot cheaper (Mark, Canada).

Perhaps one way that guidebooks help local economies rather than undermine them is in the auxiliary industry of photocopying them in large volumes and selling them for far less than an original copy. Lucy, another backpacker, highlights how she happily travels in new countries and places without the guidebook - she has decided that she has enough information and confidence to travel without one. Lucy is resolute in her decision to make the (metaphorical) leap from the page of the guidebook to a more ‘real’ world fusion of reality and imaginations:

Why do I need a book to tell me what to do? I want to eat where I want to eat. I want to do what I want to do (Lucy, France).

In the following section I explore how backpackers ritualise certain material practices. I call, therefore, for a consideration of texts from the standpoint of materiality. Analytically I wish to combine my earlier scrutiny of what texts contain with a consideration of how, when, where, why, and by whom they were read? The aims of this new interpretation of guidebook praxis are twofold: to reconstruct how backpackers acquire knowledge and to reconfigure critical being (ontology) through reading. In this process I also discover, if and how, material form of the guidebook (hardback versus cheap or photocopied or older edition), physical setting (library, field, overnight bus from Bangkok), and embodied difference (seated or standing, in concentrated silence or in the company of other backpackers) affect the assimilation of content and the backpackers-becoming. Thus I explore the modes of backpacking reading and the ways in which they are instilled and manipulated. I also explore the interactions between the ways in which guidebooks are
read and used (note-taking and the alarming habit of cutting out extracts or tearing out whole pages); and to track the reception of backpacking in which the meanings of the guidebook is generated through a reciprocity of control between person and thing.

Meaning does not reside in artifacts or in people but in the moment of interaction between the two (Thomas 1996:97).

In the above quote Thomas (1996) echoes Jacques Derrida’s maxim that ‘meaning does not reside in a text but in the writing and reading of it’ (Derrida 1976:11). Indeed, there is a shifting interface between people and material technology. Similarly Dimock describes the encounter between reader and text as a ‘reciprocal process by which readers and texts are mutually produced and mutually productive (restoring) a dialectical agency to the reading process’ (ibid 1991: 639). Thus it is neither the backpacker nor the guidebook operating as the pivotal interface in reading but the encounter between backpacker and guidebook. Iser (1980) comments on the difficulty of describing the space opened up by the activity of reading by asserting that ‘the two partners in the communication process, namely, the text and the reader, are far easier to analyse than is the event that takes place between them’ (Iser 1980:107). In accessing the backpacking space of reading created by the interaction between reader and text, I suggest it is useful to consider it in terms of permeable borders.

Kinzer (2006) asks if language should be thought of as a formal system of meanings, or as a set of acts and practices that connects people to the world. I first sought to address the following problem, what is the nature of backpackers’ ability to select or perform if the choices available are always already circumscribed? The guidebooks narratives produce a problem in imagining anything other than binary identity, since the very presumptions upon which they depend also already systematically hinge upon polarised narratives of identity as both cause and effect. Yet with closer inspection I find that this statement is fraught, for as Butler would have it the doing is in the thing done. The fact that the subject is constituted by social discourse does not mean that the subject is determined by social discourse. Quite the contrary, she maintains, ‘the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency’ (1995:45-46). Eschewing determinism, Butler proposes an understanding of agency in terms of the process of re-signification: the subject who is produced in and through discourse can act by articulating words in contexts that invest
them with new meaning. These contexts are always material. Thus, in order to recover a sense of how texts reflect and engage the location from which they are read, I need to return to deconstruction through the thematics of materiality. Thus I am first concerned with how backpackers’ identities are constructed, represented, and performed during acts of reading.

The theoretical framework of ANT helps me explore reading as both a form of cultural contact and literature as imaginary. It foregrounds the cultural function of literature by highlighting how through the specificity of the medium and its status as a material practice, literature creates a powerful cultural intervention. It thus brings materiality back into the discussion of culture. I therefore contend that such practices in general cannot be separated from the cultural function of literature but form its very material basis (Schwab 1996). Thus with this new emphasis on material signifiers (things are not written and read in a vacuum) the very materiality of the circumstance of reading, both differs and defer the textual signifying presence of the guidebook (this is essentially a definition of Derrida’s differance). I have already posited backpacking reading as something that may be able not just to help rethink the difference between backpacker and tourist, but this also ‘rethinks’ the binary division of subject/object.
Beyond discourse

Where some research holds discourse as the only diagnostic framework on which to reconfigure knowledge I wish now to turn attention to the ‘things’ that surround backpackers - the objects that are materialized from and in the social. Backpacking ontology is located in and expressed through a dense network of discourses, systems and objects (see Figure 6 below). There are countless paths through which backpacking identities constantly flow and momentarily remain, between wider discourses, and detailed texts and rich, embodied socio-material worlds. Within these worlds backpacker guidebooks are but one constituent feature. For backpacker guidebooks to be effectively performative they must be appropriated and used by backpackers. This first occurs when the guidebooks are removed from the shelves of bookstores; when read in transit to the first destination and then later in the journey; when unzipped from backpacks and read in private or public (see plate 3 above); when referred to in the company of other backpackers; and when other tourists see backpacker’s using them. Backpacker guidebooks become cultural artifacts and materially affective. Fundamentally, the act of reading is physically performative and this act is visible to other backpackers, tourists and locals. The presence of guidebooks helps to distinguish backpacker’s from other types of travelers. These books are thus part of a backpacking material nexus - a material semiotic realm in which persons and things come together and constitute social praxis. Just as tourists might be identified in groups, en masse, being lead by a guide, backpacker’s are easily identified (and often parodied) in the act of searching through their guidebooks. Fundamentally, the status of the subject - the backpacker is rendered less ambiguous in the presence of the object - the guidebook.

The way I see it, if you buy a guidebook from like one of the big book shops back home, you’re just feeding into the whole commercial aspect of travel – they’re so expensive, but if you buy a copy from one of the street stalls you’re feeding a local economy, you know like doing something good. Plus the books are really cheap if you get a good deal. You won’t get a brand new copy, but you can get like a 2004 – this will do the same job. In many ways it’s better, I go to places recommended by the older
guidebooks and there’s less Westerners there, because the place is no longer listed in the latest one (Jake USA).

In the above Jake refers to the perceived benefits of buying guidebooks from street stalls (see Plate 4 below) this practice, he suggests, determines how he experiences backpacking travel. It performs a difference in his backpacking identity in several ways. First, it suggests that where backpackers purchase their guidebook determines as much itself, aside from the performative capacities of a guidebook per se. Second, Jake’s narrative goes in some way to reject an ideology that positions backpacking as part of a global consumer society. Third, and perhaps most importantly, he essentially describes an ethico-material practice of guidebook/backpacking behaviour (see Plate 4).

Plate 4: Used backpacks, guidebooks and clothes for sale, authors photograph.
In Figure 5, above, I highlight the connectivities between production, reception and performance artefact. However, there is not a neat correspondence. There is a normative force field that persists, yet within these normative schemata people and things resist translation (see axis of displacement). This disrupts any supposed circularity.
What exactly is the status of the guidebook as a material artefact?

Its status merely as made out of paper and, of course its tangibility does not on its own or without elaboration answer this question. In what does the materiality of the guidebook consist? This is possibly a better way of pushing this concern. The book on which the guidebook is inscribed offers two quite different answers. On the one hand, the book literally demands that the guidebook be viewed as an authoritative artefact, an object that stands in for a missing backpacker as ‘Other’ to itself, which is its epistemological significance; regardless of whether the guidebook is actually owned by a backpacker. In this view the unassuming material object gestures invitingly to a larger, extra material plane that transcends it yet also transposes its mundanity into something performative alluring, desirable. On the other hand, the book’s inscriptions also allow me to view the backpacker as something altogether less interesting; as a product whose effect has been, and continues to be, produced by means of its passage through multiple modes and sites of exchange, whether as an active subject, an immutable mobile or a subjected subject. The material object in this sense does not encode beyond itself, then, but enacts the ongoing processes of location and dislocation, exchange and spacing that produce and reproduce its performative signifying power.

Guidebooks are big and heavy. At first I used to think why can’t they make smaller books, like pocket size ones, but I know how much information you need and how much detail the guidebooks contain – it must be hard to make them any smaller, like much of the writing is small enough already (Jenny UK).

I attempted to locate the advantages, weaknesses, ambiguities and contradictions derived from the material properties of the guidebook. Guidebooks have specific material ‘energies’; some of these ‘energies’ emanate from their material properties including paper, size and weight. These properties have considerable effects in the backpacker’s world.

When I travel as a backpacker I always keep my guidebook close to hand in the pockets of my backpack, or inside my daypack. I often write onto
the pages of my guidebook, adding notes and travel tips. This is never my only source of information, I regularly use the Internet. I do, however, remember several times when the Internet failed me. One particular incident comes to mind. I was motor-biking in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, I was travelling alone, and became quite sick – I needed urgent medical attention. On this occasion there was no internet service available. It was my guidebook that provided immediate first-aid advice, along with a local map and the address of the nearest health-care centre (my reflections).

Guidebooks are fairly portable things, and reasonably well suited to the long-term travel that backpacking can involve. As I indicate in earlier in chapter 5 backpacker guidebooks are mnemonic repositories for backpacking history and social performance. They provide a practical method of accessing collective memory. Yet as Caspao points out: ‘memory is not only a realm that is in no way exclusively interior and invisible; it is also a realm that is crossed by and interfered with so-called exteriorly performed visibilities (ibid 1997:56). Thus to first address the materiality of guidebooks I refer to the above narrative in which I describe how guidebooks hold important benefits over other types of backpacker media such as the Internet that may require network allegiance or power-sources in order to work. Guidebooks, however, travel with backpackers - they offer a distinct tangibility. With the rise of digital media devices there are material trade-offs. A digital device such as ipad or Kindle conveys all media (guidebooks, maps, music, newspapers etc.), in the same material form, that is, in and through the device itself (the user interface). Differences, therefore, between media cease to become important in tactile terms, and the idea of printed media in particular begins to become an abstraction. Without yet wholly lamenting the death of the book the material/cultural/sociopolitical/economic meaning of a ‘journal’ or a ‘guidebook’ might (and arguably already has) shift as the internet offers almost equal access to each of these media and people cease to use them in their printed forms. I hold that there are similarly induced, embodied and materialised responses that emanate from the activity of holding a Kindle, for example, but in terms of its signification in backpacking culture it does something quite different (see later section on flashpacking).
Guidebooks can be read at a glance, studied at length, picked up, held and stored away methodically, sporadically and fleetingly but always in particular situations. Indeed, one of the research participants used a guidebook in quite an unconventional way:

I’d rip pages out (of the guidebook), and carry that around with me... I have met people who are nuts on weight, carrying weight, and they’d actually throw away, each section they’d used - they would rip it out and throw away (James, UK) Author added in italics.

In the extract above from James’s interview the very ‘realness’ of the book, its tactility, its materiality allows him (and the other backpackers that he refers to) to carry with him, on his trip, only the necessary section of the guidebook that he needs. Indeed, Debray (1996) writes: ‘Fusing material firmness and symbolic value, the book linked persons together through its virtues as a concrete thing’ (ibid 144). In reflection on their longstanding influence on human history and society Debray alludes to their material performance. There are, of course, also distinct drawbacks to using guidebooks. Some of which are direct consequences of their material properties. Heavy and large guidebooks are awkward to carry, books can get lost, pages torn, paper spoilt and print becomes illegible. The fixivity of printed text means that information inside guidebooks inevitably dates. Recurrent frustrations for me and the backpackers I travelled with were finding that
businesses had closed down and transport timetables since changed. Books have their obvious disadvantages.

**Note-taking in guidebooks**

I’ve bought lots of second-hand guidebooks; they have notes and scribbles in them. You can’t help reading what other people have written, sometimes it’s just good to read what other backpackers have done (Jenny UK).

In the above narrative Jenny points to the impossibility (once notes are written in the guidebook) of turning back to a time when the writing in the guidebook was still intact, nor is there any possibility of undoing what has already been written and read. The preceding notes and their inflections toward backpacker identity have already destabilized the original meta-narrative even as these identities are detached from different backpackers. In the process, they have placed into question formulations and possibilities of other identities. The new reader is now introduced to the performative opportunities of a new narrative.

I think people now dump them at the end of the trip, I used to hold onto my because I quite like having a guidebook that’s quite worn out and knackered – you scribble a lot of crap in there, you know notes on things, ideas, addresses, books you should read, music you’ve heard, things you want to get into when you are home, so they are quite nice, lots of momentos, on your shelf - you’ve got this little battered book on your shelf, you know what I mean, it does invoke memories of where you’ve been (Chris, UK).
Affective reading

Affective literacy displaces literate ideology in performative practice, through the construction of interactive textualities, textuality beyond the page (Amsler 2001:84).

In this section, I use the phrase ‘affective reading’ to discuss the ways that backpackers extend emotion, or embodied (somatic) reaction to their guidebooks as part of what I term the material practices of reading. The initial concern with affective reading involves the situated measure of reading as backpackers hold, feel, sense, verbalise or perform a guidebook with their facial expressions; eyes, gestures, mouths, and bodies (see Massumi 2002 for his account of new ways that bodies are reconfigured by sensation, movement and affect). Second I attend to the range of embodied reaction that backpackers have to their guidebooks, such as awe, humour, attention, surprise. In short I chose to label and observe ‘affective reading’ to trace a wide array of backpackers embodied reactions to the matter of reading backpacking. The specifics of backpacker reading practices shows, compellingly that text are also material artefacts embedded in practices that imbue them with performative sensousity.

Brand new, uncreased pages, squeaky clean, new backpacks, yeah you can spot them, but you know you were the same. You’re fresh and yellow, but you know- what else do you use? Where do you read from? You then get independent, stop using it, but then you start using them again, this time just picking out little bits, and you use other things, maps, books, you know - talk to locals (James, UK).

In the above passage James refers to ‘brand new, uncreased pages’ and squeaky clean, new backpacks’ as signifiers that the backpacker is recently arrived, the implication is such that they have little experience in either the place or being a backpacker. The material world of backpacking as such is already a signification whereas representation (the description with which it is replaced) is pure expression. The guidebook belongs to the regime of signification not only because it performs how backpacker know their world but also because the guidebook induces an embodied response. In this sense it is the body.
and not the text that marks the ultimate source of signification. In other words, the guidebook works on the body were the body becomes the ontologising feature.

In an article titled *A Non-human eye: Deleuze on Cinema* by Temenuga Trifonova (2004), the author discusses a Deleuzian argument that natural perception (the ocular) is already a signification. Trifonova reiterates Deleuze’s notion that merely by reflecting images back upon themselves and thus making them appear (to us humans) - we are representing them. Trifonova adds that this is a radical shift in the understanding of the nature of signification or representation, for Deleuze implies that ‘representation is not a manifestation of a reflective consciousness; instead, representation marks the birth of perception’ (Trifonova 2004:140).

...some of the other backpackers I’ve met read out passages; confident like, you know as though what’s written is written on stone, like standing up – excited, even shouting. I’ve done it as well, there’s little else to read from (Jack USA).

Jack refers to an embodied practice of reading. He observes other backpackers relating confidently from passages in their guidebooks - this involves an altogether different practice of reading (composure). Thus the way, in which the passages are read, add social credence to an already source, this has the possible effect of embedding meaning into the backpacking, the book is socialising.

The different composes are not incidental to the performance but rather they are the affective performance of the passage said. Turning momentarily to the historicised performative of Austin and Searle, this is just as Austin (1962) would have it - when conditions are met and a speech act is performed, an utterance has the ability to change social reality, but not through textual convention; from embodied affect. To use Searle’s (see Wright’s 1982 article) terminology, the world is changed to fit the word. The conditions necessary for the backpacking ritual above, that Jack describes, include the following: the person performing does so as a (more) experienced backpacker (sanctioned by their road status); they must therefore be familiar with the performance of backpacking. When these conditions are met, the effect of the particular backpacking statement (performed within the network in which it operates) is fundamentally different
from that of any other speech act: the physical nature of the reading induces a reaction, other to its textual intent.

It depends where you are – you know, I try to find a quiet spot to read my guidebook – there’s times when you definitely don’t want to draw attention to yourself (Mark Canada).

I never want other people to see me reading my guidebook, like other backpackers, and I don’t know… maybe from locals as well. Yes! Because they know who you are then, they can approach you and start talking about cheap accommodation and stuff (Mark, Canada).

Textuality can be described as the (re)production of knowledge about a given reality through a web of authoritative texts (Said 1979). For example, in his ethnographic work among backpackers and charity travellers, Hutnyk (1996) recognises that the authority of texts such as films, novels and travel books about Calcutta constructs a reality for the Western traveller that often becomes more ‘real’ than the place itself (Said 1979). This textual reality informs and constrains travellers’ perception of the ‘actual’ Calcutta as well as their own production of images and texts about Calcutta as a place and an experience. Similarly the ways Bangkok is represented beyond the hypebole and rumour of backpackers extends to a variety of forms of representation with global resonance. Thus travel guides, formal literature, maps, postcards, photographic collections, blogs and websites, cinema, TV, souvenirs, and so on, each contribute to the elaboration of Khao Sarn Road which circulates around the world in ways which play a crucial role in the maintenance of a touristic sub-cultural hierarchy of this particular place.

Backpacking narratives about Khao Sarn Road are offered by authoritative texts, but at the same time backpackers themselves are active producers of these texts and narratives via their oral contribution to backpacking folklore through ‘word-of-mouth’, and socialising, as well as through reader-response to the Lonely Planet websites, and input into each new edition of their travel guides.
Material signifiers defer meaning

While privately reading his guidebook Jack interrupts the textual performative, he realigns the distance between backpacker and guidebook, between referent and signified. The material interpretation of reading does something to the division between backpacker and guidebook, it constitutes a somatic response that delivers the text elsewhere in ways new to the original framing of backpacking (delivered textually). Thus embodied and situated readings transgress didactic narratives and performs them in ways far beyond that of any authorial intent (see Figure above the production and reception of performance text).

Literature is not a shadow world; we are not condemned to languish at a removal from the real in Plato’s cave or in the social constructionist’s ‘prison house of language’. To critically essay into the world of poetry is to explore the nature of textual realities as they engage us in specific and energetic material forms of life (Retallaks ‘Scarlet Aitch’ in Kinzer 2006:65)

Leaving the literary realm now (at least in the manner of text) – it is necessary to account for the multiplicity of the guidebooks ‘doing’. For this the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze are readily engaged. Backpacker guidebooks are expensive. Backpackers are not able to buy new copies for each destination. To counter this, many backpackers’ exchange, buy and sell ‘used’ copies of guidebooks with other backpacker’s and with local vendors. This is typical practice in places like KSR, tourist markets and border zones. Guidebooks are good bartering material.

Out of few possessions I had with me – my guidebook was among the more valuable. In one backpacker accommodation I remember seeing a new edition of a Lonely Planet guide cased in metal and chained to a reception desk. In many other places I noticed that access to guidebooks was permitted under supervision only (My reflections).

Guidebooks are used as a means of gaining cultural leverage within backpacking, that is, some backpackers actively distance themselves from using guidebooks, the rationale
exists if you do not use a guidebook you are a better backpacker, in such identity statements the guidebook is co-constitutive of backpacking in incredibly important aspects of self, such as identity and social role. Both local agents and other backpackers realize the monetary and cultural value of backpacker guidebooks and use this as leverage into the backpacker’s world. One of the key outcomes of my ethnography and study of material practices suggests new unities and tensions exist between the locals and backpackers where guidebooks speak to local agents and other travelers.

When I met other backpackers we often chatted about where we were going, or where we had been. This was a good conversation starter. There was always somebody commenting on how many countries they were going to or how many they’d done. I am sure I also asked questions like have you done Europe yet? I definitely experienced some sort of competitive anxiety during my trip. This anxiety also boiled over into how I referred to my guidebook. There was a certain stigma attached to using guidebooks, I would make a point of telling other backpackers if I hadn’t used a guidebook for a while…’ (My reflections).

Ironically, guidebooks become synonymous with less adventurous backpackers; that you are a better backpacker if you do not use a guidebook. Many backpackers’ claim non-user status when they have been travelling for considerable periods of time, a practice used as social leverage. The presence of the guidebook differentiates between less experienced backpacker’s (those seen with the book) and more experienced backpackers (those seen without a book). This is significant because backpacker guidebooks, in this instance, exert a non-presence performative. During my time in Thailand I heard backpackers use phrases ‘I haven’t used mine since (place)…’ or ‘I tend to travel without guidebooks…’. These phrases were used strategically in important backpacker identity creation, in the presence of other backpacker’s. The subtle and detailed ways that individual backpacker’s used their guidebooks were co-constitutive of incredibly important aspects of backpacking performance such as social status, travel experience, and local knowledge. In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattrai argue that a book:

is an assemblage. . . and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity . . . As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other
assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connections with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, into what other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. . . when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. . . literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been (Deleuze and Guattari in Hayles 2001:156).


Chapter 6 Backpacking materials and backpacking bodies

Discover the errors of the ego! Realize that *egoism is an error*! But not to be understood as the opposite of altruism! That would be love of other *supposed* individuals! No! *Get beyond* ‘me’ and ‘you’! *Experience cosmically*!” (Nietzche in Smith et al 2005:16).

Introduction

This chapter explores the ‘doings’ of materiality in backpacking-becoming. Materiality is defined as the way in which ‘things’ are involved in the world, and like ANT, it describes how material objects also create knowledge and realise social actions. Social worlds are comprised of constantly shifting relationships and changes of meanings between objects and people that are materially and historically embedded (Miller 1987; 1998; Bourdieu 1991). The phrase ‘material culture’ is a broad one, however; it is defined in different ways by various scholars. Perhaps the simplest way to define the term is that material culture (re)presents the ‘things’ or the ‘stuff’ surrounding humans or the ‘material’ products of both nature and culture. These ‘things’ range from plants, clothes, household ornaments and appliances, interior decorations, to more complex items such as cars, homes, ICTs, and yet also includes mundane things such as paperclips, pegs, stones, nails, baskets, and bags. The list is almost infinite. Some artifacts denote class and social status, while others simply help accomplish specific goals. Most importantly, material culture reveals information about places and times about the people who create or use the artifacts, and in a historical sense about change over time. Just as people create material culture, so too, are people shaped by the surrounding material culture. But the matter is not as simple as this. It is fraught with many challenges. How do I study material culture? Some scholars argue that artifacts can ‘speak’ but do they? Can I really treat them like text? Others claim they perform much like human actors do? Is this classic anthropomorphism? How do I interpret what the artifact or the collection of artifacts ‘says’ or ‘does’? How does material culture help address my larger ontological questions and issues? Like what constitutes being? Where is the locus of meaning? Or my related research question, how is meaning generated in backpacking? I have come against many
other questions pertinent for methodological discussion. What are the limitations of using artifacts? Is it possible to overstate their value? Knorr-Cetina warns of an equally dangerous turn which she names the ‘objectualization’ of social relations, in which objects progressively displace persons and increasingly mediate human relationships (ibid 1997). How can I represent something not only other to me, but other to human? How do I go about performing research on something inanimate? What are the ethical concerns that I must negotiate, and even more importantly do ‘things’ really ‘do’ things?

What is a thing?

Tourism abounds with things. Objects provide tourists – people away from home - with ontological security. Before entering into further discussion on the performance of such tourist objects I wish, again, to turn to etymology. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) draws attention to the ambiguity of the word ‘object’. According to the *Chambers Dictionary* an object is a material thing, but also an aim or purpose, a person or thing to which action, feelings or thoughts are directed: thing, intention and target (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000:104). Philosopher Lorraine Daston traces the origins of the word ‘Object’ to the root meaning of a ‘throwing before’, ‘putting against’ or ‘opposite’, that is; objects are those aside or before the subject. This is classic humanism. Before entering discussion of specific backpacking things, I would first like to provide a brief history of the way humans consider objects. The first axis of debate is generated by conceptual residues of the ongoing debate between idealism and materialism. This continues to permeate descriptions of the web of sociality/materiality. Marx’s commodity notion marks one of the first modern exercises into the ethics of things. Essentially Marx describes a way for some thing to be. Historical materialism meant that production (and therefore certain types of exchange) is only possible in a particular kind of society, *at a particular period in history*. The concern here is how much autonomy and agency can be granted to material objects in view of their social inscription and symbolic construction, and also where conceptual experiments with the ontological symmetry between humans and nonhumans might lead and/or should be permitted to go. The second axis of debate concerns the fate of cultural theory and of sensibility in the face of heightened uncertainties about the distinction between what is real, what is constructed, and what is imaginary, and between what may count as a person and what may count as a thing.
Thus before looking intimately at backpacking artefacts, I wish to invite the reader to look more closely at some everyday objects, the familiar objects that drive behaviour, rituals and society, as well as the not so familiar, even the boring objects that are just somehow there. Consider Plate 6 and 7 for a moment. Rather than seeing them indifferently as insignificant things, I wish to draw attention to all of their sedimented meanings constructed by people and through them, and all at once. Thus the social lives of Plates 6 and 7 begin: as something holding together a machine, a building, a bridge; a home for a mollusc; an effective paperweight on my desk; a redundant industrial apparatus; a memory from a walk on the beach; an achievement in ingenuity; a pretty little keepsake; rough, smooth, old, older, aesthetic, functional, defunct? These ‘insignificant’ things are caught up in space-time; they redress their surroundings in each context. The Seashell and the steel-nut ‘doing’ emerges in their involvement with what they’re doing, what they’ve done, where they have been, where they are now, who they are with and the effect they have. Objects are complex and hybrid; they hold affections and ‘do’ things. The properties of ‘things’ are not attributes but historical densities.

Anthropologist Alfred Cell proposes that artifacts are devices ‘for securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed’ (1992:43). Central to Cell’s argument is a recognition that the performance of artifacts is
dependent on their particular materialities and contexts, and not reducible in any determinate way to the object ‘in itself’, that is, the material resistances of objects are inseparable from the arrangements through which they materialize. Brown turns our attention to the ontology of things, marking, perhaps, the latest move in materialist philosophies.

Consider a blind man with a stick. Where does the blind man’s self begin? At the tip of the stick? At the handle of the stick? Or at some point halfway up the stick? (Bateson 1973: 318).

**Material histories or history of the material**

Before focusing exclusively on backpacking objects it is pertinent to draw out some key theoretical developments in the history of the study of material culture, and in this process to highlight those with particular resonance to studies of tourism. Since the start of the enlightenment project philosophical inquiry has been based on the supposition of human centricity. In his book *We have never been Modern* Latour (1993) reconciles the denunciation of objects in modern times and presents detailed historical insights into subject/object relations. Objects or ‘non-humans’ in traditional Western philosophy are typically seen as disembodied, detached and devoid of any meaningful social operation. This underlying philosophy has organized Western thinking for the past few centuries. For example, in his work on commodity fetishism Marx (1867), though occasionally alluding to the ethereal properties of objects, simultaneously sets precedents on how to conceive of such objects (exchange value). In the twentieth century Saussurean linguistics reduced everything to text, discursive relation, sign and image (upon which the works of Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss are based). Essential premises of structuralism are that social and visual phenomena do not have intrinsic meaning but rather are logically defined as parts of larger governing systems, and that the meaning of these phenomena can only be revealed when these larger systems are understood. This is most fervently expressed in Roland Barthes (1970) book *The Empire of Signs*. Later, authors such as Jonathon Culler (1976) Jean Baudrillard (1981) and Jacques Derrida (1976) although purportedly inclusive; continue to detract from ‘things’. Until recently we have been told that there is nothing outside of text (Derrida 1976).
Even today, in the cultural realm for example, meaning is often only considered in abstraction - in which any material affectivity is denied or rendered obsolete. Existing cultural vocabulary diminishes the ability to discuss the relational energies of ‘things’. Theatrical terms such as the stage is set and the props are in place still allow people to imagine that they are in sole charge of their worlds. Linguistic similes are no longer deemed sufficient to describe human performance in the social world. Such dramaturgical metaphors continue to undermine established Hegelian work on ‘interconnectedness’ (Hegel 1977) and more recent theories of ‘mutuality’ (Keane 2003). Furthermore, the legacies of signification uphold the ever-present danger of reducing an object’s performance to mere symbolic enculturation. Haldrup and Larsen (2006a) describe how the recent cultural turn continues to melt everything solid into signs.

Studies of the ‘sociality’ of objects can be traced back from Hegelian dialectics (Hegel 1977) to modern anthropology and museum studies (Ingold 2000; Harre 2002; Schechner 2001) and into the general social science imaginary with Appadurai’s (1986) seminal book The Social Life of Things. More recently, Miller (1987; 1998; 2005) has contributed significantly to material culture by applying ‘the material’ to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, so that persons, objects and things are no longer treated separately: each sets the conditions for the other. Webmoor and Wilmore (2005) have since pronounced the ‘symmetrical levelling of humans and things’. Carlile, Nicolini, Langley, and Tsoukas in their (2013) book How Matter Matters: Objects, Artifacts, and Materiality in Organization Studies edit an innovative collection of works on the ‘things’ and technologies in everyday lives and organisation settings that interact and engage the people (and employees) around them. The study of ‘entangled objects’ (Thomas 1991) and the ‘entangled tourist’ (Tribe 2005) are now the project of many post-processual researchers who endeavour to supplant discourse as the modus operandi for the social realm (Latour 1996, Ingold 2000). In short, critical emphasis in the contemporary social sciences is gradually moving from a study of textuality towards the essential materiality of the world. An important movement in this has been actor-network theory (ANT).

Actor-network theory (for detailed discussion see chapters 3 and 4) is both theoretical framework and deconstructive toolkit used to consider the infrastructure and operation of networks. It assigns agency to both human and ‘non-human’ actors (artifacts). In tourism, aside from the textual performance of certain artifacts (guidebooks and backpacks, for
example), the relational ‘materiality’ of these objects is crucially performative. Critically, Latour states that ‘there is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist’ (1994:45-46). As Graves-Brown reminds us:

Culture exists neither in our minds, nor does it exist independently in the world around us, but rather is an emergent property between persons and ‘things’ (ibid 2000:4).

Thus materiality is defined as the way in which ‘things’ are involved in the world and follows ANT’s central charge that objects or ‘non-humans’ around us also create knowledge and realise social actions (see section on the ‘material practices of reading’). Social worlds are comprised of constantly shifting relationships and changes of meanings between objects and people that are materially and historically embedded (Bourdieu 1984; Miller 1987, 1998). Notions of ‘material performativity’ operating within ANT embody pooled perceptions of time, space and material culture, and serve to constitute a (post)modernity distinctly different from the positivist formation of modern times, an era overwhelmingly marked by human and object dichotomies. Thus following the leads of ANT (discussed in chapter 3) as well as the wider contributions of materiality (discussed earlier in chapter 5), the ensuing analysis considers how backpacks as material artefacts impact on the lives of the backpackers who use them. This is in response to Haldrup and Larsen’s (2006a) article in which they stress the ‘inescapable hybridity of human and ‘non-human’ worlds’. By looking specifically at backpacking identity performance as the hybrid performance of backpackers and their affiliated objects, I seek to move towards an evocation of ‘things’ in ways that begin to fuse the signifying capacities of both subject and object.

The identity of things

In the past few decades, then, theoretical approaches that serve to stabilize the identity of ‘things’ into functional form and use have given way to more complex notions of identity constituted by the performance of both humans and ‘non-humans’. In response to this Keane (2003) calls for a deeper understanding of the multiple modes of objectification in social life. In his study of recreation and leisure Dant (1998), for example, uses windsurfing to reveal how recreational activities are realized through interaction with
material objects and focuses on the notion of ‘living with things’. Later Dant (2004) uses the term ‘assemblage’ to discuss the meeting of two entities, and uses the example of the automobile (car) and car-driver. Elsewhere, Franklin notes that ‘…tourist things are intertwined in the practice of tourism; we do not merely look at them or search them out, we become involved with them’ (2003:101). Additionally, Franklin and Crang (2001:15) note ‘…many things formerly considered merely as ‘things’ are more properly hybrids of the human and ‘non-human’.’ Similarly, Johannesson asserts ‘tourism can be understood as a practice that involves networked orderings of people, natures, materials, mobility’s and cultures’ (2005: 141). Keane also refers to human/non-human relations in his theory of mutuality as a ‘bundling’, a ‘co-presence’, a ‘mingling’ (2003:414).

**Performative things**

Earlier I discuss the contribution of poststructuralism in the development of performativity. Though critically regarded for reductionist tendencies a ‘relational’ interpretation of poststructuralism illuminates the complexities of a backpacker guidebooks performance. A relational reading of poststructuralism refutes the notion of essentialist ontology and effectively argues that subjects are found (or never fully discovered) in a construction of identity that is anti-metaphysical and materially embedded. Now performativity moves into the material. Thus, whilst the first two elements attend to the linguistic performance of backpacker guidebooks, the following provides an account which describes the material performance of backpacker guidebooks. Over twenty years ago Daniel Miller wrote that material culture ‘has consistently managed to evade the focus of academic gaze, and remains the least understood of all central phenomena of the modern age’ (1987:217). Since this time the study of materiality has slowly gathered momentum, the introduction of concepts such as ‘relational materialism’ (Law 1992), ‘cyborg’ (Haraway 1991), ‘hybrid’ (Latour 1997) ‘actor-network’ (Law 1992) and ‘assemblage’ (Dant 2002) attempt to collapse the distinction between the social and the material. Indeed, these academics write with the charge that the social is material and vice versa. Markussen writes that ‘Performativity is a theory of how things - identities and other discursive effects - come into being’ (2005:329) Author Italics. Bruno Latour (1997) a key proponent of actor network theory describes how both lexis and things act. Key to Latours (1997) actor-network perspective is his notion of
‘translation’ - moments in social performance where the actors are affected by the outcomes of others. The recent ‘material turn’ in social research recognizes that objects, technologies and environments are simultaneously material, cultural and social (Haldrup and Larsen 2004). Material artefacts, therefore, do not only represent the social world, they translate and displace the contradictory interests of people and things (Law 1999). Van der Duim (2007) describes actor-network theory’s focus on the ‘processes of translation’ as one of its key elements relevant to studies of tourism. Translations in the realm of backpacking include the many shifts in meaning and intentions that result from repeated compromise between backpacker’s and the material world of ‘things’. By de-emphasizing traditional subject-object controversies, an actor-network perspective and the wider contributions from material performativity describes how social arrangements in backpacking are shaped by interactions with material objects, in this instance the guidebook. A focus on the performative powers of objects precludes their multiplicity, by this I mean the simultaneity of the communicative, cultural, practical and technical dispositions that result from a backpacker network comprising backpacker, other backpackers, guidebook, backpack, places and a vast array of objects. Increased attention to materiality in backpacking practice is useful as it encourages ways of articulating the constitutive actions and processes of ‘things’.

The ubiquitous backpack

Many think it incomprehensible that ordinary things might be vague. Vague objects, they think, must have some sort of shady presence, being neither quite there nor not there, and they must have dodgy identities, being somehow neither quite the same as other things nor different from them. Vague objects, if so, cannot be at all ordinary. On the contrary, they really must be pretty queer (Moreau 2002:333).

This section specifically engages with the performative indices of the backpack. It explores the way that the backpack interrupts the realities and performances of being a backpacker (see Walsh and Tucker 2009). Backpackers depend heavily on certain objects in the material world that guide and assist in their journey and in their identity construction. Amongst these material objects the backpack is one of the most critical in
this culture. Indeed, this object is synonymous with this type of traveller. I show how beyond the realm of representation the backpack is pivotal in backpackers’ lived experiences. As well as a symbol of this culture, it is argued that this object is performative. This material object is enmeshed in the backpackers corporeal performativity. A large part of the backpacker’s identity creation is left to the performative indices of the backpack itself. In short, this is to say that the backpack does things. But what does it do? How does it do things? The following section serves to highlight the centrality of the performance of this material object. Much of the theoretical and analytical side of tourist behavior has been premised on ideological, linguistic and semiotic approaches to the study of tourism phenomena, including ‘the tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990) and a wealth of other key tourism works based on representation as the main organizing feature (Urry 1990; Dann 1996). Among these authors, though, many have since served to transcend ocularcentricity (Dann 2003). New interpretations of human sociality have been theorized by drawing upon emblematic figures such as Pierre Bourdieu, Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour, yet these have largely been ignored by tourism studies, which typically consider tourism as a form of consumption of the world and the cultures therein. This conceptualization has produced a proliferation in studies of tourism management issues and practices, whilst inhibiting research and developments elsewhere. In other words, tourism practice and behavior has been treated as a form of business enterprise. Moreover, the alternative dimension or the non-business sociological side that does exist has, for the most part, developed without a material conscience. Dant (1999) explains how sociologists in general have largely ignored material culture and studies of objects to explore how we live and socialize. He writes ‘…until they are put in a museum, or turn up in a strange context, we do not notice that they are culturally distinctive, that they are part of our lives alongside the people we live with’ (1999: 15).

I attend then to a critical concern raised earlier in chapter 4 ‘Methodological framework’ – the dissolution of the subject/object distinction. This has gained much attention lately as scholars now speak of the ‘turn to ontology’ – a recognition, in part, of the significant effort to radically reconfigure an understanding of the ways that humans and non-humans (people, artifacts, materials, the environment) constitute the social world. I also address current discussions in social science framed around this ontological turn which simultaneously stress the need to redress the meaning(s) of culture and the politics of
identity. In doing so, I necessarily outline relevant historical developments in cultural theory pertaining to objects. Essentially this part of my inquiry is representative of this shift and thus falls under the branch of tourism research concerned with tourist ontology. I focus my attention to the objects that are part of the backpacking tourism world by specifically examining the role of the backpack in backpackers’ moments of identity production as well as their embodied interactions. Backpacking is supported by a huge assembly of specific objects and material ‘things’. These include guidebooks, luggage, clothing, souvenirs, equipment, belongings and all other kinds of stuff that contribute to the minutiae and sentience of the social world. These things afford cohesion and weave texture into the tourism experience. Backpacking travel would not be possible without such different and composite things. Backpackers are constituted in ideology and discourse and in the relations between themselves and other humans (O’Reilly 2005), yet also with the ‘things’ or ‘non-humans’ in the world that surround them.

**How are backpacks performative?**

I consider the performance of the backpack in a twofold manner, first, in the construction of backpacker identities; backpacks travel through various cultures and economies and are subject to numerous social meanings. In other words, different understandings of backpacks are enmeshed in the global systems through which these objects move. I describe how backpacks are used, in various ways, as a subtle means of identification, both within and outside of backpacking circles. At a wider level I highlight the affective relation between self and ‘thing’. In this way I challenge the distance through which western notions of identity have been historically constituted as separate from the categories of objects.

Secondly, the performativity emanates from the effect the backpack has on the configuration of backpacker’s embodiment. The backpack is not only semiotically fused to the backpacker’s identity, but also physically fused to the backpacker’s body. This type of luggage is pivotal in backpacker’s bodily performance. From this embodied perspective, I claim that the backpack determines corporeal ways of knowing. In the wider sense, what is shown is the effect that a material ‘thing’ can have on the understanding of human embodiment and subsequent social activity. Backpacking social
worlds are imagined and read through discourse yet they are realised and held together through bodies and things. Drawing attention to the corporeal and material dimensions of society and culture a study of the backpack illustrates how the social is an embodied performance as much as a semiotic translation (Walsh and Tucker 2009).

Shaffer (2004) also provides something in the way of a lead by suggesting that ‘in its difference from the norm, in its intimate connection with the body’ (ibid: 148) the backpack performs. The following discussion elicits further meanings from this particular tourism ‘thing’ in order, specifically, to reveal the complexity and specifics of the materially ‘entangled’ world of travel. In suggesting that the packs that backpackers carry with them are performative, I argue that they ‘do’ things. I therefore face the following questions: What do backpacks ‘do’? How do they ‘do’ things? And, how do these material objects bring backpacking social realities into being? In order to answer these questions I outline the various ways in which backpacking is configured through the performance of the backpack. I frame this section on backpacking materiality around developments in the study of materiality in the social sciences in general, and in the tourism literature, specifically. Theoretically, I continue to develop the possibilities that an application of actor-network theory (ANT) can bring to studies of backpacking tourism. Through this lens, and together supported with evidence gathered from participant observation, photographs and interviews I examine how backpacks are implicated in the production of the backpackers’ world. Thus in terms of empirical support I present a collage of methodological affect, including photographs, backpackers’ narratives and I also narrate my own experiences to reflect upon my thoughts and observations whilst travelling as a backpacker, from during my ethnography and before. Collectively these insights serve to illustrate how backpacks perform in backpacking journeys. In another interpretive study Morgan and Pritchard (2005) also explore the relationship between tourism, materiality and identity when they examine ‘how consumers reflexively use souvenirs after the original travel experience to (re)create tourism experience’ (2005: 30).
Backpacks and backpackers: an intimate etymology!

I remember looking for the first time at the new me, in my mirror, before leaving home. It took a while to get used to the heaviness and awkwardness, to the feel of this thing. I knocked a vase as I turned. It really was a new me (my reflections).

The term backpacker came about in response to the growing numbers of a certain type of traveler (those with fairly large packs on their backs) in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. In Australia, for example, the first corporate usage of the word was registered in 1981 by John Cook in Kings Cross, Sydney (Pearce 1990) whilst in Cairns The Backpacker’s Inn a hostel-style accommodation appeared in 1983 (McCullogh 1991:10).

From the outset the traveler, the subject, was named and identified because of the presence of the backpack, the object. Anthony Giddens’ (1994) describes how ‘things’ can provide us with ontological status, explaining that when people accumulate objects they accumulate being. Clearly a highly valued object (see Plate 8), backpacks may contain medicines, clothing, footwear, all kinds of gadgets, and copies of important personal information, travel documents and identification. Backpackers are thus dependent upon the pack and its contents. Moreover, in the world of travel and tourism backpacks offer backpackers’ ontological proof of their being. Backpacks are part of the collective consciousness which include the people, objects and things that constitute the backpacking world. In this respect backpacks are among those cultural artefacts that have meaning and reference particular cultural praxis (Bauman 1998). In the world of travel and tourism this process of signification typically associates suitcases with package tourists and backpacks primarily with backpackers. Backpacks are, without doubt, one of the ultimate symbols of this travel (Walsh and Tucker 2009).
It is important to note that I do not view backpacks as the only defining feature of backpacking. Backpackers are increasingly seen with different types of luggage; trolley cases, for example, are now very popular. Other travellers, for example surfers, itinerant workers, volunteer tourists, and some mass tourists use backpacks as well. Detailed socio-cultural identification is produced through a variety of means. Many other linguistic and material discourses pull backpackers in certain and temporary ways. Backpacks, as a key material artifact, or as Shaffer writes ‘an integral component’ (2004:147) within this travelling culture, serve to distinguish backpackers from other types of tourists, to the
extent that if backpacks did not exist, the ontological status of the subject, the backpacker, is rendered more ambiguous.

Plate 10: Backpack badges

The fabric of things

Over the past few decades different styles in the design of backpacks confound some of the changes in backpacking travel. Initially backpacks were made from canvas with leather straps and metal frames. Today most backpacks are made from synthetic and strengthened fibre fabrics, such as Teflon (www.teflon.com). Backpacks have developed from earlier, simpler designs (aluminium frame and canvas) into to the ergonomic construction of many contemporary backpacks. Backpackers perform impressive and contingent constructions of self and choose from many different types of backpacks suited to gender, taste and travel style. Backpack futures may lie with fabrics such as ballistic nylon, a material used to cover bullet proof vests. Traditional materials are being replaced by industrial materials like rip-stop nylon that are strong, lightweight and durable. There are ecologically responsible aspects in the manufacture of new backpacks – with recycled materials used in their production. This mirrors some of the environmental and political narratives that currently exist in backpacking discourse. Backpacks are increasingly responsive to backpackers’ needs and the environments they travel through. Computerised-fabrics with built in Global Positioning Systems (G.P.S) are already available in ‘Dolce & Gabbana’s’ Military inspired backpack vests (www.dolcegabbana.com) for example, and ‘North face’s’ new line of backpacks have pockets designed to hold laptops and mobile phones (www.thenorthface.com) each
making the traveling body more effective in its correspondence with the world. Through such technological developments backpacks are becoming important communication interfaces. These material artifacts are fusion-objects with cultural, practical, status and communicative properties (see Walsh and Tucker 2009).

**Backpacks and space-time**

Backpacks commission a specific socio-spatial and temporal politics. On the micro-level, they organize the backpacker’s world. They fix and channel experience, determining in a very real sense, how far backpackers can travel in one day, how long to go there for; which site to visit; which alley to walk down; what shop to go in; which hostel to stay at; which beach-hut to stay at; and what to carry with them. The irony of the backpack is that (as an object) it initially sets backpackers’ free from the shackles of the modern world; it facilitates the very style, freedom and flexibility associated with backpacking travel. And yet at times, during the backpacker’s journey, the backpack becomes the unwanted, cumbersome and frustrating effect of a doing outside of the backpacker’s immediate control.

In short, backpacks perform well beyond the conceptual parameters of their utilitarian function, nor do they simply speak from the stories that they tell, they are beset with an affect that achieves considerable doing from their various individual translations of backpacking. Backpacker’s achieve local and detailed ontology’s of self through the connectivity’s and performances of their backpacks. Individual backpacks retain traces of what the backpacker has done, what the backpacker is doing and what the backpacker is now. Backpacks not only reflect given aspects of self, signifying backpacks as performative are actively constitutive in incredibly important aspects of backpacking such as identity, status and travel experience.

**Backpacks and mobility in KSR**

Ultimately, the backpack was what marked me as a backpacker for the audience I encountered daily. The backpack, rather than a huge rolling
suitcase or a steamer trunk or several smaller bags, performs. In its
difference from the norm, in its intimate connection to the body, it marks
the long history of distinguishing the traveller from the tourist (Shaffer

Backpacks facilitate the very mobility and flexibility associated with backpacking travel. They can be seen everywhere in KSR. People can be seen wearing many different types, sizes, colours and brands. Old, new and manufactured copies of backpacks are also for sale in many places in and around KSR. The backpack distinguishes backpackers from other types of travellers, mainly tourists. At the level of signification, the backpack is a seductive illusion of a person’s self-mastery or control, indicating level-headedness, planning; independence; bravery; youth; vitality; liberation; and desirability. Conversely, the backpack can also designate the backpacker as low-budget; vulnerable; alone; poor; dependent, undesirable for some. According to the age; brand; number of badges, backpacks can denote well travelled, experienced, somehow better-backpackers. Thus already the backpack is considered simultaneously at both ends of the semantic spectrum. That of the abstract meaning it conveys, which is most removed from the literal thing signified by the object, and then back to the backpack itself as exactly that - a functional pack on somebody’s back. It has been the failure to look outside of the semantic spectrum, however, and into the performative world of the backpacks doing, where the objects semiotics meets its actual performance, which has served to undermine the development of their material ontology.

When I was younger I owned the same backpack for most of my teenage
years and early twenties. I’d had it since my first independent trips away
from home - weekend camping with friends. I remember rolling my
clothes up and shoving them into my pack, so much more fun than folding
my clothes carefully into a suitcase. I used to think how ‘cool’ I was
wearing my backpack – leaving home and walking out of my parents
house. As I ventured overseas for the first time my pack came with me.
Like many other backpackers I also stitched some badges onto my pack. I
don’t think I got competitive with this. But I suppose just with the few that
I did have - I was saying something (my reflections).
At the level of signification, the backpack is a seductive illusion of a person’s self-mastery or control, indicating level-headedness, planning, independence, bravery, youth, vitality, liberation, and desirability. Conversely, the backpack can also designate the backpacker as low-budget, vulnerable, alone, poor, dependent, and undesirable. Similarly do large backpacks assign different notions of self-sufficiency and (in)dependence than smaller ones? According to their age, brand, number of badges (see Plate 10 and 11), backpacks can denote adventure and experience; they can construct better backpackers.

When I was in India a few years back I met two Danish backpackers, Signe and Maya. They were experienced travelers and great company - we ended up travelling together for several weeks. One day we were walking through a small town in central India when Maya’s backpack fell from her back to the ground, one of the straps had come away and tore a good part of the fabric away with it. This was not something our travel sewing kits were going to fix. We were near a tourist market - so carrying her bag like a ‘hold-all’, we went backpack shopping. She chose her new pack and stuffed her gear inside whilst still in the stall. Waiting at the bus station shortly after, we each admired her new purchase – commenting how shiny and new it looked. ‘Quick pull the labels off’ I said. We didn’t want people to think we’d just arrived! We were laughing and joking about this as the bus appeared. As I placed my pack onto the roof rack, Maya pulled hers along the floor, scoring dust into the seams. “Now”, she said “it looks likes yours” (My reflections).
Although the essential appeal of goods in the late-modern world is often the newness of things, there are embedded cultural nuances that only more experienced backpackers may know. In reaction to the newness of their backpacks some backpackers’ deliberately scuff and dust-up their packs. The material condition of the backpack differentiates between less experienced backpackers (those seen with new backpacks) and more experienced backpackers (those seen with used and older backpacks). Hence, some backpackers actively make their backpacks look older, where the older is equated with the more experienced, the authentic; the arduous; the intrepid; the better-backpacker. To gain status in this culture, then, backpackers can use their backpacks to change their relationship to time: were the older backpack connotes the longer travelled. The backpack forces the viewer to position the subject (the backpacker) after a primary correspondence with the material conditions of the object. Backpacks orchestrate a backpacker hierarchy; they act as compressions of self and intensify that which is represented. Backpackers have a large number of accidental properties beyond their immediate control resulting from the performative energies of this object. A complex association develops with a material artifact once deemed synonymous with adventurous travel, now understood as a determinate to how adventurous individual backpackers have been. Beyond signification the object of the backpack is, in reality, constitutive of experience and performance:

I was wearing my backpack and searching the narrow alleys of Banglampoo, the Khoa Sarn Road area of Bangkok - a well known backpacker district, for a small hostel recommended by a friend. I was repeatedly asked if I wanted a taxi to the airport, and approached by local touts for discounted accommodation and onward travel. Once I found my hostel, I was relieved to take my pack off. Life was always a little easier without the backpack. I went out into the street and was approached for other things. Did I want to go sightseeing? Did I want 2 for 1 beers? Did I want a meal? (My reflections)
Backpackers find themselves in situations because of their backpack, when they are approached by local touts or vendors, for example. The object is performative in these circumstances for if the backpacker were not wearing their backpack they may still be
identified as a backpacker, but are likely to be propositioned for different things. Backpacks are critical material objects that conjoin backpackers to new possibilities in their social worlds. Backpacks do not only serve to signify a certain type of traveler, they organize the possible encounters with people, and subsequent experience that backpackers may have. Importantly, Shotter (2013) writes ‘what changes within us in such encounters is not our learning new facts or bits of information, but our learning new ways of relating ourselves to the others and othernesses in the world around us.

Plate 14: Backpack, guidebook and tuc-tuc

Plate 15: ‘Backpack’ and ‘tuc-tuc’
The backpack is used by locals to start a dialogue with backpackers (see Plate 14 and 15). Of course, many other signifiers abound, but the backpack is certainly one quite big ‘lumpy’ one. When disembarking off small boats onto the island wharfs, getting off the airport bus, and from coach tours, for example, local agents lift the backpack onto the side. Backpackers are then forced to enter conversation in order to retrieve their pack, or negotiate their onward plans. Locals (often in command of the next/onward form of travel) thus use the backpack to engage the backpacker into these new economies. Thus because of a primary correspondence with the backpack, the backpackers possibilities, are limited – changed or otherwise affected as a result of the presence of the object. The possible futures of the backpacker are an outcome of the effect of the backpack.

Plate 16: Backpack, shops and narrow streets

The backpack, is co-productive of situations, experiences and social relations. The backpack becomes not only the conduit that deliberates in others who you are, but also where particular and situated selves and particular and situated relationships, are denied and others made possible. Backpacks have the power to invoke change. They are objects in flux, unstable and contingent. The social and constitutive effects of backpacks are thus far-reaching.
Plate 17: Wheeled luggage
- the backpack is not the only form of luggage belonging to backpackers.

**Embodied performance**

The conceptual development of the body in Western science is largely premised on Cartesian dualism and its patriarchal undertones - the separation of mind and body, in which the former is given priority over the latter (see Veijola and Jokinen’s 1994 article *The body in Tourism* for early insights into the interplay of masculinity, power, the gaze and the body in tourism). The inadequacies of Cartesian dualism have led social scientists, and feminist theory especially, to herald the ‘rediscovery of the body’ (Grosz 1994; Harraway 1991). They argue that the body is constituted by more than the capacity to be a sign. In other words, the body is much more than a semiotic condition, it can be understood (through the logic of sexual difference) as ‘...a site of practices, comportments, and contested articulations’ (Bray and Colebrook 1998:37). In this ‘process of becoming’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1984) the social body can be seen as performative because it continually makes connections. Haraway defines corporeality as ‘the interactions of humans and non-humans in the distributed heterogeneous work processes of techno-science’ (1997:141). She states that ‘the body is simultaneously a historical, natural, technical, discursive and material entity (1991: 209). Haldrup and Larsen (2006b: 5) also
write that the recent “performance turn” dislocates attention from symbolic meanings and discourses to embodied, collaborative and technologised doings and enactments’ (Italics Original). They continue by adding that ‘these writings reinstall the body and the corporeality and expressiveness of performance by stressing the significance of embodied encounters with other bodies, technologies and material places’ (2006b: 5-6). Moreover, ‘understanding the body means examining what things it performs; what transformations and becomings it undergoes; the connections that it forms; and the capacities that it can proliferate’ (Grosz 1994: 165). One of the research participants comments on how the backpack affects his body, wearing the backpack makes him perspire:

You know when you are wearing a backpack - you sweat (James, UK).

Warnier (2001) substantiates this, arguing that material culture is especially affective because it impinges on humans not in abstract forms (of knowing and doing) but in very real terms, via the sensori-motor experience. Attention to the doings and enactments of tourism has meant a school of research has developed around tourism embodiment, for example, ‘corporeal mobilities’ (Gogia 2006), ‘sensuous tourism’ (Crouch and Desforges 2003) and emotion and bodily affect in tourism. Backpacker embodiment is thus a research framework where ‘understanding comes from specific embodied and particular locations’ (Hannam and Ateljevic 2007:252). Aspects of backpacker tourism involve detailed embodied praxis. Indeed, backpacker bodies are part of the backpacker world; a locale of contest between human and object, between materiality and corporeality. Backpackers’ travelling bodies are complex sites of intersection and resistance; their bodies engage the world into being.
I’d arrived on the island in late afternoon, it was very hot. I’d had little sleep in the past forty-eight hours. From the boat dock I had decided to walk to the beach where I wished to stay, which turned out to be several miles further than my map suggested. The beach looked beautiful; a typical white sand crescent. It was now approaching dusk and the light was magical. I had my eyes on the accommodation on the other side of the bay above some giant rocks. There were a group of beach-huts built around what looked like a huge Baobab tree, hugging the cliff face. Unfortunately, there was no way I was getting over there with my backpack. I was feeling the added weight of the clothes and gifts I’d bought in Bangkok, plus I’d also packed it wrong. It was top-heavy and kept pulling me back at the shoulders. I was exhausted. I needed to sit down and rest. I wanted to get out of my pack as soon as possible. There were average looking beach-huts scattered behind the first line of Palm trees nearby, I settled for them (my reflections).
Parrinello (2001) examines tourism technologies from an anthropological perspective he considers them as prostheses that extend the abilities of the tourist’s body. Backpackers’ embodied performances are enabled and disabled through their backpacks (see Plate 19). In the image above, the backpacker’s luggage lies at the core of their physicality. The backpacker to the left of my photograph can be seen hunched forward. Both backpackers are leaning forward and wearing backpacks that appear heavy and full. The packs allow certain kinds of movement and confine others; thus these material objects construct a fine line, a constantly negotiable line, between travel freedom and corporeal constraint (see also Plate 23 and comparison with Plate 17 ‘wheeled luggage’). There is a noticeable change in posture and carriage in the way backpackers hold their bodies when wearing their backpacks (see Plate 19 again). Indeed, medical research draws attention to the bodily risks associated with carrying backpacks. Boulware (2003) for example, describes the various types of backpacking-induced paresthesias. Knapik (2004) discusses the energy costs of walking with backpack loads and lists common injuries associated with prolonged load carriage including foot blisters, stress fractures, back strains, and knee pain. Heavy and bulky backpacks define the corporeal limits of individual backpackers and mark the boundary of backpacker’s bodily extent (see Plate 18). Drawing on Edensor’s inquiry into the embodied performance of tourism, it is clear ‘how the material
and sensual qualities of particular spaces interrupt the equanimity of disciplined and regulated embodied dispositions’ (2001:79).

![Plate 20: Walking to find beach-hut](image)

In Plate 20 (above) I could hear these backpackers complaining about the weight of their packs, I could see them struggle to walk especially given both the combined effects of high temperatures and walking on sand. Backpacks commission a specific socio-spatial and temporal politics. At the micro-level, they organize the backpacker’s world. They fix and channel experience, determining in a very real sense how far backpackers can travel in one day, how long to go there for, which site to visit, which alley to walk down, what shop to go in, which beach-hut to stay at (see Plate 20), and what to carry with them. The irony of the backpack is that (as an object) it initially sets backpackers free from the shackles of the modern world; it facilitates the very style, freedom and flexibility associated with backpacking travel. And yet at times, during the backpacker’s journey, the backpack becomes the unwanted, cumbersome and frustrating effect of a doing outside of the backpacker’s immediate control.
Plate 21: Waiting with backpacks

In Plate 21 (above) I was waiting for the ferry from Koh Phang Nan Island to travel back to the mainland at Surat Thani in southern Thailand. I was surrounded by other backpackers and there was little shade from the sun to be had. It was hot and I could feel myself sweating under the strain of my backpack. I noted that the backpacker immediately in front of me (and in the centre of the plate image displayed above) was leaning forward to offset the weight of her backpack which is clearly pulling her backward. Another posture the backpack configures is one whereby backpackers must spread the weight of their backpacks down and through their bodies, resulting in both feet splayed, and knees locked in order to balance, this is evidenced in the image above.

We have to learn to re-ascribe action, goals and power to many more ‘agents’ than the human actors, in other words we need to remember things’ (Pels, Heatherington and Vandenburghe 2002: 12).

The backpack is not a neutral instrument; it functions in a hybrid fashion as an operative technology in a complex political economy of knowledge, power, and the exclusions upon which privilege is based. Leigh Star and Griesmeer show that material entities can sometimes function as boundary objects. They create enough structure to the interactions
between actors in heterogeneous social worlds to enable the successful coordination of their efforts, yet do not try to impose on members the same definition of the work they are trying to accomplish. In their view, then, it is the mediation of nonhuman actors that allows members of different social worlds to productively articulate their similarities and dissimilarities.

In summary, backpacks perform far beyond the conceptual parameters of their utilitarian function; they are beset with an affect that achieves substantial performance from their unique and evolving materiality. Backpacks not only reflect given aspects of self, but they are performative, being actively constitutive in incredibly important aspects of backpacking such as identity, status and travel experience. Backpackers achieve local and detailed ontologies of self through the performance of their backpacks. Individual backpacks retain traces of what the backpacker has done, what the backpacker is doing and what the backpacker is now.

In this chapter I have presented an understanding of backpacking as it is negotiated in the performance of a material object – the backpack. Beyond the realm of representation the backpack is critical in backpacker’s lived experience. Firstly, by purchasing and wearing a backpack the traveler begins to construct the idealized backpacker’s body. Backpacks are thus co-productive in backpacker’s identity creation and processes of backpacker embodiment. Furthermore, backpacks organise backpacking tourism in many complex and subtle ways, and thus these material objects are critically performative within backpacker travel. Backpacks confirm, agree, deny, promise, declare and perform in the worlds in which they are embedded. My use of the language of performativity resurrects a redundancy in cultural vocabulary to account for what these objects do. I have thus shown how backpacking should be viewed as a performance, not in the traditional sense of the word, an approach or an act of intention, but rather as an engagement in an object/subject matrix – a human and ‘non-human’ network that configures the possible realities that backpackers will experience. The ways in which backpacking is configured, together with the things that backpacks ‘do’, thus collapses any real distinction between sociality and materiality.

Backpacker identity and the social network of backpacking are regulated to an extraordinary degree by the ‘non-human’ expression of this material object. Backpacks are an integral part of the backpacking world; a nexus of social relations. They have
effects, they embody intentions, and they thwart intentionality, they ‘exercise something which resembles agency’ (Brown and Capdevila 1999) and produce results in the worlds in which they are embedded. The multiplicity of the backpacks’ doing (their material performativity) makes these material objects a rich counterexample to the totalizing image of objects as ‘other’, to that of us.

**The Body ‘In’ Backpacking**

In this section I articulate the various ways on which backpackers bodies are impacted on and both impact – backpacking identity and culture (see also my work in chapter 6 the backpack and embodiment). Before doing so, however, I wish to briefly trace the history of the body in academic studies – or might I better write – trace the non-presence of the body in academia? Veijola and Jokinen (1994) highlight the acute disembodiment of tourism research. They argue that the foundations upon which tourism scholarship is based (MacCannel 1976 and Urry 1990) ignores the body of the tourist and of the researcher; where people are positioned as genderless, voiceless and objective. Since this time feminist theory has contributed much in terms of body-research. Margaret Swain (2004) traces the mutually affected project of embodiment and feminism. Elizabeth Grosz and Donna Harraway move the body into a posthuman logic and provide tourism research with new leads to seek embodied meaning. Contrary to some belief the body is far from redundant in posthumanism, the body is celebrated because of its connections to the world, these can be biological, prosthetic or imagined (virtual). In her book *How We Became Posthuman* Katherine Hayles urges that in order to prevent the takeover of our posthuman future inspired by a technologically deterministic notion of information as disembodied, we must reshape discourse in ways that foreground embodiment. In theory, posthumanism stands against the ideal of disembodied knowledge and declares that ideal to be a mystification; an impossibility. There has been a growing body of research that demonstrates the role of the body in qualitative inquiry. However, as Crang (2006) writes: ‘While accounts recognize the positioning and presence of bodies, along with how they are made socially meaningful, there are rather fewer that unpack the body as active agent in making knowledge (ibid 2006:499).
If I reflect on the experience of the body as it conditioned my travel, indeed, on my body as it conditions this research I therefore engage central questions of Western philosophy: how do I come to ‘know’ the world? Thus I attempt to integrate reflections on the performances of my body as researcher and also of those backpackers I observe. I agree with Helmers and Mazzeo when they write the traveler’s identity is construed as double: in terms of mind (reason, emotion, and ideas) and body (the corporeal existence of the traveling person) (ibid 2005). Thus I follow from Edensor’s inquiry into the embodied performance of tourism ‘to see how the material and sensual qualities of particular spaces interrupt the equanimity of disciplined and regulated embodied dispositions (2001:79). In the next few sections I provide some reflections on the corporeality of backpacking style (that backpacking is a corporeal enactment) - both intentional and performative. The embodied differences I observe are also social actions which require a repeat performance. This repetition is both routine and ritual within backpacking; it constitutes backpacking identity. Thus I argue that being a backpacker (or ‘doing’ backpacking) is at once a social action and a personal act; it is neither prescribed nor narrated, as some strands of poststructuralism would suggest (see chapter 3).

The body: a very real presence in the world

Backpacking identity is organized through subtle stylizations of the body and hence, must be understood as the way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute their identity construction. But more than this the backpackers body is indulgent, is prone to illness even, is new in its place, is very different than the body of the local – which is often the body that is a product of its environment. If backpacking identity is influenced through embodied acts then the appearance of form is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment, which other backpackers perform and ritualise. Thus it is here where I wish to reflect on Nietzsche’s insistence on taking the body rather than the mind as a guide for philosophy since the body is a more accessible phenomenon with different rules, essentially those that are more sensuous than discursive. Nietzsche’s vocabulary evokes thinking on the body through his use of words such as ‘impulse’, ‘drive’, ‘desire’, ‘instinct’, ‘power,’ ‘force’, ‘passion’, ‘feeling’ and ‘affect’.
I now need to examine how spaces and bodies are simultaneously created in the process of being in places. I want to think of space as engagements that materialise corporeal becomings. By challenging the idea of space as an orientation that relies on points, I explore the possibilities of narrative cartographies as textual connections between body and space. In doing so I question: How do backpackers understand and construct body knowledge as corporeal cartographies that materialize space as visual textual narratives. According to Merleau-Ponty (1968) embodied knowledge is the skill that never reaches the level of discourse, but rather is motioned in practice (Bourdieu 1977). Backpackers learn, realise and embody knowledge of the social world through their engagement with it. In sum, they acquire the social skills necessary to become a backpacker through embodied practical experience.

If the tourist’s body is mollicoddled like a child (Dann 1989), is the backpacker’s body rendered active, and activating? Does this only further the imaginary ontological distinction I mention in earlier chapters? I examine some narratives gathered from the interviews to investigate how backpackers question their subjectivity (how they see themselves), their representation and their embodiment. I draw from the same contemporary theories of space that I describe in chapter 8 ‘Space In Backpacking’ (such as non-euclidean ways of mapping, primarily Deleuzian ‘scrumpled geographies’) that conceptualize space as disruptive, and offers different ways to ‘do’ space. I argue that what backpackers know is intersected with spatial experience and their corporeal enactments. This, I believe, is paramount in thinking of backpacking inquiry as a process of embodiment constructed in, and through, space. Saldhana’s (2002) article engages dancing bodies in an analysis of trance parties in Goa, India to which many backpackers attend. This work marks a shift away from a focus on vision to one that engages the material and the embodied. Saldhana does this by connecting music to the environment in which it is played and to the bodies that dance:

The sounds mean because they are connected to a range of entities and conditions: the sun, the moon, the temperature, the coconut trees and the rocks, the smells of kerosene and cannabis and sweat – all these are implicated in the Goa trance event (ibid 53).
Significantly, Saldhana believes that the most important connection (trance) music makes is with bodies, for it is in and through the affective performance of bodies engaged in the event that people are differentiated.

**Backpacking clothes**

Joanna Entwhistle (2000) explains that, even when fashion has been considered by sociologists it has tended to be reduced to simplistic overarching theories of symbolism (see Barthes 1985). She argues that these theories do not account for the complexity and contradictions of everyday dress. Thus Entwhistle (ibid) proposes a move away from clothing as having singular or monolithic meaning to seeing it as an embodied activity embedded in social relations. In a similar vein Turner (1993) coined the term the ‘social skin’ to describe the duality of dress; a metaphor of proximity and deferral between self and other through a membrane; external to the body but still touching the skin. In this sense clothing both conceal and reveals. Moreover, *how* backpackers adorn themselves is intimately linked with how they wish to be understood, and this experience in turn is influenced by the situation and the structure of the wider context (Keane 2005). Thus I am alerted to theoretical discussion on the performativity of clothes. Clothes are fashionable, yet they are also fashioned; we shape them to construct our appearance (Davis 1992, Cappetta 2005). Hansen (2004) writes about the experiential dimension of clothing; the lived experience with clothes. Clothing is woven in as one activity among many others that adorn the body and articulate identity; it helps to organise backpacking lives. In this view, clothing, body, and performance come together in dress as embodied practice. Thus I seek to explore the relatively under researched topic of backpacking clothing. I concentrate on backpackers own use of clothing, in their attempts to construct various travelling, ‘gendered’, ‘cosmopolitan, and ‘ethical’ identities.

Stylisation and articulation are two different facets in the performance of the backpackers’ body. Stylisation through dress (or particular clothes, and certain ways of wearing particular clothes) and body-mapping, backpackers are rearranged and reconstituted as a new set of possibilities. By articulation I refer to bodily comportments, prostheses (see
earlier chapter ‘The backpack’) that enable and disable the body, and the way the travelled body differs from and acts differently to the rested body or body back home. Taking stylisation first, I argue that the performance of clothes has crucial expressive and instrumental roles to play in backpacking identity construction. Importantly it is not just the clothes, but how the clothes are worn that motions their performative aspect, transcending the symbolic gesture which, of course, is historically documented (Polhemus 1996). Backpacking style, like any other is expressed in difference not similitude. Clothes have gendered and sexual implications (Davis 1992) I believe that different constructions of gender and sexuality performed in the West are transgressed through a different regimen of display for backpackers when overseas. Certain clothes are not gender-specific (linen pants, sarongues), similarly these popularised backpacking clothes may transcend class distinctions that are fixed in the specificity of clothes in their home environments. Some backpackers’ clothes follow the ethical concerns of backpacking discourse. Some backpackers wear ‘natural’ fabrics; hemp, linen, cotton, fishermans pants, sarongues, the idea of ‘going-native’ whilst wearing these clothes often sets them apart from locals whom tend to wear jeans and T-shirts anyway. Some backpackers wear practical ‘activity’ clothing suited to longer-term travel, trousers that zip-away at the knee to re-make themselves as shorts, and other adjustable garments. Other backpackers are comfortable in clothes that may be seen on any of the beaches of meditteranean Europe.

muted tones don’t attract attention, it’s best not to wear ‘in your face’ labels (Katie UK).

Thus backpackers know what they are (or at least portray) through the performative capacity of their own appearance, of which clothes play a large part. Clothes are part of the materiality of presence. This challenges the notion of the ‘demonstration effect’. Backpackers assume an embodied performance something akin to that of the locals, I witnessed numerous backpackers perform the Thai greeting gesture of closing their hands together in a praying motion, tilting their head and bowing. Of course, although now performed meaning is lost during the performance, as the subtleties of how low to bow depending on whom you are acknowledging remain largely unknown between backpacker (farang) and local Thai.
What I observe about all these moments of becoming of backpacker through the clothes which they adorne; the decisions – ‘made’ on the spot, and materialised affiliations, their arrangements and embodied vocabularies (the clothes backpackers wear and the way they are worn); the manner in which their backpack behaves and their guidebook performs; each backpacker and their travelling performance whether fraught or enabled have their own personal(ised) inscriptions. In Plate 22a above two Western female backpackers walk confidently, in a casual and relaxed manner, along Khao San Road, they are not burdened by their daypacks, nor are they sweating or looking uncomfortable. Backpackers are dynamic entities that exist in changing and very ‘real’ environments, through this performance web and the spontaneity that becomes it, a new physical presence on the social scene is activated. This is one based on lived experience and not a priori discourse. I believe that the backpackers I witness and their (relational) identity always changes. In other words they transform and therefore must (in the very process of reiteration) (re) constitute backpacking and its identities. I suggest that Khao San Roads durable but mutable resonance is simultaneously sustained and changed by the echoes of individual desires about landscape materiality and its making, these are revealed by the backpacker’s comments in their reflections on the place. As a result, I suggest that KSR functions as a ‘material theatre’, in which the topological trajectory continues to link ‘locale’ and the modern spatial semiotics of globalisation (see Plate image of Fish and Chips in KSR).
Flashpacking

Plate 23: Two flashpackers

These two backpackers both in Plate 23 self identify in their blog as flashpackers, they are arguably performing a new and emerging style of backpacking. I believe that rather than a type or sub-category it is a new and emerging incarnation of backpacking itself (the connectivities of people and place make for a new stylisation of backpacking, perhaps where the former one is no longer possible - or really desired). In the photograph above flashpacking is also performed in their dress, their sunglasses, their stance, in their embodiment. Interestingly, they both travel for shorter periods thus further positioning themselves into a flashpacking travel approach. Indeed Sorenson (2003) exclaims there have been some changes in backpacking culture; he writes that ‘short-term backpackers are growing in number, possibly indicating stronger growth than that of backpacker tourism, in general (ibid 858). Short-term backpackers are ‘individuals who travel like backpackers, but within the limits of cyclical holiday patterns’ (2003:858). Arguably flashpackers fall into Sorenson’s definition of short-term backpackers. Certainly some of the few travellers I spoke who identified as flashpackers agree with this.
They’re sort of older backpackers who do the budget hotel thing but fly to the islands and travel with i-pods (Jenny UK).

It’s the whole lifestyle thing, look at me I’m cool, it’s all about the staying in KSR, carrying a backpack but staying in boutique hotels, eating in expensive restaurants, drinking beer at 160 baht a night and then they’ll go on the street, stop the guy who’s walked around all day trying to sell – I don’t know ‘corn-on-the-cob’ and haggle him down to half the price, this idea that your gonna get ripped off is rubbish, you are being ripped off the moment you eat in a Westernised traveller restaurant, not when you buy off some one in the street (James, UK).

Flashpacking is also understood in a popular or literal sense as backpacking with flash, or style. There are many references to flashpacking in the imagery and signage around Thailand, and information can be sought from several specialist internet sites, with global reach at www.flashpacker.com, www.flashpackerguide.info and blogspot http://tuxinbackpack.com. One of the participants expresses his feelings toward flashpacking:

Now it’s not about seeing things, it’s about being seen, that’s what flashpacking is about; it’s nothing to do with your personal inner-journey, it’s about being able to pose about it and tell people about it, always on your blog, when I was in India there was no internet, you didn’t have nothing not even a phone call, you just put a stamp on card and hoped that it got there, that was like proper adventurous, nowadays you just chat with your mates on skype or whatever, ‘live chat’, doesn’t cost anything, in that respect the whole sense of isolation and distance has changed, therefore your’e whole mindset has changed, the way you think evolves (James, UK).

I argue that flashpacking (and definitions there of) reinscribe rather than complicate (or erase) the fine line between tourist and backpacker.
A lot of people say, ‘ah, what day is it? Man...’ Like it’s cool you don’t know what day it is, and that’s quite easy to fall into because you don’t have to think about what day it is – so you know it’s acceptable to think like that (James UK).

Most interesting about the above quote is that James begins the first sentence with quite a lot of carcasm in his voice, anomosity even, toward the backpackers who says ‘ah, what day is it? Man...’ He then speaks mockingly about this sort of statement ‘Like it’s cool you don’t know what day it is’, whilst then shifting the tone of his voice to an almost apologetic pitch that empathises with the backpackers reason... ‘that’s quite easy to fall into’, and then he ends the passage by establishing that ‘it’s acceptable to think like that’. I wish to relate this importantly into the context of this interview, James and I were in a street-bar near to KSR, he was living in my apartment block, and we’d arranged this interview earlier that day. Until that morning we had never spoken to each other. The bar was unusually busy, this was a spot I regularly used and it was almost always quiet, this particular afternoon, however, there was a group of lively backpackers who took up most of the other tables, James recognised a number of them and said hello as we’d sat down. This narrative shows how James was affected by my presence; the presence of other backpackers, the interview locale; his tourist angst, status, intolerance and tolerance for backpacking at the very same time. I believe this extract highlights much of the identity crisis that many backpackers experience; the need to distance themselves from annoying or pretentious backpackers, whilst at the same time, feeling strongly about being a backpacker, but just not one of those backpackers.

The two concepts I use in this section – stylisation and articulation work together to produce identity difference and sameness. Karen’s use of clothing and ‘body work’ (see Plate 23) both ‘do’ things; they combine on the surface of her body and present a distinctly different appearance, to that of Rachel (see Plate 23). Yet they are both backpackers. Rather the clothes that backpackers wear demonstrate that clothing has agency (a performative residue). Thus as part of a larger (life) world that constitutes and forms backpacking identity - clothing has cause and effect. Perhaps most interestingly,
Plates 22a and 23 point toward the notion that it is through clothes and styling that backpackers develop, maintain and change their identities and communicate those identities to different audiences. Butler is resolute about this difference:

performance as bounded "act" is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's "will" or "choice;" further, what is performed works to conceal, if not disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, un-performable. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake (1993b:24) Italics original.

Plate 24 also shows how alternative constructions of backpacking movement through space reveal evidence of multiple and hybrid social identities that move between and across the former divisions between flashpacker, backpacker and tourist and human and non-human things.

The way and the ease, in which these garments are worn, sought after and exchanged, connote different things. Important aspects of backpacking social identity are expressed via the body. The way that backpackers move, walk and carry themselves enables others to understand who they are (see Plate 23). These ‘techniques of the body’ are products of embodied knowledge (Shilling 2003). Shilling introduced the term ‘body projects’ a
tendency for the body to be seen as an entity that is in the process of becoming; a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of an individual’s self-identity (ibid 2003). Projects of exercising, suntanning, hairbraiding, tattooing and piercing and wearing certain clothes are just a few examples of how backpackers adapt their bodies. The body mappings shown in Plate 24 and 25 ‘Hair-braiding’ are ones that install new social worlds - opening bodies to other bodies and future encounters. Physiological features pose a challenge for certain body projects (see Carls narrative below) and, as such body projects are sometimes beset with limitations that may reveal more than some travellers might wish to give; bodies are adaptive, but also constraining. In a Deleuzian sense many backpackers are in the process of becoming their bodies, in the logic that they identify with their bodies, but also that constant awareness of the, potentially, critical gaze of other backpackers that generates anxiety over the possibility that their body may let them down. This is evident in Carl’s narrative:

Like your body gives you away, especially mine. I look so white still and I’ve been here for nearly three weeks. Maybe I should sunbathe more, its hard to, I get bored anyway. That idea that you’ve just arrived can be offset through other ways. Like I’ve been here lots of times now, so it’s not as though I look like a complete newbie or anything. Some do though, you can see it in the way they hang round in groups, see it in those pants that zip off at the knees and the way they look at and speak to locals, like a naive way. They think everyones out to do them over. Like it’s good to be wary, but it’s the way they go about it, shaking their heads, ignoring them. It pains me to see it (Carl UK).

Carl refers to his own body as white, indeed too white. He is anxious that his (white) body is an indicator that he has only recently arrived in Thailand. This has implications for both the way he believes he may be received by locals but also, and importantly by other backpackers. He considers the possibility of spending more time suntanning, but is discouraged by the boredom that he associates with the activity.
I took this photograph just as I had stepped off the ferry from Koh Phang Nan and had arrived back to the wharf on mainland southern Thailand. The four backpackers in front, like me, were headed for onward travel options. The backpacker in the front-right of the image has not yet levered her strap over her left shoulder. In the hurry of disembarking various transportations, it is easy to neglect this. She carries her daypack in one hand and a guidebook in her other. It was a blisteringly hot day and we were all headed for the covered walkway – located in the top-left of the image. This walkway was very long. By the time we reached the bus terminus building at the other end, we were all hot, tired and really feeling the weight of our packs. The wheeled suitcase or ‘trolley’ style backpack are much more suited to the spaces and material architectures of developed tourism superstructures such as this.
Plate 26: Two backpacks

In the image above the backpacker was momentarily helping a friend carry her pack onto the ferry from Koh Pnang Nan back to mainland Thailand. In doing so the backpacks simultaneously offer the possibility of freedom for him to step on the boat with both arms free (unlike the suitcase), and help a tired friend, but arrange his body and vision as such that he cannot see his own footfall. *Backpacks work with and against the body.*

The (re)searching body

There are multiple bodily markings and axes through which my relations are produced, (a ‘politics of relation’ dislodges the deceiving ‘stability’ of a ‘politics of location’) my whiteness, for example positioned me, worryingly as coloniser, whilst the very colour of my skin, its whiteness (I am from the Celtic fringe of northern Europe) has performed in ways I did not first consider. In June 2005, before commencing my doctoral research I spent several weeks convalescing after an operation removing a melanoma skin cancer on my lower left leg. I have regular mole-mapping check-ups and have had no more occurrences since. However, I must now practise real caution when in the Sun, this means I must cover up, slap on the sun-cream, wear a hat etc, etc, and simply not expose myself to potentially dangerous, perhaps fatal levels of UV. There were times in Thailand where this behaviour inhibited (and inscribed) some moments of research, I could not, for example, join in beach activities for anymore than ten minutes or so. Much of ‘island life’ for many backpackers is organised around spending time ‘hanging out’ on the beach. On
many occasions I wished to spend more time talking and observing whilst in the sea, or on
the sand. Of course this did not disable my overall research project, it did however
organise my daily routines, the site of my interviews and the manner in which my
participant observation was performed. My body clearly inscribes in the research process.
Personal bodily acknowledgement is important. Traditional research is based on the
assertion that the outcome of the research is neither determined nor tempered by
particular bodily arrangements.

The framework within which my research aims were first produced and configured did not
anticipate or, indeed accommodate any necessary dialogue between me, the researcher and
my body (its state, its limitations) equally in broader academic discourse, the nature of the
researchers body is rarely addressed. Within the traditional framework, physicality is
deemed to have no bearing on either the researcher, the researched and nor the ultimate
research outcome. And yet, in Thailand as I performed my research I realised that all of
the above was put into question. The messiness of my own body, its individuality and
complexity, its limitations and its corporeal expansions – apparent in its sickness, its
deficiencies, its reactions and its shocks challenges objective accounts and threatens,
furthermore, a still disembodied academe.
Chapter 7: Space ‘In’ Backpacking

Introduction

Space is a practiced place (De Certeau 1984:117).

This chapter endeavours to make sense of backpacking spaces, and perhaps more so, of ‘space’ in backpacking identity. Earlier (in chapter 6) I demonstrate that I subscribe to notions of ‘material performativity’ operating within ANT, I now intersect this materiality with combined perceptions of time, space, things and culture. This serves to constitute a (post) modernity distinctly different from the positivist formation of modern times, an era overwhelmingly marked by human and object dichotomies. Thus a study of materiality in space alters perceptions of place, distance, proximity, sociality and other understandings that typically frame tourism. Following the leads of ANT as well as the wider contributions of materiality I consider how materiality (re)organises spaces and how these spaces impacts upon the social lives of backpackers. Edward Soja (1989) argues in his book Postmodern Geographies that spatiality is simultaneously a social product and a shaping force in social life. He cautions against assuming that space is a given or a natural phenomenon. Just as the idea of nature is socially constructed, so too, claims Soja, is the concept of space. In his latest book he develops this notion further and claims that space can and must be understood as a social process (ibid 2010). In other words, any notion of space as static must be problematized and explored in order to make visible the possibilities for alternative constructions of social space. Indeed Soja (2010) proffers that the social sciences need a new spatial consciousness.

In the following sections I highlight the relations between backpacking spaces, materials, and the ‘social’ using a combination of ethnographic material gathered at two sites in Thailand (Koh Sarn Road in Bangkok and Koh Pnang Nan – an island in the Gulf of Thailand). I start with the following questions, how do spaces and materials relate and how do they create backpacking ‘social’ contexts? How is the material-semiotic consumption experience, offered and presented to backpackers in particular places? In order to answer these I consider how the relational processes between backpackers, things and spaces co-constitute backpacker identity and describe how activities are bundled in
particular places in which backpacking identity develops and changes in these same spaces. Backpacking is produced and performed by what I term ‘territories of affiliation’. In short I am concerned with how material culture shapes, and is shaped by, backpacking tourism, in spatialised contexts.

A brief history of space!

In the last twenty years or so, social scientists, in general, and geographers, in particular, have positioned their critique against Euclidian notions of space. In brief, this critique is founded on a concept of ‘space-time’ that is irreducible to either space or time. The dualism of space and social action is rendered variously as ‘performativity’ or spatial practice; whilst there are many problems in defining what the relationship is, the overarching theme – depending upon the theoretical discourse that it is situated within – is a form of duality or a hybridity.

If you take a handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities. If you sketch a circle in one area, you can mark out nearby points and measure far-off distances. Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed. If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant. This science of nearness and rifts is called topology, while the science of stable and well-defined distances is called metrical geometry (Serres and Latour 1995:60).

Bachelard (1969) in his influential book ‘The Poetics of Space’ suggests that modernitys organisation of space founded on the abstract Cartesian coordinates leads to the loss of the tonalization of being (ibid 231). A non-cartesian architecture (also an approach to space), however leads to an ‘inhabited geography’ (ibid 146). In other words, such an understanding of space implies a ‘lived-in space in which the very materiality of the spaces that people use performs them in ‘ontological ways’ (ibid: 239). Deleuze also helps me to (re)conceptualize backpacking topologies precisely because he gives much consideration
to the notion of ‘space-time’ as folded. Deleuze explains how a folding, refolding and unfolding of space continually brings people, space and time together. This is essentially an account of the material topography of space (and its connections). Therefore, as much of ANT is premised on this deleuzian notion of space as folded a topological rather than a geometrical, spatial configuration emerges (see Mol and Law 1994 and Murdoch 1998). According to Hetherington (1998) topology is formed through bricolage and invariably affects identification. Deleuze’s poststructuralist philosophy is one where boundaries, measurements and territories disappear. What the folds of Deleuze mean for studies of spatiality has been taken up by some ANT theorists (Latour 1993; Law and Hetherington 2000; Latour 1995). Actor-network theorists have extended a semiotically based description of performativity to model how social practices produce discrete spatially indexed organization or, more simply, contexts (Oppenheim 2007). ANT has a unique view on spatiality. It seeks to distance itself from a Euclidean view of space. The coordinates of distance becomes less meaningful when geometric space is displaced in favour of a topological theory where space-time is viewed as folded, crumpled and multidimensional. Furthermore, processual space argues that the ‘experience of space cannot be separated from the events that happen within it; space is situated, contingent, and differentiated. It is remade continuously every time it is encountered by different people, every time it is represented through another medium, every time its surroundings change, every time new affiliations are forged’ (Corner 1999 :227). Rather than view space as an empty vessel that objects are placed within, poststructural reconceptualizations link space with corporeality and subjectivity. Reading the spaces of backpacking through the theoretical lens of performativity, and social practice, shows the extent to which former geometries needs to be supplemented.
Space, things and identity: material performativity in ‘KSR’.

Plate 27: Khoa San Road sign

There have been very few studies that focus per se, on the performance of space in backpacking culture, but certainly several that take the notion of geographical space (see Teo and Leong 2008; Hampton and Hamzah 2010), for example, to explore the changing geographies of backpacking is SE Asia.

Due to the lack of published information on KSR’s historical trajectory and earlier development as well as the difficulties I faced in Thai-english translation at the point of source (reference books at Thammasat library, Bangkok), the following is based upon the information provided during several face-to-face discussions with Thais that live or work in the area; Marnvika Dejdamrong – street-bar owner/operator in KSR area and Sirb Tatenong - Recruitment Consultant, and also library staff at the University of Thammasat, and the Department of Philosophy and Religion. Khao Sarn means ‘raw-rice’, an indicator of the historic trading function of this part of central Bangkok; it is next to the Chao Praya River. KSR is also popular with dress-makers and small artisan-type work shops, whilst many of the other businesses serviced the nearby Grand Palace. It has historically been a productive and creative quarter of central Bangkok, a result, in part of its proximity to two university campuses - Thammasat and Silpakorn. Thus most of this area known as Banglamphu has traditionally been a relatively liberal and artistic zone. Since the area
opened up to Western travellers (largely a result of presence of US soldiers in Vietnam war – see section below), a subsequent gentrification has ensued, with workshops, clothes manufacturers and designers, artist studios and book shops comprising a sizeable proportion of the local commerce in the surrounding neighbourhood of Banglampuu. KSR, however (and the few adjacent streets) significantly focus their business operations on backpacker travellers.

My analysis of KSR and Koh Pnang Nan Island is premised on my ethnographic observations and interpretations of backpackers, objects and architectures in their context. I wished to ascertain if, how and to what extent backpacking identity is constructed in the infrastructures, artefacts and the surrounding material world. Whilst in these places I considered the ways in which material things are used to promote and maintain certain backpacker identities.

Both Cohen and Vogt noted as early as the mid 1970’s that in the locations where non-institutionalised travellers congregate a parallel infrastructure develops, the connecting routes between these places become well-trodden paths and themselves become part of a globalised landscape that facilitates backpacking travel. Later Cohen suggests that despite their supposed proclivity for adventure, ‘the need to deal with strange and dangerous situations ... has been largely ameliorated through the emergence of an institutional structure serving the needs of the backpackers’ (2003:103). Guidebooks, word-of-mouth, internet technologies; cheap transport and accommodation, travel services, coffee shops, bars each constitute a socioscape that develops and supports new backpacking identities. Travelers, local business’s, images, narratives, objects and ideas intersect and constitute the backpacking network. There are no boundaries in the literal sense, this network extends across time and space, but there are ‘nodes’ such as KSR and connecting ‘planes of flight’.

**Backpacking enclaves**

The space of KSR is the object of increasing attention by tourism scholars (Howard 2005, 2007, Leo and Teoung 2008). I am concerned with construing the space yet also, and at greater length, with interpreting it. These problems require me to describe the space within
a context, to display its architectural language as a use of material diction, its emphases as a choice of material themes, its devices as an exploitation of a travelling culture. I thus examine, in this one instance, the interplay between the tradition of building for tourists and the specifics of buildings for backpackers.

The architecture of KSR (rustic/eclectic/contemporary – paradoxical) correlates with the syntax of a backpacking adjective (zen, cool, hip) that is in concord with the vocabulary of backpacking. It exemplifies another general stylistic feature: the tendency toward simpler, natural signifiers. What appears to be incidental rustic and charming is, in effect, informing backpackers of their own presence. Through texture and material it marks a process of cultural composition (see Plates 25-28).

There is a theoretical issue at stake here: what is the relation between this materiality and the shared culture and speech of social groups? Since I argue that the materiality of backpacking environments communicates a message different to that of classical tourism buildings (hotels, luxury resorts), the notion of a differentiated architecture seems to add further complexity. Yet the issue of complexity is really this; various material means may be used, in the course of communicating a message, to convey and in this sense communicate differences between types of backpackers.

Backpacker enclaves are found across the world but there have only been a few detailed analyses (Howard 2005). The backpacker enclave is a classic example of a ‘tourist bubble’ (Cohen 1972). Many travellers can be seen in and around KSR; backpackers, tourists, English language teachers, itinerant workers of different sorts, aid workers, volunteers, expatriates, business personnel, Asian tourists, and visiting Thais. Among these travellers backpackers and tourists, for example, occupy the same physical space but they interpret and use this space differently: their realities slide by each other, at times, creating friction as they contend with their difference. Howard writes ‘backpackers may use an enclave for varying purposes; for inexpensive accommodation, to relax from travel, socialise with other backpackers, collect travel information, see local attractions and make further travel arrangements’ (ibid 2005:358). In this ‘traveller-scape’ (see Van der Duim 2007) the same food (banana-pancakes) the same entertainment (MTV-Music, and bars
that play The Simpsons, continually) and similar architectural designs (rustic, zen, minimalist, contemporary – styles that I believe architecturally reflect the shift from backpacking to flashpacking) are found in such enclaves around the world. Enclaves provide safety and (ontological) security in foreign spaces. Backpackers use enclaves as a ‘meta-world’ to recover from culture shock (see Hottola 2004), for suspension from the strangeness of travel or as ‘refuelling stations’ (Richards and Wilson 2004). According to Howard (2005) a backpacker enclave is primarily used by backpacker tourists. In another article (2007) he defines a backpacking enclave as a type of tourist district, a peripheral type of enclave which originates from earlier tourism development. In terms of KSR’s history Howard (2007) refers to Askews’ (2002) book Bangkok: Place, Practice and Representation in which the development of the KSR area is described. Askew claims the Viengtai Hotel on nearby Rambuttri Street was responsible for the growing reputation of the area among overseas visitors in the 1970’s. Howard (2007) also suggests that backpacker enclaves typically expand from one or two guesthouses or hotels. He assigns this pattern to the development of KSR. Lloyd (2006) explains that traveller cafes particularly, in Vietnam, have played an important role in the development of backpacker enclaves by providing a network and the beginnings of infrastructure used by independent travellers. Some research has studied backpacking performance within enclaves, especially Allon (2005, 2007). Following Richards and Wilson’s (2004) suggestion that backpacker enclaves are ‘refuelling stations’ spaces which serve to maintain a sense of identity within backpacking culture. I sought to examine this further asking specifically, *how* these enclaves might achieve this. I hope to contribute to the current backpacking literature by asking *how* these enclaves perform. I too start from the premise that backpacker enclaves serve as places that institute backpacking identity. I argue that they provide travellers with the tools or means to become backpackers. Aside, however, from operating on a discursive plane – *an obvious meeting ground for backpackers to come together and exchange stories, travel tips and ideas* - I contend that the materiality of these enclaves is ontologically significant and spatially formative: these spaces ‘affect’ the performance of backpacking

In problematising the notion of ‘backpacking enclaves’ I refer to these locations anew as ‘spaces of affiliation’; performing backpacking in their general infrastructure and through the material connectivity of specific backpacking things. The Khao Sarn Road (KSR) area of Bangkok is one of the largest and most longstanding of these ‘glocalised’ backpacking
spaces. Backpackers are literally directed in and channelled through KSR: ‘mapped’ and
‘ontologized’ by a materiality that provides, sustains and fuels multiple senses of what it
is to be a backpacker. I explain how, that aside from any symbolic value, this material-
semiotic landscape is performative: that it ‘does’ things, bearing upon backpacking,
effecting change and shifting meaning. First, I suggest that dominant performances of
backpacking are always available in these spaces. Importantly, however, they are not
always consumed, sometimes they are rejected. Second backpacking identity is co-
constituted via the ontological connectivities between backpackers and things ‘drawn
together’ in this material-semiotic realm. And third, that space is therefore interpreted in
terms of the performative densities within it. Following this I draw attention to some of
the complexities and contradictions in studying ‘tangible simulacra’. I also, in conclusion,
reflect on the relationship between the visual and material through important decision
making regarding methodological practice in my performance as researcher in this
particular space.

**Space-time compression and backpacking spaces**

Global travellers armed with their *Lonely Planet* guides, weighed down by
heavy backpacks and the euphoria of close encounters with the
unfamiliar… can be seen congregating in cities all around the world. From
Khao San in Bangkok, Earls Court in London, to Bondi Beach in Sydney,
backpacker communities have spontaneously emerged, marking out
suitably furnished quartiers of cheap restaurants and lodgings,
administrative requirements and facilities, with backpackers intuitively
assembling as a temporary mass of itinerant pleasure seekers (Allon
2004:49).

Allon explains that the ‘spontaneity’ of these backpacker enclaves is only another ‘feature
that backpackers’ mobility has resulted in the highly visible and ubiquitous backpacker
ghettos such as Khao Sarn Road, Kuta Beach, and Puerto Escondido in Thailand,
Indonesia, and Mexico respectively. Globalisation and the related concept of ‘space-time
compression’ have facilitated the development of such places around the world. Thus
rather than understand backpacker enclaves in Euclidean spacing (geometry, proximity and distance), then, it is better to understand the spatiality of backpacker enclaves with the dual concepts of ‘space-time compression’ and the networked spaces of actor-network theory. Both have redefined traditional geographical analysis and allow for discussions of connectivity and material performance that occurs across backpacker networks (extended through space-time) as well as in the specific locales of backpacker enclaves. ANT redefines geography for it overthrows the ‘tyranny of distance’ (Law 1999). Instead of proximity/distance and the mapping of fixed co-ordinates it demands a re-consideration of spatial analyses given a new landscape born out of material connections and social relations. Mol and Law (1999) describe the landscapes of ANT as the ‘geography of topologies’. This Deleuzian spacing involves the folding and indenting of space around relations between people and/or things.

The malleability of space has been a recurrent theme of geography throughout the twentieth century, for example ‘plastic space’ (Forers 1978) ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey 1990) and ‘time-space distanciation’ (Giddens 1994). Similarly, Massey (1993) also eschews any notion of fixed or absolute space. Her work on ‘power-geometry’ informs us how space is bound into local and global networks. Thus space is considered a relative phenomenon. Similarly, ANT demands a rethinking of the Kantian concept of space as a container for human activities vis a vis the relative conceptions of space to show how space is negotiated through networks (Murdoch 1997). Fundamentally, ANT sees space as constructed within networks (Van der Duim 2007b).

**Contested Space in KSR**

Aesthetic and cultural practices are peculiarly susceptible to the changing experience of space and time precisely because they entail the construction of spatial representations and artefacts out of the flow of human experience. They always broker between Being and Becoming (Harvey 1990: 327).

The *peculiar susceptibility* that Harvey observes some eighteen years ago is that which actor-network theorists are concerned with. The ‘translation’ (the brokering) of ontology between entities (actors) is a key underpinning to actor-network theory. It is how the
network works. ANT’s conception of space also follows from Lefebvre’s (1991) social constructionist view of space as in his book the Production of Space. Yet, critically in ANT this social space is networked; it is constituted in and through the network. In ANT space is simultaneously real, social, imagined and discursive. The networks are critical because the sets of relations between both human and ‘non-human’ things are the means by which the space is produced. The notion of network helps us to lift the ‘tyranny of geographers’ (Law 1999) in defining space and offers us a notion of space which is neither simply social nor real space, but a space of cumulative associations.

In late modern times spatial analyses has to resort to aesthetic and social value rather than Euclidean logic. The annihilation of space through time has radically changed the mix of things we are presented with (Harvey 1990). In KSR, for example I can see how, in Harvey’s words, ‘a strong sense of ‘the Other’ is replaced with a weak sense of the Others’ (1990: 301). In the relational materialism of ANT, however, postmodern nihilism is still a nightmarish scenario yet it remains precisely that the stuff of dreams (see Anything goes? The perils of spatial relativism by Keith and Pile 1993). Importantly, images are transformed into material simulacra in the form of built environments, objects and things which are often indistinguishable from the originals. Things collect, but this collection is not random it is in the juxtaposition of things and the affiliations this creates that makes space grounded, real and different. Moreover space is reconfigured as created, lived and experienced by backpackers. The constant reproduction of the image continues to shuffle and effectively fleet, but in a materially constituted social world, meaningful interaction (between the Others) depends, relies and is performed in the relations between them. This redefined space of affiliation is a tactile space and sensuous space - much more lived than a visual interpretation might imagine. The translations that emanate from these spaces define backpackers, bestow them with competencies and make backpackers ‘do’ things.

Materialised spaces

The area of Khoa Sarn road does strange things to backpackers. They get like an air of importance, you know always behaving like they are the most adventurous travellers; the most daring, when really all they are
doing is drinking and having a good time. Why can’t they just be happy with that? You know like why do they have to be so annoying (James, UK)?

At the centre of the Khao Sarn Road area there is the main thoroughfare of Khao Sarn a fairly wide semi-pedestrianised road with pavements cluttered with shops selling all kinds of gadgets, backpacks, badges for backpacks, guidebooks, street-bars; food-stalls, restaurants, travel agents, and internet cafes. Surrounding KSR there is a circuit of narrow, sometimes covered alleys, there are stairways and signs directing those who may become lost, back to the main area. The material semiotics of KSR comprise the guesthouses, travel agents, internet cafes, laundries, massage parlours, Banana pancakes, fruit smoothies, other food stuffs and menus; henna tattoo and hair-braiding shops, souvenir stores, guidebook and backpack vendors, art stalls, fake clothing stores, street cocktail bars; mp3 downloads and DVD music stalls. There are several blocks — the streets and alleys adjacent to KSR - that inform backpackers that they are still in a backpacker enclave. Yet their spatial affectivity is born out of the connections that emanate from the material performance of the fabrics and things from which they are comprised. Their materiality compounds their meaning and their materiality exists beyond their spatialised existence. That is, these material objects perform beyond the parameters of enclave itself, certainly beyond local governance attempts to spatially and temporally bound the area (there are railings placed at each end of KSR to regulate traffic, taxis and local vendors, within this bounded site local licensing laws apply – with a limited number of bars/clubs allowed to sell alcohol after midnight). In each direction I walked a couple of blocks away from KSR. Overall backpacker semiotic instruction wanes yet there are places were material affectivity is strong. I stumble across a cocktail bar; an advertisement for 241 beers; a cocktail bucket stall; a flyer on a wall promoting a special backpacker-party in a nearby club. The material manifestations of the backpacker network weave and thread across the streets of central Bangkok, occasionally compounded in these material semiotic forms. So what is it then, this backpacker environment? How best does one characterise its doing? How is it possible to convey its sensual and distinguishing traits? Faced with a political and economic system other than that of the surrounding districts, the backpacking architectures resort to an aesthetic that plays into the desires of backpackers themselves. My own senses seemed to be challenged, displaced even, in the difference or ‘otherness’ of Thailand, and in Bangkok as well, despite its global(ised) appeal I was thrown into
sensory overload, yet when I returned to Khao Sarn road something came together, there was clarity of sorts, sanctity in the form of familiarity; there was a way of salvaging a sense of order in the chaos that difference performs. This backpacking enclave is produced in history yet performs outside of its history (in a temporal sense). There are references to another time, a time past, along with a prevalent denial of history. This explicates how the backpackers that inhabit these spaces experience a warped sense of time, (simulating time) one which alludes to a simpler past, but one which is formed in the present.

Plate 28: View of roof-top swimming pool at D & D Inn central Koh Sarn Road (source: http://danddinn.net/).

I’m sat here having recently arrived from Subvanabhum airport just two hours ago. I am resting around the poolside (see Plate above). There are about twenty other backpackers sat around - some lounging, some chatting and drinking. Save the Buddhist pagoda, itself a shaded lounge area, there is little to suggest I am in Thailand. The presence of the ‘other’ is manifest in the servility of the pool attendant, the bar staff and the Spa girls who are waiting to massage, provide henna tattoos or braid the hair of the next backpacker. I think the place has an Ibiza feel even; a hedonistic space of indulgence, a socio-sexuality compounded in the way the space is designed and the services that are offered there. Similarly this is affected by the clothes that the backpackers are wearing, the stylish sarongues, the sunglasses, a certain European chique maybe. I’m excited about the
coming months, I’m fixated already with what ties this group of people
together, I start thinking about sociality, materiality, and the many
operative discourses surrounding and pulling at me and them; both
differently and the same (my notes).

The order of ‘things’ in the backpacker enclave performs specific types of backpacking;
whereas the space of the enclave itself performs backpacking in general. Just as
Hetherington (1999) explains agency is now ‘mediated by the space itself and the
semiotics of its heterogeneous elements’, KSR is a complex location in which
backpackers both conform to and contest against particular types of backpacking. There
are slips and slides in and across KSR, moments when backpackers conform and moments
when backpackers contest backpacking. Backpackers are funnelled through Khao Sarn
road, quite literally. This is one such zone which offers, at times heightened or
exaggerated senses of doing backpacking, but I argue also a risky and dangerous zone, in
terms of identity-making: as an entry point for many backpackers. Identity is contested. It
is literally up for grabs. KSR provides various ways in which backpackers can do
important identity work. It is a place, in which, to become a backpacker.

Plate 29: Ethnic things

Through juxtaposing representations of native exoticism (Tribalhead-dress) with Western
technological development (ipods), KSR displays technological achievements of the West
and twenty-first century Asia, versus an authentic vision of the Other (the typified and idealised Asia).

Plate 30: An environment that performs backpacking ethics

I took these photographs in KSR. Many eateries in the backpacking enclave use the semiotic arrangement of the colour green and use the inference of words such as ‘wholemeal’ and ‘home-baked’ (see right-hand image above) to denote a keen environmentalism. One that perhaps echoes the alternative histories of former ‘drifter’ travellers and serves the consumer needs of contemporary ecologically-politicised middle-class Western backpackers. The various grammatical systems that are always simultaneously at work in (material) semiotic utterances (the chalkboard above, and the menu) are specialized to realize specific metafunctions, that is, to realize either ideational, or interpersonal or textual meanings (Kress 2002). Just as the material itself (a bamboo-bound menu in a restaurant in KSR or, as in the plate above - a wooden chalkboard) functions as such.

Backpacking en masse

During my research one of the favoured topics of conversation that many backpackers identified was the discussion of the ‘pretentiousness’ and ‘cultural-insensitivity’ of other backpackers. It seems much of this contempt is born of backpackers guilt at their contribution to affecting the same Western culture they wish to escape; and the subsequent embarrassment (in Tims situation, at least) at how absurd the quest for a Third World experience looks when pursued by thousands of other backpackers. This disdain for mass
tourism or backpacking en masse is also a dominant theme of backpackings growing subgenre of books, many of which feature appraisals of backpackers in places such as Thailand’s Khoa Sarn Road, as well as Goa’s Anjuna beach and Laos’ Vang Vieng (I travelled to the latter two destinations in 2004 and 2005), where backpackers are often depicted (and parodied) sitting in cafes eating banana pancakes, drinking chai and wearing pseudo-ethnic clothes. *The Beach* Alex Garland’s nightmare of neo-hippie tribalism is among the most popular of these. Mee (2007) reflects on an earlier study by Kauffmann of backpackers in Bangkok which combines a range of material from written sources, to studies by Urbain and sociologist Westerhausen, novels by Alex Garland and email interviews, including one with Joe Cummings, author of *Lonely Planet Thailand*. The study reveals a process of exchange between the literary and academic approaches to tourism. It demonstrates a more considered approach to backpacking tourism (Mee 2007). The study finds that Khao Sarn Road has become overrun with hedonistic young Westerners. Kauffmann’s investigation establishes the ways in which backpackers socialise amongst themselves whilst also scorning each other. He identifies the paradox that while backpackers are highly critical of the West and of tourists, they essentially offer no alternative. Kauffmann distinguishes backpackers from ‘touristes ordinaires’ which implies that they are still tourists, just not ordinary ones. He also separates them from ‘real travellers’. He reports on the nostalgia of the travellers he encounters. They wish to avoid elements of the conventional tourism industry. Suggesting like so much of tourism and literature that authenticity is found in the past. Kauffman is disappointed by Khao Sarn Road he struggles to find those who still embody the spirit of the original travellers, but they remain elusive. He concludes:

The backpacker’s world is populated with men and women who hide behind an array of masks: they wear them for a while, let them fall to the ground, discreetly pick them back up, then abandon them again. The hard core – that minority of travellers who look for adventure and contact with the local people – is at the centre of a kaleidoscope: the absence of fixed images, of unchanging silhouettes, of complete figures (Kauffmann in Mee 2007:326).

Is it really possible to locate any ‘hard-core’ real travellers? Their very existence is now in doubt. Mee (2007) draws attention to the challenge that Kauffman raises for ethnography.
Many backpackers consider themselves politically liberal and identify with political causes such as anti-racism and the anti-globalization movement, when in practice they themselves are symptomatic of globalization (O’Reilly 2006, Valentin 2009). This highlights a fundamental feature of backpacking that Cohen (2005) identifies as the gap between the ideology of backpacking and its actual practice. Correspondingly some of the backpackers I met share sentiments that amount to a distinct anti-tourism, yet at the same time many demonstrate touristic qualities, and these characteristics were not always hidden. Buzard (1986) in his study of travel writing shows that anti-tourism goes back as far as the origins of tourism itself. Frow (1981) adds that ‘a certain fantasized disassociation from the others, from the rituals of tourism, is built into almost every discourse and almost every practice of tourism’ (ibid 146). That the disassociation is merely ‘fantasized’ is significant: every anti-tourist, however they wish to perceive or present themselves, is part of the great tourism machine, and this includes travel writers (Buzard 1986).

Plate 31: Locals as commodities

Fantasies of meeting a local who has never set eyes on a white person abound. In plate 59 above these women in Northern Thailand (not far from Chiang Mai) have been forcibly relocated into tourist villages, largely visited by backpacker tourists in organised small group tourism departing from Chiang Mai. A nostalgic, even naieve, view of traditional life exists; untouched by modernity, but still rapidly disappearing. Orientalist fantasies are
deeply ingrained in the backpacker imagination. Linked to this is the perception that some backpackers maintain of the brave explorer, overcoming adversity and aggressive locals, and stretching physical and psychological limits.

I don’t really know anything about what goes on in the countries I go to, like it would be hard to keep up to date, anyway. I mean you care if there’s danger around the corner but you can’t expect to know about what’s happening in every country when you’re travelling, isn’t it meant to be a time when you leave that stuff behind? (Maya, Denmark)

Important, in the above quote, is that Maya creates a space in order to play out, expressively, the identifications that she feels. She manages to convey that she has been ‘on the road’ for some time, which gains her credit in terms of road status, and she also cleverly challenges backpacking normativity, by not inclining toward ethical concern for the countries in which she has travelled. Thus, Maya becomes an inversion of the backpacker/political, tourist/apolitical opposition, see also James’s comment below when he describes how ‘my security comes from within me’. Similarly, Carl and Jessie in their relaxing, ‘chillin out mode’, overturn the hegemonic backpacking assignment as tourist/passive, backpacker/active.

You only eat in the restaurants (on KSR) if you want to get ripped off, like why do you want to pay 180 Baht for a meal, when you can get a Pad Thai on the street for 10 or 20 Baht max, and it’s good stuff. Its better for the locals, you can be sure your moneys doing something good, these bars are owned by business men, Chinese and the mafia, own these bars, the police get cuts, take money. You don’t need to follow the crowd, man. You don’t need to have an English menu, you can see the food, and order the food. If it smells good, it generally is, you know (James, UK).

In contrast to the earlier comments this extract performs the rigidity of backpacking identity; arguably where desires are rendered invisible, masked by the ‘appropriate’ performance of an ‘ethical’ travelling style. Thus this quote acts to counter the destabilization of norms that occur in the previous (Maya’s) one. Similarly in the quote below Mark raises the issue of the effect of place (see chapter 7) – commenting as he
does, in speaking on behalf of Julie (his travel companion) how ‘we wouldn’t ever come here’ with reference to Koh Sarn Road. Julie also later makes a comment on how she avoids ‘places like these’ with reference to the backpacker hostel on first floor level above. In accordance with the normative backpacking trope of not being a tourist, Mark disassociates himself from any touristic pursuit.

We wouldn’t ever come here. We just came here to see what it’s like, you hear so much in terms of you gotta go to Koh Sarn Road, its mad. I think it’s for younger backpackers, see look around. Why not? Finish uni’ come here with your mates, whatever. But it’s not for us; we booked into one of the hotels off Samsen (Mark UK).

I mean we’re not like tourists the place were we stay is more local, like the guy in the room next to us is from up north, you know he’s Thai, on some University visit, I think (Mark, UK).

Like I’d avoid staying in places like these. You don’t get no sleep, and the people that work here, there not horrible or anything, but they’re tired of seeing backpackers all the time, so you don’t get to talk or to smile even (Julie UK).

Backpacking interactions regularly focus on travel stories - a correspondence that, as Sørensen (2003) describes, ‘in itself reconstitutes their social construction as identity, (and) reinforces the popularity of certain routes’ (ibid 858). KSR is ubiquitous in backpacking folklore. Thus despite the disassociation from backpacking implied in the above, this particular conversation enacts the oppressiveness of backpacker norms. In terms of a literary performance the stage is set for an act of backpacking bound to a particular presentation in Julie’s words ‘getting closer to the locals’ and Mark’s statement of ‘travelling without much crap’ thus a certain script still exists prior to its actual enactment. It is worth noting that the junction for ‘Samsen’ is three roads parallel to KSR. It is an area popular with more longer-stay foreigners (Farangs), and although very much a Thai neighbourhood (like KSR) most of the services and shops cater for Western tourists as well. These narratives reproduce a version of backpacking fused with status seeking, rivalry and competition crammed with anecdotes of normative backpacking narratives.
Plate 32: Objects in backpacker markets

I took the photograph above of a small street-side stall in KSR to highlight the vast array of objects and ‘things’ made available to backpackers. Note the smaller padlocks in the bottom-centre/right of the image – used to lock luggage and backpacks. The batteries, electrical chargers and adaptors are readily purchased by backpackers to service their technological needs.

Plate 33: KSR at night: a ‘glocalised’ streetscape
Advertising has become a ubiquitous part of the contemporary global consumer culture. The above photograph (plate 34) depicts KSR at night, the neon signs advertise bars, hotels, restaurants and services and products. There are always other cultural cues. After dusk KSR is cloaked in a veil of neon luminescence. Indeed the way the light warms the street up, draws me further into the scene. I also smell places as much as I see them, and I want to go to those places that smell differently, and smell nice, and I avoid the ones that smell strange and definitely awful. There is a fetid pool outside a small café, I cross its cardboard bridge, and walk to the food cart furthest away from the sewage. There are several small tables and chairs to sit and eat on. I chose my food by pointing at some photographs of plated meals, these images don’t look particularly appetising, but the smell is great, I look at the char-grilled pork hanging from hooks, and point at that also. Pork is ‘Moo’; I make an attempt at pronouncing ‘Moo’ correctly, whilst staring at the joint of meat. The lady smiles and nods at me. I take this as a ‘yes, it is ‘Moo’’. How does my guidebook intersect with this experience? It tells me which area I might eat in; it tells me where to find this street; it offers a phrasebook section and also describes the food on offer, simultaneously my backpack informs where I might walk and how I am received as backpacker; as tourist; as outsider. Yet it is my sensing and embodied difference (the struggles I have with my body in this new space) that always interrupts this textual inscription:

…not language, but image; and not just the image but its tactility and the new magic thereof with the transformation of roadway parking-lot bitumen into legendary lakes of fire-ringed prophecy so that once again we cry and, presumably, we buy, just as our ability to calculate value is honed to the razor's edge. It is not a question, therefore, of whether or not we can follow de Certeau and combat strategies with everyday tactics that fill with personal matter the empty signifiers of postmodernity, because the everyday is a question not of universal semiotics but of capitalist mimetics. Nor, as I understand it, is this the Foucauldian problem of being programmed into subjecthood by discursive regimes, for it is the sentient reflection in the fiery pool, its tactility, not what the neon sign says, that
matters, all of which puts reading, close or otherwise, literal or metaphoric, in another light of dubious luminosity (Taussig 1991:151).

The key words in the above passage are found at the end of the closing sentence: ‘...all of which puts reading...in another light of dubious luminosity’ (ibid 151). Indeed Taussig places linguistic authority under question and draws attention to the material body in space. Identity is constituted at the interface of images and signs and the physicality of the consumption site itself; the personalities and material inscriptions that form a social architecture in which the material must be taken into consideration along with the semiotic. The scopic drive, the impulse motivating the desire to look and be looked at, is still central to the social performance backpacking culture, yet it is now displaced with the material affiliations that involve people with places as well. Thus the symbols that surround me provide imaginary gratification as substitutes for real objects of desire. They enable me - the individual backpacker to re-experience over and over in the imaginary/symbolic realm the originary scene of being there for the first time; the original object, the fantasy of meaningful encounters. Yet the drive for unity by way of symbols is always frustrated by the intersection of the material into the symbolic; the literary subject is already and always lacking in its very constitution. Waitt (2013) wholly departs the realm of the symbolic when drawing upon feminist ideas of the body as a physiological, and sociological assemblage out of which spatially situated knowledge and social relations are made. Here, the author is concerned with the spatialising aspects of sweat (and its materialities) and explores the narratives of twenty-one young female participants to further interpret how sweat and sweatiness are integral to negotiating their everyday lives. Excessive bodily heating, being ‘too hot’ and ‘getting sweaty’ are a daily part of backpacking and the ‘sweatiness of backpacking’ forges new ways in which backpackers move, re-focuses their immediate desires and thus spatialises their doing and being.

It’s like sometimes you need air-con’, a fan is not going to do it. You need to sit down, have a cold drink, find some shade. You know what you can wear and you know what feels good (Jenny UK).
Promotion workers hold signs that promote the street-side bars to passing backpackers. The reference to ‘very strong’ cocktail, in plate 35, appeals to the drinking culture that permeates some backpacking circles, the sign intends to compete for backpackers’ custom with passerbys and those backpackers in the adjacent bars. A ‘bucket’ is a popular backpacking drink that Wendy also refers to in her narrative below. It is literally that, a small bucket with an unopened half bottle of spirits, a can of Coca-Cola, and a bottle of concentrated Red-Bull energy drink inside. A bucket is generally shared between two or more backpackers, and drank through a straw. It is, in this sense, a fun and communal drink. It is has a high alcohol content and especially because it is mixed with the amphetamine properties of the redbull it has the desired effect of getting backpackers ‘wasted’.

Buckets are everywhere in Khao Sarn and the islands, I think they started making them in the islands and then Khoa San tried to bring a bit of the beach-culture up here. I don’t drink them anymore, you get too wasted (Wendy, UK).
Alongside some local foods Koh San Road offers a wide range of Western foodstuffs, from Falafels, Kofta and salads largely catering to the number of Israeli backpackers, all manner of pizzas, burgers, pastas and other standard Western foods. One of the newest additions (Plate 36), which opened whilst I was there, is a Fish and Chip shop located in a small square between two large hostels with an overwhelming British and Irish clientele. I was passed a flyer that promoted ‘Beer-Battered Sausages’ and ‘English Breakfasts’.

Plate 36: Economies of dependence?
These spaces are certainly manifestations of places of exception, ‘glocalised locations’ but they are not unique. By nature and necessity, they are selectively porous traversable spaces for backpackers and impenetrable membranes for many locals. There are wider processes of globalisation occurring in KSR, but what brings certain objects to the fore is the affective performativity of an overwhelming backpacker presence. The fact that backpackers have commandeered, managed, and conditioned these spaces at a variety of levels while playing just within the remit of Thai tolerance (see Plate 38 ‘Backpackers partying’) is phenomenal. Locals are making attempts to reclaim this space, but the physicality of these places which is seriously affected by the presence of the dis-placed backpackers is yet another sign that this transformation is far from comprehensive (Leo and Teong 2006).

Plate 37: ‘Backpackers partying’

In the above photograph Bob Marleyesque dreadlock style wigs suggest a chilled-out, Rastafarian attitude. The Redbull T-shirts compound the high-energy party mentality of some backpackers and the graffittied walls connote a cool, urban, sort of ‘underground’ space in which this crowd meets. Indeed several of the many sois adjacent to KSR have their own identities: ‘A bit of Ibiza chique in one, a bit of Tofu dieting here, and quite a lot of Zen just around the corner’ (my research notes).
Material Simulacra in Khao Sarn Road

It’s all about drinking buckets, init’? (Wendy, UK)

In reality, Khao San Road is a place that operates inside its own stereotype. It has become a parodic space (see Plate 38). Some backpackers are increasingly aware of this (see Wendy’s narrative above). Khao San Road is a performative contact zone; a social territory that continually reinvents itself into the imaginary of what backpackers and other travellers want it to be. Yes, Thailand exists in the background, so to speak, but there is confusion to where you might really be; somewhere in Southeast Asia, maybe. Few referents indicate precisely where you are. Language and images, of course, suggest that you might well be in Thailand. Thailand is there, but it exists as stereotype; as Jean Baudrillards’ simulacra, as a hyperreal background. There are empty spaces, cracks in the landscape, in what should be - but no longer is - a space that welcomes expectations and satisfies the wishes of those who visit (the day-trip around the canals of Bangkok; the Tempura insects; the women with tribal headwear and jewellery – see Plate 34). The materiality of KSR (the ‘things’ of the space), however, unanimously suggest one has arrived in a backpacker district. Importantly then, such material and symbolic processes constitute the space of KSR. And in this sense it must be read by means of ‘tangible simulacrum’, a form of material semiotics. Following a performance approach to tourism, spaces are constituted in accordance with the performance they enable. Thus (backpacking) space is interpreted in terms of the performative densities within it. Whilst still imbricated with ‘representation’ the affectivity of social space always involves material and multi-sensory qualities as well as the usual semiotic codes. To analyse materiality in KSR is to analyse the performative fabric of space.
Plate 39: Cheap dorm-style accommodation KSR

The room in this photograph is typical of the very cheap accommodation made available to backpackers in the Koh Sarn Road area. This room has four single beds, it is run-down, there is graffiti on the walls; these rooms are noisy because they are separated from other rooms with just plyboard partitions, the backpackers that stay in these rooms share a shower and a toilet located in the corridor outside.

Plate 40: Consuming difference
Plate 41: Tribal ‘things’

As with all forms of tourism there is a drive to consume difference, in the above photograph this is manifest in the sale of ethnic trinkets, jewellery and satchels.

The beach and the backpacker

The beaches on the mainland and islands of southern Thailand are popular backpacking destinations. While in Koh Pnang Nan the backpacker I observe haggling aggressively with a local vendor seems completely different from another backpacker playing football with local children on the same beach. The backpacker I see each morning in the beach hut next door to me is dressed in Thai fisherman pants, adorns his beach-hut with lanterns, fabrics and tells me he has long stopped bothering to call home (see Plate 51), he is different from, or acts differently to, the backpackers I see dancing in the late night bars back in KSR, wearing much the same as anyone their age might wear on a warm evening anywhere else in the world. The backpackers I met who temporarily work in an English language school in Banglampuu (near KSR) and the backpacker in a reconstructed village near Chiang Mai (see plate 3 on page 110) and similarly are those backpackers I talk to in the Royal Palace, Bangkok the same backpackers that I see drinking cocktails, debating
whether to go to Patpong (downtown Bangkok) to watch a sexshow? Thus I paid close attention to the differences in these performances and in the relationships that enact those identities. In other words I wanted to make sense of and display this complexity.

Arriving on Koh Pnang Nan

Upon leaving KSR, I travelled south to Koh Pnang Nan Island. After eating my first full meal since leaving Bangkok 36 hours before, I was sat in a roadside cafe near the ferry wharf on Koh Pnang Nan Island. I listened to a pair of backpackers talking about travelling and became intrigued by the idea that these backpackers were positioning themselves as better backpackers as they watched other travellers arrive from the Koh Samui ferry. Koh Samui Island, adjacent to Koh Pnang Nan is popularly associated with organized mass tourism. One of them referred to Koh Samui dismissively:

‘It’s hardly the land that time forgot’ [Jenny, UK], commenting that ‘there’s a Macdonalds on every corner and flights every hour to Bangkok, and even Manchester’ [Jenny UK].

Materials used in in the construction of beach-huts reinscribe the identities of backpackers (see Plates 48-59). The beach-hut itself can be said to reinforce a sense of community of backpackers, i.e. I am not a tourist. But the type of beach-hut backpackers choose to stay may also be used to reinforce differences among backpackers (long-term backpackers, flashpackers, older backpackers, those of certain nationalities). When backpackers choose their accommodation, they are presented with a different material style, and may be especially careful to choose a particular type of hut.

The contrasting beach-huts displayed below (Plate 48-59) are intended to be mutually intelligible; each hut restricts my behavior as backpacker to a subset of the materials available. As a backpacker I can see the sand-floor as a challenge, as a cheap alternative, as ‘going local’, as unnecessary, or perhaps as forcible deprivation. In each case my ‘backpackerness’ consciously or unconsciously, identifies as performing and belonging to a group of other backpackers with specific values. This identification is explicit in terms
of the materials chosen, implicit in terms of the materiality rejected as ‘outside my identikit’.

**The Didgeridoo**

In the photograph below (Plate 42 Backpacker playing didgeridoo) a backpacker is sat in the communal restaurant area of a beach hut, another backpacker relaxes and reads next to him. Back in KSR, as well, there are many stalls selling bongos, didgeridoos, the Indian cirtar and other indigenous instruments. In one of the stalls selling DVD’s, CD’s and MP3 downloads’ there was a small street bar with a number of backpackers hanging round, listening to music, and drinking. Some of these backpackers were playing the didgeridoo. Perhaps because the beach is a more open space, affording me a more extensive field of vision, and one where sound travels further I was often drawn to backpackers playing the didgeridoo. Broadly familiar with its history I was intrigued how backpackers had appropriated this instrument (see Plate 42). I argue that it has become (as one among many) *a backpacking cultural artefact*. The didgeridoo is a wind instrument made from hollowed wood. It was (and still is) made by Aboriginal communities of northern Australia, some evidence suggests that the instrument could be thousands of years old. Etymologically the ‘didgeridoo’ is an onomatopoeic word of Western origin. It is known as ‘Yidaki’ in the Yolngu language of northern Australia (Tarnopolsky et al 2005). The Didgeridoo is now mass produced in factories in different parts of the world. It has lost its historical spatial resonance. It no longer determines which Aboriginal tribe people come from, and similarly nor does it elucidate which tree nor which particular area of northern Australia it was made.
Plate 42: Backpacker playing the didgeridoo

I bought mine (reference to didgeridoo) in Australia and I’ve travelled with it for six months now. I’ve travelled across Europe, India and now into Thailand. I use it on the beach, sometimes in the hostel or wherever, but mostly on the beach. It’s great it normally attracts a few people and I’ve definitely made some friends I might not have met. Yeah…It’s a way of meeting people…I can play better than most other backpackers – though some can do it, especially those who’ve been to Aussie. There are classes, you know, like in the bush, in the Northern Territory. That’s the best place to learn - that’s where they (didgeridoos) are from. There and the beach parties up near Broome and Darwin. Actually some of the Thai guys play well - like those who work on the islands - they know how to do it (Jacob, South African).

Over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century the didgeridoo has become associated with experimental and avant-garde musicians. It is regularly fused with Celtic and folk music. It has also found a niche in ‘techno’ music owing to its haunting and euphoric sounds. The didgeridoo has now assumed a ‘socio-logic’ (Callon 1980) different from the traditional logic of their origin. In backpacking the Didgeridoo operates with a new material semiotics. It translates performative energies upon the backpacker (and then other backpackers) just as the backpacker (and then other backpackers) translate the
performative densities of the didgeridoo into social relations, roles, ranking, and cultural knowledge). The didgeridoo and the backpacker can also be said to form a multiplicity.

The orchid leaves its own territory by forming an image, by imitating a wasp; but the wasp returns to its territory in this image while leaving its turf at the same time and becoming part of the orchid’s reproduction apparatus; the wasp reterritorializes the orchid by carrying pollen . . . capture code, surplus-value code, increase of valence, a true becoming, becoming-the-wasp of the orchid, becoming-the-orchid of the wasp (Deleuze and Guattari in Dosse 2010:41).

Deleuzes and Guattaris use of the ‘orchid and the wasp’ is taken from the biological concept of mutualism, in which two different species interact together to form a multiplicity (i.e. a unity that is multiple in itself). I apply this to the becoming between the backpacker and the didgeridoo (see plate 42).

The material production of backpacking identity

ANT highlights the importance of linking time and space within heterogeneous networks, based on a relational understanding (of space) as topological stratifications that bring together time and space within a network of agents (Murdoch 1998). Translation in backpacking is related to issues of connectivity, heterogeneity and the ‘bundling’ together of people and objects. Whilst translation indeed has an inherent spatial component, due to the concrete location of KSR, spatiality does not anticipate the translation, rather spatiality (the meaning of space) develops through these various transactions.

One does indeed find folds everywhere … (Deleuze 1995: 156).

KSR and the beaches of Koh Pnang Nan Island are material-semiotic realms in which backpackers and things come together (territorially) and constitute social praxis. Importantly, however these particular places are but one type of presence, just one territory of affiliation, albeit a significant and constitutive feature, in a vast performative stratagem, itself, a Deleuzian fold. Backpacking durability would not be possible without the manifestations of backpacking that occurs across the whole network. I suggest that the
‘partial connections’ (Strathern 1991) that emanate from the materiality of the objects and architectures found within backpacking spaces, such as KSR and the beaches of Koh Pnag Nan co-constitutes the network of backpacking and should therefore not be seen as incidental but rather as the *materialisation of* backpacking ontology. Backpacking passes through these locations, the actors and the material objects within it. Indeed, it is precisely the partial connections, mobilizations, and changes in these spaces that preserve, negotiate and develop new backpacking identities (even within contested urban spaces like that of KSR). Thus, space exists ontologically as a product of change (Soja 1996).

An exploration of the specific spatial contiguity of ANT and the recent contributions of Deleuzian scrunched geography (topological space) shows how backpacking networks fold space and time through the re-constitutive energies of people and things. Both demonstrate how social networks ‘draw things together’ (Latour 1990). The networks of ANT ‘solidify social relations and allow these relations to endure through space and time’ (Murdoch 1997:360). Space and time is gathered together in KSR. The reiteration and citational characteristics of these backpacker spaces account for the translation of backpacking identity across space and time; and vastly different (social) terrains. A hyperlinked space such as KSR increases the ontological connectivity of backpacking. What is more, backpacking ontologisations extend far beyond the cartographic realm of KSR (or that of other backpacker enclaves) especially in a narrowly defined Euclidean sense. So to return to my original research questions, what provides backpackers with being? And what makes the network durable across those vast terrains? Backpacking is constituted by multiple actors; these multiple actors meet and coalesce in places like KSR and Koh Pnang Nan. The actors include the vast array of material artefacts, fabrics, objects, foodstuffs, other backpackers, texts; infrastructures, travel itineraries, modes of commerce, that together produce and perform backpacking networks.

You get to know what each of the cafes, each of the bars, even some of the alleys are like - dedicated to particular types of backpackers, like the back one behind KSR, if you cut through the lanes which sell the clothes – you reach an alley that runs parallel with KSR, there’s a real Bob Marley thing going on. You know at the top (points to end of KSR) some of the cafes are for Israelis, they’re Israeli owned, some are for like older hippie backpackers (Marcus, Germany).
By mimetically creating representations of the backpackers in the form of joke t-shirts (see plate 43). These locally produced and marketed t-shirts parody backpacking behaviour. This is a consumer culture that knows and mocks backpacker’s ways. With the help of these joke souvenirs, perhaps there is recognition on both parties [local and backpacker] of what backpacking can be. By creating these representations, feelings and attitudes towards the other are expressed and represented. The other is transferred into a symbolic world; the relationship now materialized literally (in the form of the t-shirt, for example). Something previously intangible is now visualized in the representation. The mimetic act is not a simple reproduction, but a performative act. The production of parodies of the backpacker is an attempt to come to terms with their ‘Otherness’ and strangeness. I argue that this falls part, albeit vis a vis consumerism – already part of backpacking colonising embrace – of some resistance from locals to reclaim the epistemological space of KSR (see Teo and Leong 2007).
The beer promotion workers above (in the right hand image) are dressed to attract the attention of of Western beer-consuming backpackers in KSR. There were few local Thai men drinking in the bars on KSR. The backpacking space of KSR states, in neat form, the whole of which it is a constituent part. It a consumer-zone (with tourists being among the most ubiquitous types) it is there to sell. It offers a stultifying space of inertia (of becoming the same) and yet if provides a stimulating cultural energy (to become). It compounds West and East; sameness and difference; a zone of compression. And materialised in this space in Bangkok, here, even more than elsewhere, precisely because of its intimate and complex spacings, in the backpacking network, every building is made to tell; the material signifier clashes with the mental image backpackers have (their pre-existing desires).

Although it cannot necessarily be escaped, space can be reformed, redefined and ultimately challenged. If I think of the spaces of KSR, of spaces of identity consumption and production, the backpacking spaces in the beaches and islands of southern Thailand - those spaces that cause different embodied movements, it is possible to imagine how these spaces of backpacking facilitate and support hybrid and multiple identities. Given this definition of space what does it mean to create a new space for backpacking, a space that redefines identity? The new architectures of KSR and Koh Phang Nan challenge the spaces of the earlier traveller scene. The contemporary space of KSR and Koh Phang Nan
reflect a new set of values gathered into objects, collected and arranged to produce new spaces of affiliation, marking a site of revisioned identity. The public spaces of these places are invaded by the private artifacts of a reconstructed identity. The artifacts within these spaces reproduce a topography of backpacking.

Material architectures of backpacking in Thailand

Architecture and design mediate between people and their environment (Levine, Miller and Taylor 2004:113).

In an article some twenty years ago Goss (1988) points to the performativity of architecture. He discusses four theoretical categories of building and architectural function; buildings as cultural artifacts; as objects of value; as signs, and as a spatial system. Since this time architectural and design theory has shown a growing interest in the ethical practices of architecture (Wasserman, Sullivan and Palermo 2000, Ray 2005). Importantly, the practices of architecture reflect human needs and styles yet they also shape human lives. The following section examines the material design of backpacking accommodation and reflects on the ethical identifications made on backpacking spaces. I will consider two different areas in which backpackers spend time in Thailand, KSR and the Islands of the Gulf. KSR has been described as a ‘decompression chamber’ between east and west (Garland 1997). The accommodation caters, predominantly, to Western backpackers, this means that the properties on and adjacent to KSR have been adapted and (some recently built) to meet certain requirements. Plumbing, kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms are distinct from local or Southeast Asian styles, yet increasingly invite travellers with material signification of the East. The accommodation varies and there are increasing tendencies in terms of building development toward more ‘flashpacking’ styles. In the main, however, many backpackers take their accommodation literally as somewhere to sleep, the idea being to soak-up KSR and make the necessary arrangements to leave. At the cheapest end of the accommodation range there are shared rooms with shared bathrooms on the corridor really designed for nothing else but sleep and showering (see Plate 41). The backpackers I talked to did not provide any reasons to spend time in these rooms beyond this.
It’s just somewhere to crash, you wouldn’t want to spend any more time than was necessary in these rooms, not even to chill, they’re hot, sticky and the only way we get to sleep is to return home drunk which is the general idea anyway (Franky, Sweden).

Compared with the beach-huts of the islands (see Plate 53-59) this is very different. Unlike the rooms for rent in KSR the beach-huts are ‘made’ as home (see plate 51) backpackers spend a large portion of their day, resting in the huts, swinging in hammocks, playing cards, listening to music, and socialising on the balconies of their beach-huts (see plate 58). These places become ‘sticky’ spaces, with viscous properties: where backpackers remain for long periods of time, sometimes weeks, months even.

Plate 46 (above): British-style pub in Koh Phang-local practices subverted
Plate 47 (below): Inside British-style pub
Plate 48: Palm-frond beach huts

In the image above two older-style huts occupy beach-front locations, on the left-hand side of the image two backpackers lounge on the balcony of their beach-hut. They have hung a hammock up between two wooden posts. These balconies (especially on beach-front huts) become very social spaces, and backpackers can be seen ‘grouped’ together in them sitting and sharing stories. In Koh Pha Ngam the backpackers beach-hut balcony often formed the space in which the longer interviews took place, there and the larger communal huts that have the restaurant, bar and reception facilities.

Plate 49: Disused huts
The disused hut in this photograph (plate 49) is indicative of a trend that is occurring in Koh Pnang Nan at the moment where many of these older style huts are left derelict and then the land soon redeveloped by resort-style accommodation.

There are a few of the older places left, and many of these have been upgraded, landscaped, I suppose they have to compete with the new places that offer wifi and swimming pools… Some backpackers will only stay in places where the internet is free (Jan, Denmark).

Similarly his partner also reflects:

We were so surprised how many of our old favourites had disappeared, some of them are still there, just left. Others are in the process of being taken down (Mika, Denmark).

Plate 50: Old huts demolished and left derelict
Another backpacker reflects on former beach hut accommodation style:

In the old bungalows, you get to meet Thai families. They live in the same complex; you see the way they live. When I was in Koh Chang last month, I stayed at this place and it had a menu, but along each dish it said ‘no
have’, instead we got to eat whatever fish the father and oldest sons had caught that day; it was the best food I’ve had here – and the cheapest. I stayed there for over two weeks. I would hang out with the older kids; they took me fishing with them (Jason, Australia).

In the narrative above Jason indicates that it is the materiality of the accommodation that affords better relationships with locals. I too share his experience. While staying in the more traditional beach-hut complexes I have made friends with other backpackers more easily and had meaningful encounters with locals. The traditional complexes are generally composed of 6-10 wooden palm frond huts arranged in rows and staggered back from the beach, there is a larger hut, typically in the centre of the complex and often on the beach-front. This larger hut houses the restaurant, bar and reception facilities, it is also here where the Thai family lives. The intimacy of the space lends itself to a familiarity between backpackers and their hosts. Jason (above) refers to a menu that a family-run beach hut complex has in Koh Chang (a popular backpacking island destination in eastern Thailand near to the Cambodian border). The menu items are not in stock and instead the family cooks whatever catch they have from the days fishing. Precisely because the Thai family is resident in their business, it is their home and the atmosphere is such that it is not like a ‘business’ at all really.

There is something more meaningful about the materiality, however. The beach-huts have a wooden frame (sometimes with concrete bathrooms), sit on short stilts, have steps up to a small balcony, The exterior wall panels and interior partition between the bathroom and the bedroom space (there is only one living/sleeping) are invariably made of rattan, cane and weave. It is the porosity of these materials, their lack of density, that allows sound to travel, facilitates conversations inside/outside and between beach-huts. There is also an earthy realness about the material that suggests to backpackers that this is pre-modern, they are experiencing authentically something that materially compounds this real.

The choice of beach hut differs depending on the individual backpacker. Koh Phangan’s cheapest huts are simple palm structures with sand or mat floors. This accommodation option is often taken up by more long term residents (or more budget minded backpackers). I talked to some people staying in these huts, and find that these are the same backpackers that keep searching for beaches ‘off the beaten track’, places away from
the crowds; they eschew the commercial end of the backpacking spectrum. I became increasingly aware of the cycle that this fixation on discovering the untouched serves to perpetuate. Indeed this is exemplary of the classical nihilism inherent in tourism. The sentimental yearning of these backpackers here is representative of the stylistically romantic category that defines much of nineteenth and twentieth century travel discourse (see earlier in Chapter 2, and also Enzenburger 1996).

Backpacking identity mediates between the physical-semiotic and the linguistic-discursive. There is an identification of affective ties in backpacking that counters the disembodied identity of other tourists. For example, backpackers comment on the sense of being at one with locals that they experienced whilst on their trip ‘its good to meet up with locals, just sit and hang-out with them – as you might chat with a stranger in a bus stop back home, occasionally even sit and smile and somehow joke when neither of you can speak the same language’ (Craig, UK). It is precisely this feeling that is difficult to convey in other non-ethnographic research methodologies, for example if I had performed textual analysis alone, or distributed a e-questionnaire to returned backpackers.

Loney (2008) writes that the backpacking beach-hut serves as the territorial stake for the traveller.

It says I'm here. I arrived and most importantly, I belong. It is a place to drop your backpack; it means that your paradise island has accepted you as worthy of inhabiting it, of participating in the utopian reality stretched out across the white sand before you. Backpackers who arrive at just the moment the hut closest to the beach is vacated feel chosen, like the planets have aligned and their presence is not just tolerated, but summoned (Ibid 2008:93).

I observe that it is as much through the ‘things’ that backpackers decorate their new home with – shells, lanterns, fabrics, beads, plants, that creates an aesthetic and more importantly a ‘permanence’ than the huts themselves. Backpackers are very much interested in the cultural and aesthetic appeal of the traditional style of the Thai home. This is still idealised in the construction of new backpacking accommodation and resorts
(see Plates 46 and Plate 56). In these newer resort style accommodations, though seemingly sustainable materials are utilised in the production of this backpacker type of lodging - there is erroneous meaning behind this assumed sustainability. According to some locals in Koh Pnang Nan, the materials themselves – especially those used in the foundations, and then the associated issues surrounding access to many of the resorts, along with their maintenance, is inherently unsustainable. The reflective aspect of modernity, which regards the world as representation has an iron grip here. It has affected its own paradigmatic completion in the production of an aesthetic, where visualised things (in this case the Palm frond beach huts, or stylised resorts) are routinely masters of the way that backpackers experience their worlds. In posthumanism, however, the imaginary activity is similarly celebrated in the spectacle (in the manner of the arbitration of signs and symbols). Yet, crucially, it always and already bestows the abstract ideal with a material form and resonance.

In summary, I suggest therefore, that tourism researchers (and backpackers and locals) must ask not what the material says. But what does the material do? I contend that the project (the overarching principle) for tourism constructions (of the future) be to configure the relations which bind people, objects and things (and sustainable actions), rather than simply imply abstraction. Thus I propose a vision of a (backpacking) tourism world that is no longer fashioned with abstract design, which is really the construction of lies (and economic necessity) but a creator of the meaningful and the truth, one that constitutes real relations between people, their actions, tourism things and the world in which they are found.

Twenty years ago most people I met traveling were backpackers. Nowadays it’s much more flexible: like you don’t have to be labeled, you’re just traveling. You know what I mean? People might spend most of their trip backpacking, but then they do an expensive diving trip to an island like Koh Tao, or they have pre-booked a village tour up in Chiang Mai. People got fed up with the Gringo Trail, the overland trail, the typical tours through South America, and the whole South East Asia thing. Now they do things like trekking or the village-tours. More and more people are talking about responsible travel or alternative travel, I don’t mean alternative in the hippie sense I mean alternative in its real sense, like eco-tourism and sustainable
forms of tourism. Yeah that’s how it’s changing, well one aspect, one way that it’s changed. And I suppose that’s good? Yeah (Mark, Canada).

Plate 51: View inside more traditional palm-frond covered wooden bungalow

Plate 52: Concrete structure (bathrooms) left standing
- these derelict spaces can be found across Koh Pnang Nan – before long ‘flashpacker’ style developments move in to these commercially desirable beach-front locales.
Plate 38: New resort accommodation

Plate 54: Older-style beach bungalow
Plate 55: Basic Palm-frond beach hut

Plate 56: Fantasy beach huts
- feeding the Robinson Crusoe imaginary of backpacking travel
Meaning is one of the most elusive and ubiquitous properties in tourism spaces. The idea of sustainability has certainly entered the vocabulary of backpacking travellers just as it
has now entered the lexicon of the tourism academe. Sustainable development and its three interrelated principles of holism, equity and futurity have also secured a strong foothold in many tourism spaces, the tourism industry (marketing and promotion). Thus I became concerned with the materialisation of sustainability (how it is brought into being; its visual and tangible realisation, and in this section I wish to focus on how the discourse of sustainability is translated into backpacking culture, vis a vis the material preferences of backpackers; the materiality of their environment.

The natural, the ecological, the environmentally sound, the local’ and dare I say the authentic; the illusive real, can be seen found (or searched for) in the materiality of backpacking tourism developments (see Plates 55, 56, 58, above). Local timber, sand, reed, palm fronds, slate, cane and so on each compound the essence of sustainability in the materials used in some backpacking tourism constructions. Yet, the new mode of fraud concentrated within sustainable tourism development, has at its foundation, that mode of production whereby the object of the backpackers’ gaze (let’s say natural materials) become those products which are used unsustainably, and that which backpackers are most subjected to (in the material form of backpacking constructions). Like most durable material objects, backpacking sites and their accommodations are read within contemporary subjectivities, and are therefore subject to constant evolution in meaning. The corrugated iron used in the construction of the roofs (see plate 50) is imported from the mainland, it is expensive, but it is robust and the former palm-frond roof finish that it replaces becomes a craft that fewer locals have the skills to make, or are willing to do.

Accommodation and recreational activities for backpackers may appear to serve as the template for sustainable enterprises which might be said to compliment the pre-existing multifunctional relationships between local residents and their environment.

I went on a coastal nature trail that the bungalow guys had organised. It was really nice to walk along the beaches and around the paths that followed the rocks and cliffs. Along the route the guys were telling me which spots were best for fishing, and what sort of fish they caught, I didn’t know any of the names, so it didn’t really matter, they told me which trees had good fruit and which times of the year they flowered; they showed me places which had local stories and meanings attached to; they
took me to a place where we could jump off into the sea. I was a bit nervous but I thought why not, they’re doing it. Each of them had jumped in and were climbing back up, they were calling me to jump in as well; so I did. The location was so beautiful, we had lunch on that spot; we cooked some fish that they had caught on driftwood; it tasted so good, it was really salty and smokey; from the wood I think. I bought a beer from one of the guys; we then rested for a time and walked back over the hills to get back to our beach, we ended up catching a ride on a jeep back over the headland (Jenny, UK).

It is clear from Jenny’s story that this was a very enjoyable trip for her. Her memory is very much realised from the sensuosity of her experience. It is still questionable as to whether this is a desirable form of tourism enterprise development. Although in this dialogue about the ‘nature-trail’ there is some reference to an educational dimension (naming of plant-life and fish), the impression she gives is one where the locals (in this case the beach bungalow workers) are able to entertain backpackers and themselves with the fee that backpackers pay. They share some knowledge of their environment, eat lunch together, sell a further few beers, and collect some nuts to take back home. My fishing trip experience also in Koh Pnang Nan (see below) indicates something similarly ad hoc (in the sense of an organised tour activity, and offers some evidence in support of the notion that backpacking tourism development can indeed graciate the existing multifunctional relationship between locals and their environment:

Yesterday I went on a fishing-trip, it was a half-day experience, it cost 250 Baht per person, including lunch, cold drinks, and any fish that I might catch could be brought back and cooked up. In fact, as I found out later, this was really not an offer but an obligation! I saw the sign in the reception hut that read fishing-trips full day, half day, catch fish-eat fish, and asked Tan the owner’s son, when the next trip was, he said I would be able to go providing I could find two others that wanted to go as well. I asked the two Belgian backpackers in the hut next to me if they would like to come along, they reckoned it was far too expensive and told me there are much better trips that operate out of Haad Rin Beach. I liked the idea of going out in Tan’s uncle’s boat with him because I’ve got to know
them a little over the past ten days. Anyway I waited till evening when I knew there would be a crowd eating in the restaurant hut, and chatted to two German backpackers, they too were concerned with the price and got their guidebooks out to check prices with other trips – it doesn’t say in here anything about fishing trips, but it does say that the owners make you feel at home, oh yeah and look, it says its worth coming here for to taste the seafood and local fish served in the restaurant. They decided, although the price, they thought, could be better and therefore suggested we ask for a discount, I said okay but knew that I wasn’t going to be the one to barter this. Tan told us that 250 baht is a good price and much better than any of the fishing trips down in Haad Rin, because here we get to keep the fish and that lunch is much, much nicer. We left after breakfast and waded out to the small motor boat that took us out to the fishing boat anchored some 200 meters off shore. When I jumped onto the boat Tan’s uncle, an old man pulled me up on deck; he was surprisingly strong. The first thing I noticed was the smell, it wasn’t a horrible smell; just a very strong fishy smell. The boat was old and wooden, but assuredly solid. It had three younger Thai guys working on it, they hardly acknowledged us, not in a dismissive way, they seemed both shy and too busy to bother with three foreigners interrupting their day at work. Tan also told us that they had been on the boat for a whole day and night before we got on. Tan’s uncle Woo couldn’t speak much English but he is a very friendly man. As soon as Tan said his goodbyes, Woo passed me a rod and line and using hand actions, and then taking my hands, he showed me what to do, where to sit and what to expect. The two German backpackers were getting a bit impatient at this point and one of them, Frans asked me why the other Thai guys weren’t fixing him up? Once we were settled Woo explained, by pointing, where we would be going to, I could see several other boats on the horizon. We headed out and I enjoyed seeing the island from this perspective. Frans explained to me that the few islands in the distance formed part of a Marine National Park in which they had filmed the Leonardo Di Caprio movie The Beach, they asked if we could stop. One of the younger guys in broken English told us this was not possible, as they had no permits to either fish or go ashore. ‘Big fines’, he said, ‘not
good’. We soon stopped and dropped anchor. After some time I did catch a fish, but it was really small. Just after Frans caught a much larger one which he seemed really satisfied in showing me. He was then told by Woo that it gave you a bad stomach. It turned out that my fish was, although by far the smallest; the only edible one. Woo told us it was really good to eat, and then pointed at the other catch and said ‘bad fish’, laughed, shook his head and threw it back into the sea (my notes).

In my notes above the trip experience, the space of the boat, and the lack of organised (commercial) operations highlights the differences that the spaces of KSR and Koh Pnang Nan can both afford. The trip described allowed for an encounter between myself as backpacker, other backpackers and (Thai) locals which was different to those encounters in KSR. Owing to the distinct territoriality and materiality of the two places; the ‘natural rural’, the sea, the sand and the relative isolation of Koh Pnang Nan, versus the ‘culture/urban’, commercial drive, the buildings, the pavements (proximities), the pollution (the fetid pool as before) of KSR, they constitute backpacking differently.

**Materials and architecture**

Through the choices that backpackers make, in terms of the spaces in which they reside, they perform and create an ethical identity. What is important regarding the beach-hut dwellings in Southern Thailand is that the very material architecture of the construction and personalised design of the beach-hut constitutes backpacking identity. When backpackers inhabit some spaces and avoid others this serves as markers of distinction. According to Levine, Miller and Taylor, the act of inhabiting one’s environment, accordingly, can be seen to both comprise a set of techniques for forming one’s ethical identity and a means of representing cultural identity (ibid 2004:107). Thus by assuming one of a range of accommodations with specific material styles, it points to a certain performative value in the material composition of backpacking accommodation. Different accommodation types affords various ethical identifications, where the peculiarities of the environment in which backpackers temporarily dwell, provides some interesting leads into
their particular ontological affiliations. For some backpackers a palm-frond beach-hut (see Plate 40) is ethically superior to the resort complex next door with tiled floors and landscaped terraces (see Plate 46). Backpacking spaces are comprised of networks of relations that are created by the mixing of identity and particular architectures: material semiotic arrangements that are each crucial in the functioning of the ethical performances of backpacking identity and in the social maintenance of those same spaces. I find that backpacking spaces (in Thailand, at least) are complex, self-organising, and adaptive systems. They change with, before and after transformations in backpacking (see Plates 41, 42 and 43). They are material spaces of affiliation. Backpacking identity is performed in their architectured and spatialised environment.
Chapter 8 Becoming-backpacker

A boundary is more like a membrane than a wall (Conquergood 2002:145).

Introduction

In this chapter I make important evaluations on the preceding domains discussed in chapters 5, 6, and 7 – discourse, materiality and space respectively. My previous encounters in these chapters with tangible things; ‘the backpackers body’ and ‘the lived spaces’ in backpacking identity formation returns me to ‘the real’. These composite realms are affective. Affectivity, however, has long been dismissed as subjective feeling. It is only lately being explored. Theorists including Deleuze (1987), Massumi (2002) and Sedgwick (2003) have each considered the effects of affect. There is, however, a lack of consensus on terminology. In their book The Affective Turn: Theorising the social, editors Clough and Halley (2007) collate a number of essays that together take the notion of affect as pre-individual bodily forces which both augment or diminish a body’s capacity to act or engage with others (see also Clough 2008). According to Clough and Halley (2007) affect ‘refers to pre-subjective agency, a force that delimits bodily boundaries, determining bodily capacities to affect and be affected’ (ibid 2). Although the meaning of the terms feeling, affect, emotion, passion, and sensation do overlap and are often used interchangeably, it is important not to confuse Deleuzian affect with feelings and emotions. Shouse (2005) reminds us that Brian Massumi’s definition of affect in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus demonstrates that affect is not a personal feeling. Indeed Shouse makes a clear distinction (of these interrelated terms) himself, adding that feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are pre-personal (Shouse 2005). Moreover, Massumi argues that it is Deleuze’s theory of affect that ‘holds a key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology’. He suggests, therefore, a poststructural theory of affectivity. Geographer Nigel Thrift (2007) is similarly inspired by the works of Gilles Deleuze and has explored the role of affect in what he terms ‘non-representational theory’. I believe that my application of an affective interpretation of ‘relation’, alongside notions of backpacking rituals (the material practices of reading the guidebook and a body configured
in and through affect, for example) is central to the understanding of backpacking identity formation as postmodern hybrid.

**Resignifying backpacking**

Using Judith Butler’s notion that bodies are materialized via performances, resignifying backpacking involves a project of deconstructing what a tourist is and what a backpacker can be. First, I have shown how consistency between backpacking and tourism, together with the knowledge that backpackers and tourists are one in the same (upon which mutuality is based), are both subjects of a pan-touristic discourse and not something ontologically different. And second, I have shown that although they are also contingent constructions, the material ingredients are often identical. The underlying tension I attend to here is earlier described by Stuart Hall, who writes, ‘The subject assumes different identities at different times, and identities which are not unified around a coherent ‘self.’ Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted around’ (1996a: 277). I take Hall’s interpretation of the subject and definition of identity only as the point of departure for the methodological scrutiny of Actor-network theory. That is, Hall’s concern with ‘the processes which produce subjectivities’ (ibid 1996:5).

**Subjectivity revisited**

If the subject is opaque to itself, it is not therefore licensed to do what it wants or to ignore its relations to others. Indeed, if it is precisely by virtue of its relations to others that it is opaque to itself, and if those relations to others are precisely the venue for its ethical responsibility, then it may well follow that it is precisely by virtue of the subject’s opacity to itself that it sustains some of its most important ethical bonds (Butler 1991:326)

Thus the backpacker/tourist dichotomy I refer to in Chapter 1 ‘Introduction’ is (re)constructed as a site of fluid permeability and therefore serves as a necessary
counterpart to the normative positions of adventure/familiar, same/difference which resonate implicitly in all travel discourse. Thus it is better to consider this binary as mutually constitutive: each a product of social, historical and cultural shifts concerning the raison d’etre and meaning of tourism itself. The tension between the fluidity of the human subject and the constraining nature of the subject position has important implications for understanding the nature of backpacking and its processes of becoming in the world. This tension is not solely a matter of the theoretical nature of the subject but also moulds the practices of the backpacker as it negotiates the space in between its multiplicity and its position within discourses that seek to fix it.

Identification is the detour through the other that defines the self. This detour through the other follows no predetermined developmental path, nor does it travel outside history and culture. Identification names the entry of history and culture into the subject, a subject that bears the traces of each and every encounter with the external world (Fuss 1995:3).

A sense of subjectivity as fluid, dynamic and multiple is not yet generally accepted across the social sciences. The widespread influence of poststructural thought has, however, insofar as contemporary philosophy is concerned, at least begun to undermine Enlightenment notions of a unified, transcendent subject and has paved the way for critical approaches. The fluidity of the human subject, though, is not without its bounds or constraints. Indeed, the same line of poststructural thinking that served to de-center the Enlightenment subject also specifies that the subject is positioned by larger formations of discourse. Thus poststructural subjectivity operates under the juxtaposition of fluidity and position, this does not necessarily amount to paradox but it does underline the fundamental tension through the subject must now be understood. Thus Phillips writes:

‘…Judith Butler has conceived of the subject in terms of its performativity and the ways that the “I” is crafted through numerous and fluid citations of existing power relations. Conceived in this way, the notion of the “self” is a constantly changing object crafted and re-crafted out of the points of identification provided in the exterior fields of power and knowledge. These points of identification, in turn, provide symbolic anchors by which a subject is moored, at least temporarily, into a particular subject position
within which they become identifiable and intelligible in terms of the broader formation of discourse’ (ibid 2006:310).

Identities shape people’s practices, thus their practices play a role in their identifications, their abstract positionings and their relationality (their intimate relations). When I consider backpacking identity to be a social construction, it is one always open for change and conflict, an identity that depends on the social circumstances and material conditions. By reconsidering identity anew (from its structuralism to poststructural, the fixed to the fluid, from the singular to the plural, and then its impossibility and after its multiplicity identity as an important concept (if indeed it still is) is one that needs to be embraced, challenged, and reconceptualised. I have started, in this thesis, to think about backpackers and their practices in ways that can help to reconsider the efficacy of former typologies. I thus open up possibilities for rethinking the labels formerly used to identify backpacker travellers. Some of the theories that derive from social constructionism and postmodern theories of the social have acted as catalysts for my own thinking because they emphasize the constructed and dynamic nature of identity. For example, Sarup defines identity as ‘a construction, a consequence of interaction between people, institutions and practices’ (ibid 1998:11). Sarup, following Deleuze’s lead, suggests that identity is relational, that is, in the context of backpacking - that backpackers make claims about who they are by their interaction and translational propensities with people and things (consider the discursive interlocutions, the affective practices, the backpack, for example; that socialises and mobilises backpackers, and the spaces that fold around them).

**Expressions of the social**

Backpackers get out-there, they do things; they’re adventurous. Tourists, like to sit on buses and let others do the work, they’re safe (Scott, South Africa).

These are statements of identity. The conjunction of *Scott being a backpacker* and *backpacking being adventurous* precedes his statement. Thus Scott states a discursive
truth, not by its own syntactic appearance, but rather by its ability to name and predicate the formal relations, exemplified by if Scott is a backpacker and backpackers are adventurous then Scott is adventurous. Thus the narratives that the backpackers provide are not passive reflections, they are active, dynamic articulations that offer specific perspectives on identity and their social world. This deconstruction is characteristic of the poststructural study of Derrida which focusses on the act of writing, on the construction and structure of texts, and on how issues of syntax deeply affect the production of meaning. To quote Derrida deconstruction deals with ‘the irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic’ (ibid 1970: 221).

Let us remember that one gives an account of oneself to another, and that every accounting takes place in the context of an address. I give an account of myself to you. Further, the context of address, what we might call the rhetorical context for responsibility, means that I am engaging not only in a reflexive activity, thinking about and reconstructing myself, but also in speaking to you and thus instituting a relation in language as I go (Butler 2001: 31).

In reference again, to Scott’s statements above, this is the crux of the paradox of identity: explicit identification leads inevitably to autonomist alienation. Significantly though, I can ascertain that identity already exists as a relation of expression in language. Identity is syntactically avowed. Thus, in the first instance, identity (or identifications-in-process) is always already a linguistic performative. This is exciting, for if I agree that identity is a linguistic performance. It is already a performative, which, in turn, facilitates a meeting between Derridas proto-langue and Deleuzes rhizome (along which it can travel). There are innumerous performatives - so I must, always and already, imagine that identities (identifications-in-process) are complex, contested and formulated in various domains. Indeed, this is what makes them in the Deluezian sense – as multiplicity. Equally important, in the identity statement above, are the embedded metaphors which work to structure backpacking realities, and also that the concepts involved are fundamentally metaphorical. More precisely, the claim is that the world and experience is conceived around metaphorical concepts, such as the representations that metaphors form, of spatial and temporal orientation, based on the oppositions of up-down, sitting or standing (passive or active) in-out, or deep-shallow, as in ‘backpacking is meaningful’ and ‘tourism
is superficial’. Despite the constatitve characteristics the metaphoric form of these identity statements are important apparatus in their impact.

**How does a poststructural logic of deconstruction frame backpacking?**

In this section I frame the performance of backpacking with a poststructural logic that implodes the former modern notions of signifier and the signified, but denies and ignores access to material densities and seemingly reduces their ‘substance’ to an ethereal ‘doing’ where nothing and everything ontologises simultaneously. This, I note, is a dangerous limitation and therefore I historicise its application in this thesis.

![Diagram: FUSION OF THE SIGNIFIER AND THE SIGNIFIED](image)

**Figure 6: In word and deed: the socio-linguistic production of reality**

I designed the above figure to highlight the interrelated roles and effect of word and deed on (social) reality. Language in its ‘modern’ understanding is a correspondence between a word with its fixed meaning on the one hand and a representation on the other, whereas
language in a poststructural logic is contingent. My challenge in the chapters on *Discourse* and *Materiality* was to find ways to account for the relation of reading practices to theories of identity (actor-network theory) which is to say, identifications-in-process for ‘backpacker reading’ as well as the difference for those identifications of other persons (tourists) during my participant observation. In other words, textual strategies remain, in the genre of backpacking guidebooks, normative translations supported through ‘non-touristic’ behavioural narratives. Thus the tension of difference between backpacker and tourists is built into the textuality of backpacking travel itself. However, equally important has been the shifting significations of backpacking identity because of their ‘doing’. Thus Figure 7, above, expresses the performative union of backpacking word and deed. This Figure really articulates the poststructural fusion between signifier and signified (let’s say backpacker and guidebook), and in this sense, alone is somewhat reductive. Indeed I am dissatisfied with the implication that there is a supposed axis of a constituting consciousness or ‘single-body’ from which relations emerge. Figure 7 is designed to highlight the reductive tendencies (visually so) of this logic, to create a sort of theoretical/real schema that illustrates the limitations of this logic.

‘Allied’ expressions of the social

I now wish to draw attention to Figure 8 overleaf - backpacking practice as multiple alliance. I have attempted to synthesise my arguments from earlier chapters and point at this stage at something near to a conclusion, or in the very least an implication of my efforts.
Figure 7: Backpacking identity performance as multiple alliance

The above Figure is inspired by Malfouris work on identity (1996), and adapted to create this diagram. I use his term ‘conciliation’ to explain that backpacking identity is socially manifest; it is essentially socialised. It is also ‘embodied’ (see chapter The Body ‘In’ backpacking); identity works in and through the body. It is also ‘scattered’; it is dispersed in discourse, exists in society, not in a priori sense, but always already waiting to be performed in a given moment. It is ‘performed’ through the mind and the body; the inseperability of mind and body (though still differentiated) foregoes its binary distinction. It is extensive (see section on backpack – where objects define corporeal
limits that is it incorporated in the things around us, prosthetically acted). It is ‘situated’ in specific actions; allied to particular situations, always in a place.

The representation of backpacking, in the diagram I designed below, illustrates how the ‘doings’ of (self) identifications (part one) morph into, and join with others. These are ontologically ‘mapped’ by and affected in the various domains (part two).

Figure 7: Backpacking identity jigsaw

In Figure 8 the image of the jigsaw is not meant to represent a perfect fit, it is more akin to the practise of jissawing when pieces squeezed together may fit, but the groove is always keen; the join whereby the edges of one part of the jigsaw piece fits with another, also shows that backpacking identity is a type of ‘doing’ that is only made manifest at the point of contact (the necessary performative exchange).
Conceptually my interpretation of backpacking ontology and the multiplicity of becoming therein is represented in the jigsaw Figure above. Part one of the Figure details the various identities that different participants claimed (all of whom were asked in the very first instance if they were backpacking). Part two shows the making that those self-identities rest upon. In Figure 9 I want to demonstrate that backpackers fit where they feel is most appropriate, given the socialising effects of the moment. The jigsaw effect also gives draws attention to the idea that backpacking identities are never completed it exists in a constant process of becoming, becoming in relation with the different domains (see also Figure 2 ‘Domains of becoming’).

Figure 8: ‘Relating’ backpacking

Legend

- Transference of ontology
- Strategic resistance
- Affiliated offshoot
The above Figure I designed to display to the reader how I see backpacking and other travel identities ‘relating’ their being (always in a performative fashion). There are main paths where key moments of identity transactions occur (transference of ontology, let’s say KSR), but these paths are embedded in a multitude of resistance strategies (let’s say listening to an ipod), identity is also lost, manifest and made through a host of affiliated offshoots (a world of material-semiotic challenges and signifiers).

Backpacking identity is not a localizable relation between traveller and tourists, for instance, but goes from one to the other and back again, it is a perpendicular direction; a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, and occasionally affiliates elsewhere. The transference of ontology is also contained and related within the strageic resistance and carried in the affiliated offshoot (see legend above). Thus backpacking ontology is rhizomatic, in the Deleuzian sense; one without fixed beginnings or terminal ends, one that undermines and catalyses, envelopes things, and alters others and alters itself. The Figure above ‘relating backpacking’ also goes to illustrate how ontological transference between tourist and backpacker marks a transitional period of indeterminacy; it represents a state of flux between two or more stages of being. Backpackers are subject to assimilation, self-rejection, political struggles, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative and personal assemblage. It would therefore be dangerous to collapse together the different modalities of hybridity that I encountered in this culture, its (semiotic) territories and the various socio-materials to which it is exposed. Amidst the exchange (between backpacker and other types of traveller) there are resistance strategies that backpackers employ in which elements of tourism and backpacking are incorporated into an identity that rejects normalized definitions of either.

The point is, as soon as performativity comes to rest on a performance, questions of embodiment, of social relations, of ideological interpellations of emotional and political effects, all become discussable when performativity materializes in that risky and dangerous negotiation between a doing (a reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions that frame interpretations) between someones body and the conventions of embodiment, I have access to cultural meanings and
critique. Performativity, I suggest must be rooted in the materiality and historical density of performance (Diamond 1999:97)

Researching, multiplicity and anxiety

The danger is in the neatness of identifications – Anon.

Plate 60: Home-stay in Piloki, Northern Thailand

I include the photograph above because this was only one of the few times during my research when I felt comfortable in my own presence. Not because I am positioned against or with locals in Northern Thailand. It is ‘just me’ in this photograph, that is, I was momentarily ‘more’ ontologically sound – a time away from being both backpacker and researcher. I met up with a friend from Otago – Dr. Daniela Schiller who was working for a Tourism Development agency, at the time, with the villagers of an ethnic tribal group in Eastern Thailand, approximately 2km from the Myanmar border. These villagers do not have full citizenship rights in Thailand and are not recognised at all in Myanmar, they are not ethnically or linguistically ‘Thai’, yet have always lived in Thailand. Their movements outside of a small number of villages are restricted and identity cards are required for travel to the nearest sizeable market towns. I visited one of these villages and stayed with this family for two nights. It was a two day journey from Bangkok, as there are no roads in this part of Thailand; we travelled by river for the afternoon of the second day. I include
this to explain it was a matter of relief for me – I was not researching other backpackers, there were no other backpackers here; thus I no longer, ambiguously felt, backpacker/researcher, nor was I really backpacker.

It is not a question of this or that place on earth, or of a given moment in history, still less of this or that category of thought. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again (Deleuze 1987: 20).
The shift to performance

The findings in my earlier chapters suggest that representational logic has shaped how backpacking identity has previously been approached and how backpackers have been understood (the symbolic realm). Through representational logic, performances are envisioned as communicational vehicles for messages among signifiers and signified (backpackers and guidebooks, for example). The texts of performances (the *Lonely Planet*) or the ‘script for the actor’ (Boorstin 1964) primarily functions to signify (or represent) a reality that exists before them. Backpackers reproduce this clarity and order in their interactions, and researchers, in their work, contribute their own representations of this. Thus, when working from a representational perspective, interpretations of backpacking performance are heavily rooted in stable ‘frames’ (Goffman 1974) of meaning and interaction. In the literature depictions of backpacking performances involve shifts between established frames for backpacking identity (narratives) and the performance of backpacking. Thus in my chapter entitled on guidebooks I claim that whilst semiotics remains helpful in many ways, I am also confined by a logic that predicts stability and defines diversity as something ‘Other to’ or a rupture from the inner frame. Premised in structuralism the logic of representation overemphasizes stability, structure, and repetition and underemphasizes the change, diversity, and innovation that are part of reading in use (the situated guidebook). The movements among language, images, bodies, and other actors in performances of backpacking are creative, innovative, and affective, actually producing backpacking rather than merely signifying them (see chapter 7 Space in backpacking). Thus my primary goal has been to explore the theoretical perspectives and methodological techniques that I outline in earlier chapters, to enable me to recover the performative, in its widest sense, in backpacking performances. To this end, I explored a poststructural logic that carries with it the assumption that the material practices necessarily involves backpackers in generating new ways of connecting texts, things and performed identities. Among others I draw upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and their philosophy of rhizomatic analysis. To reiterate my original contention: aside from any a prior ideological motivation or textual performance backpackers are constructed in, and through, social performance.
Thus I reflect upon the complex act of repositioning backpacking through the material practices of reading that I discuss in chapter 5. The action of dissecting oppositional categories of guidebook and backpacker reveal that person and thing do not reside in binary camps and instead may be positioned in a *networked* understanding, that backpacking interactions, weave between and within each other in the reading encounter, fusing, reconciling and creating new spaces for understanding the parameters of self and thing. This opens up the notion of a backpacker/guidebook interface into a new domain: a contested space whose parameters shift and morph. In this sense backpackers are not doomed to replicate the same acts *all the time* but are granted possibilities to access new ways of being.

In my chapter on the body in backpacking I demonstrate that, whether a literal performance or a literary performance, backpacking identity is always a socialised performance, as well as a form of embodied action, and thus situated in a field of various social practices. This field is characterised by its historical density. This compliments my discussion on the ‘material practices of reading’ that is, backpacking guidebooks may or may not offer discourses about bodies and sensual perception; yet what is clear is that their discourses can in no way be detached from the bodies and the senses that engage them.

The backpacking things I describe in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 have different spheres of influence (guidebooks, backpacks and didgeridoos, for example) but more significantly they do different things, they ‘become’ differently. Importantly I have argued that these backpacker things frequently complicate and challenge as well as reinforce definitive social and cultural hierarchies. The shifting meanings of the materials objects within backpacking culture engenders a critique of previously held assumptions regarding the ways in backpacker identity is understood. From ANT’s perspective, the form, spacing and stability of what is understood as a backpack, a didgeridoo and a guidebook, is a function of the practices of the heterogeneous elements of the network. Backpacks, guidebooks and Didgeridoos are fusion-artefacts of status, communicative and cultural form. I have strived to counter essentialism and sought to avoid the logic of previous typologies, as Alneng (2002:135) might have it. It is detailed analysis of the real, social, and discursive factors that are implicated in the construction of this backpacking tourism network that supports an interpretation of backpacking identity (identity as becoming,
becoming as multiplicity) as a set of practices that both stabilizes and offers morphological potential in the ontological genesis of backpacking.
Chapter 9 Outcomes, Reflections and Conclusions

In this chapter I intend to summarise my findings and observations from chapter 9 and earlier. I also reflect on the limitations of this thesis and then express what I believe are my contributions to backpacking research.

Folding subject/object

This thesis is premised on a relational ontology, supported by ANT (itself inspired by Deleuzian thinking). It is framed with Bruno Latours’ Deleuzian inspired ANT account of the social as an ‘assemblage’ in which backpackers, their things, their ‘bodies’, affect and mobilise performance. I am aware of the limitations of this project (both theoretically and empirically – see also section ‘limitations of ANT’ in chapter two page 70/71). First, I would like to draw the readers’ attention to my subjectivity ‘folding’ - that occurred during this research and which I highlight inside its chapters. I experienced my own identity crisis, one which I used to reflexively situate myself as researcher-backpacker. Despite the Deleuzian erasure of the subject – replacing it with hybrid becomings, there there is still much ‘meaning’ in the word subjectivity that I did not let it slip away too easily, the term ‘identity’ was dealt with similarly. There were times when it was possible to collapse the subject into the object and see the hybrid form take its place (indeed this is the case in chapter 6 after my research on the backpack in backpacking and in the idea of me as researcher-backpacker), but there were other times when subject and object resist each other vehemently (backpacker and some forms of accommodation). But importantly there is still much cultural production in resistance. Later in the thesis subjectivity finally gives way to become the agentic capacities of people and things: the performative energies of the material world. Rather, then, than a radical implosion of the subject/object I fold these energies around and onto the subject-no-more – like a performative veil working on it.

Second, no textual enactment is ever innocent (Lather 1999), and this thesis is certainly not. I am guilty of denying the true (sic) plurivocality that I initially set out to achieve. Like a postmodern Benetton advertisement (see in Jobling 2011) I wanted to reach out to a wider backpacking audience. Yet, this again is an impossibility. I soon recognised that the
matter of my work was in my microcosm of backpacking performance – see Figure 10 ‘a performative assembly’). Whether this is a limitation depends on how the research is viewed. Methodologically speaking it is appropriate (and only possible) that my research be intimate, and bound to the the world which I perform, of course. But whose presence is incorporated by the thesis, and whose is implicated in its usage, and how the other backpackers influence and are construed, alongside questions of precedence and concurrence, are not just textual strategies but are matters imbued with power relations. Arguably, given than I reflexively weave in and out of each page, I would posit here that my thesis is autopoietic not self-referential, and that this goes some way in mitigating the conceptualised performative categories (the backpackers, the spaces and the things) ‘performed’ in a sense before the thesis was configured and the research produced. My challenge therefore shifts back and forth from a desire to represent the ‘real’ experiences of backpacking towards multiple yet still cautious discursive analyses of their stories, my interview themes, my notes, and the quotations from guidebooks, and their interpretations. Thus at the heart of my interpretive problem was not who or what to include in my exploration of backpacking but how to listen to, and be affected by, the narratives of backpackers, and through ANT help understand what other ‘things’ had been excluded from the categories ‘backpackers’ and ‘tourist’, which were to become so frequently and interchangeably used and narrated during the interviews, both by myself and the participants. Many of the backpacker’s observations come from the privileged social positioning of backpacking as opposed to a person historically embedded in the place (a local). I needed to understand the complexity and the mixture of the vocabulary, the (anti?) touristic critique, the statements of backpacking, the anxieties and all the emotions that cohere in their bodies and those that they might unexpectedly release. This is why I incorporate poststructural theories of identity construction, finalised in a Deleuzian treaty of becoming. It allows the juxtaposition of competing approaches in the methodology, leading me towards what I hope is a realistic plurality of interpretations. And although I often found myself pursuing cohesion (accord and harmony) within my interpretations, increasingly I became able to tolerate discrepancies in and between my ambiguous presence and contradictory responses elicited from the ethnographic experience. My postmodern hybrid approach to the performance of backpacking identities works well with this heterotopic association.
On Words and things

Approaches to image in its relation to language are incomplete if they operate only on the semantic or semiotic level, however that level is defined (linguistically, logically, narratologically, ideologically, or all of these in combination, as a Symbolic). What they lose, precisely, is the expression event – in favour of structure. Much more could be gained by integrating the dimension of intensity into cultural theory. The stakes are the new (Massumi 2002:27).

In terms of backpacking-becoming backpacker guidebooks are especially performative. In chapter 5 I describe how backpacker guidebooks ‘do’ things. Indeed, I illustrate how two major performative dimensions, the linguistic and the material, have constitutive effects in the backpacker’s social world. Elements of guidebook performativity include the literary performative ‘you’, narrative-performativity and the material properties of the guidebook, and the material practices of reading. The first two elements the literary performative ‘you’ and ‘narrative-performativity’ reveal that backpacker guidebooks are powerful socio-linguistic tools through which substantial ontological discourse for ‘backpacker-becoming’ is produced. Under these headings backpacker guidebooks became a point of recovery for the onto-epistemological foundations that they conceal (identity, self, behavior, understanding, knowledge). The privileged texts are the dominant guides on the market, the Lonely Planet; the Rough Guide and Let’s Go, for example. These guidebooks perform backpacker norms, and make these norms widely available. The first two elements ultimately frame the problem of the linguistic reference. There is never an immediate correspondence between text and the world, nor is there between guidebooks and backpackers, but there is a relationship, one that is performatively constituted. As Riffaterre puts it, ‘[…] text functions something like a neurosis: as the matrix is repressed, the displacement produces variants, although the text, just as suppressed symptoms, breaks out somewhere else in the body’ (1978:19).
Importantly, the first two performative elements the literary performative ‘you’, and narrative-performativity outline critical interactions between backpacking and text, not lineal or linguistic determinism between text and backpacker. Using the analogy of dance, the relationship of guidebook to backpacker can be likened to that of a choreographer and a dancer (that the guidebook choreographs the trip). There are whole sets of conventions and steps that backpacker’s might follow at times, but not always perform accordingly. There are two main reasons for this. First, the perfect conditions for the original context have irrevocably gone; they are in the past. When backpacker’s read guidebooks, they engage with textual and pictorial components, and enact an experience of what it is to be a backpacker, one which has necessarily moved beyond the initial literary scene. Second, and perhaps most crucially, backpacking identity is fluid yet contingent – it is corporeal, performative and individually sanctioned. Backpacking guidebooks are but one presence, dispersed across a vast performative stratagem, a Deleuzian fold in an extra-textual, materially embedded and corporeal world.

The third performative element ‘the performance of the guidebook as a material object’, explains that whilst backpacking guidebooks are indeed paradigmatic texts reinforced through repetition and emulation, they are also important cultural artifacts with specific material energies, used by ‘bodies’ in different spaces. Materiality is thus cited as one means of developing theoretical sophistication within the sub-discipline of backpacking tourism. Despite a priori ideological productions of backpacking, and the final performance of backpacking in the backpacker’s body, guidebooks remain an omnipresent and performative discourse as well as a serious material effect in the production of backpacking worlds. Consequently, backpacker identity construction is dispersed across a wider backpacking performativity where performativity itself is co-constituted by materiality and discursive practices. And thus, precisely because this is now networked - individual intentionality in backpacking is organized through the linguistic and material field of the backpacker guidebooks performative possibilities.

In sum, backpacker guidebooks are presented as an exemplary paradigm for both language and becoming. I conclude that backpacker guidebooks are fantastically performative; they provide a world within which backpacker’s move and a significant apparatus for becoming a backpacker. Backpacking is not only typified in the pages of guidebooks; it is performed in and through them. The guidebooks are performative in general, yet also
specifically performative in syntax and verb. As cultural artifacts and symbolic objects, both within and outside of backpacker circles, guidebooks are materially (and therefore) socially performative. My ethnographic experience and analysis of backpacker guidebooks discloses the performance of these texts and the materiality of performance. The act of reading the guidebook and engaging with explicit literary performatives, as well as the performance of the guidebook as a material object contribute to a deeply performative backpacking arena. The different performative elements have important implications for understanding how backpacking is organized, constituted and performed. They should not be taken as separate circumstances but as inseparable qualities that point toward an understanding of backpacking not as something given, nor as something made, but as the very activity of making - embodied in a performance. Although backpacking guidebooks open up a performative space for their textual framing of power they also articulate specific strategies for backpacking identity which at times eschew these narrative conventions. The guidebook binds backpacking identity performance through strategies of materialising identification in time and space. Thus I do not argue that the guidebook determines identity, on the contrary my thesis negates this idea as an impossibility. However, I do suggest that the imprint of the guidebook is inseparable from the subsequent knowledge assembly and ontological ‘becoming’. For me, at least, a socio-semiotic analysis of backpacker guidebooks highlights the productive tension between backpacker and guidebook; how they both weave in and out of their own ontologies, flashing back to me from time to time as I also position myself against the broader and often unseen constructions of the book, of reality. The intertextual dialogue between guidebooks and backpackers, the citational markers and material doings (and ontological densities) that they install contribute to a subject (sic), a ‘backpacker-becoming’ which is not fixed or unitary, but inevitably malleable and capable of change. Thus, regardless of the theoretical incongruities of the literary performative, poststructuralism and material-semiotics, each serve to confirm the notion that backpacking guidebooks really ‘do’ things.
What does ANT really do?

Actor-network theory challenges the classical idea of the form of the network/object as a stable configuration (Latour 2005). It attempts to explain the coming into being and therefore the performative capacity of ‘things’. These doings are referred to as ‘material practices’ (Mol 2003). According to Mol and Law (2001) these practices are highly specific and spatially distributed enactments. Importantly their construction is always ongoing. In an application of ANT to the notion of backpacking identity, emphasis shifts away from fixity (in identity performance) and moves among (or forms within) a multitude of material configurations, and therefore, an infinitude of relational possibilities. Indeed this reflects many new research endeavours in backpacking research and elsewhere that both frustrate at the impossibility of fixing identity or suggest that identity itself is extraordinarily complex, diffuse, and heterogeneous.

The actor-network approach assumes that no actor (entity) within backpacking is passive, all have some degree of agency, but all of them vary in the extent to which they influence or resist the influence of other entities (see Callon 1993). Each individual person contains a multitude of contradictory drives such that humans, as Nietzsche put it, are ‘multiplicities and not unities’ (Nietzsche in Smith 2007:69).

Bruno Latour’s ‘symmetric anthropology’ can be understood as a critique of a reduction of social order to dematerialized symbolic orders and of the material to objects of interpretation. It enables one to grasp the material not as a social structure or as symbolic objects, but as “artefacts”, as “things” which are necessary components of social networks or “practices” (Reckwitz 2002:196).

The critical enterprise of understanding backpacking anew which now has a growing tradition of qualitative inquiry (see chapters 2 and 3) vis a vis the politics of ANT is exciting. In spite of its relativist ontology, actor-network theory does place a strong emphasis on empirical inquiry. Furthermore actor-network theory, with its interplay of heterogeneous networks (in constant making) is well suited to compiling detailed and contextual empirical knowledge about backpacking. I attend to the appreciation of
backpacking as a subject/object hybrid network assembled of subtle and localised, as well as explicit and global ways (and matters) of becoming a backpacker and performing backpacking.
In reflecting on the inclusion of Figure 3 ANT as a performative science, in chapter 2 ‘Theoretical Perspective’, Figure 10 above notes how the different actors (both human and non-human) in backpacking have performative energies that variously effect and produce notions and styles of backpacker-becoming. Each entity, meeting or localised production
of backpacking (and its performative value) is described through my thesis. Such an assemblage is a key factor in understanding ANT, as the theory suggests that the appropriate method for examining the world is not to start with particular assumptions about nature or scientists (there is a relationship between backpacking and guidebooks, or there is a fixed sense of backpacking identity) but instead follows and describes what I actually do, that is, my interactions with backpacking - this is represented in Figure 10. An actor-network approach describes the relations that produce and reshuffle, and enact backpacking (see the various materials and entities that perform on, in and among backpacking). Figure 10, above is a diagrammatic configuration of ANTS heterogeneous assemblages. It is thus a model for the social performance of backpacking seen through re-occurring effects in the production of meaning and their material affiliations with elsewhere (other touristic modalities or backpacking assemblages). The performative assembly accounts for backpackers and the world in which they are found, and produced. Figure 10 serves to show how backpacking is made possible by products, services, leaflets, guidebooks, signs, menu’s, clothing, fabrics, the very the infrastructure that surrounds them. Each of these aids and facilitates backpacking journeys; they also provide and facilitate being. Thus rather than ascribe affectivity to objects as a theoretical afterthought, a ‘genealogical ethnographic approach’ (Borgerson and Rehn 2003) can bridge the perceived gap between immaterial and material, theory and everyday practice. There are times when durability and fixity result, but the focus is on how those things are performed so that such durability is achieved (the guidebook is the mobile referent unit for backpackers). In other words, durable networks are performed, and this means that no matter how seemingly durable they can fall apart. Just as networks can be performed into durability they can be performed into disintegration and even disappearance. This is why the network is not closed. The performative capacities seek affiliation elsewhere (see affiliative offshoots) these ‘offshoots’ are to illustrate that multiple networks exist, each jostle for performative effect. However, even ANT theorists recognize some measure of durability, as best exemplified in Latours concept of ‘immutable mobiles’. This can be defined as ‘a network of elements that holds it shape as it moves’ (Law and Heatherington 2002: 395-396). Thus there is a durable performed backpacker network, but it is one that is in constant movement (and there is the ever present possibility that it can fall apart.) Thus I follow the actors (see Figure 10), as they attempt to transform backpacking and build new knowledges or networked systems of becoming. ANT compliments my grounded ethnographic aapproach to research; one performed and engaged (with) in
contexts. Crucially my goal was to develop and apply a methodological application of ANT by using it to trace the historical emergence of backpacking ontology, which enables me to view backpacking in the making (how and when ontologies are formed). Network analysis, in this sense is nothing new (see Cheong and Miller’s 2000 trialectic of brokers, locals and tourists, for example). Equally important then, has been the onto-epistemological stance on knowledge. That knowledge is produced locally, it is distributed. I view backpacking identity as one in the making in which (backpacking) knowledge is never a final state of affairs (Lytard 1984).

My main observation is that the production of backpacking social order through common activities (practices involving human, non-human and the material-semiotic world) has, as both a primary resource and an ongoing, practical problem, the work of bringing various performances into productive relation with specific circumstances of action. For this I return to actor network theory. I argue that backpacking (as a construct) is a meta-synthesis (an actor-network) perpetuated by the (re) production of norms. Thus, I employed the performative toolkit of ANT one that views the world as a set of performative moments and transactions between people, lexis and things. ANT provides a relativist ontology (Lee and Hassard 1999). ANT compliments my ethnographic approach that emphasises a grounded approach to research, that is one performed and engaged (with) in contexts. Indeed ANT’s ontological equality brings into the frame those actors traditionally left out of social scientific analysis (Whittle and Spicer 2008). It represents the most recent theoretical and methodological moves in sociology, anthropology, geography and philosophy. When considered together these moves reveal multiple approaches to a common theoretical concern: the dissolution of the subject/object distinction (Pels 1995). The corollary of which, across the social sciences, is the ‘turn to ontology’ and the consequent effort to radically rework an understanding of what it is (for humans and non-humans) to constitute a world.

**Backpacking research from homogeneity to heterogeneity**

Sociological and anthropological perspectives have contributed rich and detailed academic studies of backpacking tourism. Yet aside from the nuanced additions from these perspectives it is also hoped that my actor-network inspired approach helps to build
bridges across disparate subject areas and helps to create a more integrated tourism theory. I point to my fusion of literary theory, science, material semiotics and posthumanism, each bound together through the ethics of performativity. At the same time my ANT approach also points to the constructive power of tourism research, that is different perspectives are knowledge constitutive, each brings realities into being; a new lens, each contribute to the genealogy of backpacking knowledge that also problematises backpacking research revealing it as a social and political construct. It is anticipated that my alternative methodological perspective possibly widens the ongoing debate on backpacking identity. I also wish to have made some progress in shifting analytic attention away from the solely symbolic registry of tourism research. Moreover, I have aimed to compliment the recent developments and theoretical sophistication in critical tourism studies in order to help dislodge former accepted approaches to identity research. Moreover, the developments I point to in backpacking research (the move toward embodied identities, network configurations and materiality) provide different means of overcoming the crisis of representation, that is, the issue of how can I (re)present backpacking worlds. Research can make small moves to, at least, manage the crisis in representation, recognise position in the research, ‘relate’ backpacking, rather than ‘fix’ or ‘locate’ it, I can work with embodiment, with materiality, and not only pose discourse or ideology as power. Moreover, the dissonance of the material body dissolves the fantasy of representation in its very appearing. Indeed the discourse of materiality aims at getting rid of subjectivity per se (Trifonva 2003).
Spatialised identity

Following Howard’s (2007) call for further conceptual definition of backpacking enclaves and their characteristics, chapter 7 explores the material constitution of these spaces and interprets their materiality. Place, I conclude, is not a structure imposed upon the performance of backpacking from the outside but is itself a creation of backpackers. Thus place or ‘placing’ is not an autonomous process but an ontologized locale. Space and bodies are co-determined and mutually enfolded. Through the example of Koh Sarn Road (KSR); a ‘backpacking enclave’, and the beaches of Koh Pnang Nan Island; an analysis is made of the topological character - the ‘scrumpled space’ (Doel 1996) of backpacking. I illustrate how space folds around certain objects; I do so, by looking, in detail, at guidebooks, backpacks and Didgeridoos, in the spatial context of KSR and Koh Pnang Nan. This is also applied to the myriad of other artefacts and architectures (beach-huts, restaurants and bars) each seen as agents that constitute backpacking by the folding together of place and identity. These fabricated ‘things’ bring complexity, connection, rupture and cohesion to backpacking identity. Thus these things interrupt backpacking with a stabilising force; it is the ontological effects that occur in the translations between people and things that construct backpacking identity. Ways of understanding backpacking spaces are challenged by late-modern time-space reconfiguration; reconceived through the new spatialities of actor-network theory. Thus following in chapter 7 ‘The body in backpacking’ shows that within such radically reconceived backpacking spaces (see above), the body commands an expert epistemological position: thinking with the body is interconnected with all moments of becoming a backpacker. Thus body, space and text become the non-reductive, immanent sites of knowing, each with reciprocating relations that produces affect in between – in relation, supporting a grounded and material identity politics.

Backpacking identity as performative

A performance is both a thinking and a doing: it is the doing of a thought. It is both the idea and the performance of that idea. It is history open to interpretation and difference. In the composite performative realm of backpacking – the performativities of both people
and things have fantastic affiliations. These affiliations are always mediated in space. I mentioned earlier that new vocabularies are necessary in order to speak in these new posthuman or material times. There are always words out there, they just have to be borrowed or used anew. Rheology is the study of the flow of matter. I borrow the term from biochemical science. Rheology refers to the movement of fluids and solids and the conditions in which they flow. It applies to substances which have a complex structure. The flow of these substances cannot be characterized by a single value of viscosity instead the viscosity changes due to other factors. Thus the meaning of the word ‘rheology’ has conceptual application in my understandings of backpacking identity performance. I believe that a viscosity exists between the entities in the backpacking network (the relation between backpack and backpacker, for instance). This viscosity shifts rheologically depending on the conditions (the context or space) in which these entities are found). Thus difference in the rheological conditions shift the meaning(s) between identifications that occur among the networked interactions of backpackers and their material environment.

The performative has become a generative concept in the study of sociality. As a textual process negotiating between mimesis and ontologization, it allows the construction of identity to be conceptualized in non-essentialist thinking. In addition, it captures the double aspect of language in the text: its expressive/dramatic aspect, of revealing an existing reality, and its self-producing/self-referential aspect, of creating a new reality. Moreover, not only the guidebook but also the reading of it can be considered performative, since reading brings into existence interpretations that did not exist before (see chapter 5). My inquiry thus detaches backpacking from any simple equating of identity with culture, or becoming through enculturation alone (an intersubjective interpretation). At the same time, my conclusions suggest that the dualisms initially considered in traditional tourism studies are themselves social constructs, that is, they are only produced in specific circumstances; circumstances whose historical and cultural character and genesis has now come into view.

I never wanted to be posthuman, or posthumanist, any more than I wanted to be postfeminist. For one thing, there is still urgent work to be done in reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human, properly pluralized, reformulated, and brought into constitutive intersection with other asymmetrical differences. Fundamentally, however,
it is the patterns of relationality and, in Karen Barad’s terms, intra-actions at many scales of space/time that need rethinking, not getting beyond one troubled category for a worse one, even more likely to go postal (Haraway 2006:99).

What Haraway reminds me of is the danger of posting everything. First, in the temporal sense (as though all that came before is historicised) and second the implication that (what lies before) it is outmoded (thus unable to crystallise the social). This is why I employ an actor-network framework in which paradigmatic realities are not historicised but made co-temporaneous. Importantly my study of backpacking also introduces a different distinction between epistemological and ontological aspects of backpacking identity, in which the former is always an aspect of the latter. Performativity (as both a theory and a form of social practice) clearly has a special role to play in studies of tourist ontology. It facilitates access to the meaningful social world through the fragmented relics of a material society. I suggest, furthermore, that tourism researchers can only fully comprehend performativity, and thus social reproduction, when how it works materially is better understood. Backpacking travel and its (more) institutionalised partner - tourism share a common material heritage; it is the practice of those materials that vary; that constitute the very difference.

Suggestions

The traditional view of backpacking as an approach to travel or a community that defines a reality of social positions, rules, and decontextualized abstractions that call for ‘rational’ understanding and manipulation of symbol systems is outmoded (see my work on symbolism earlier). These positions, rules, and abstractions are only apparently independent and objective; in reality they must be sustained in and through ongoing interaction. I argue that backpacking has a rheological, relational and cultural character without which knowing, change and adaptability would not occur, and which makes it the site of a search, sometimes a struggle, for identity. Without such a cognitive underpinning, this research could not adequately understand either the ontological or the epistemological aspects of backpacking, and therefore cannot begin to comprehend the way places and things transform tourists into backpackers who live and perform in complex ‘spaces of
affiliation’. My first main observation is that backpacking identity is formed not only in practical activity, but in the relations that these activities produce. Hegel (1807/1967) sought to demonstrate ‘the radical view that, without interpersonal interaction and the mutual demand of what he calls ‘recognition,’ there is no ‘self’ and no ‘self-consciousness’ (Solomon 1983:430). Backpacking identity is thus not a construction of the mind (ideological), nor simply the source of action and cognition; it is formed in the viscosities (or densities) of desire, conflict, attraction and opposition, in other words in the very struggle for that identity.

In chapter 6 I explore my ethnographical take on objects in motion, rather than focussing on backpackers per se I followed backpacks in and around KSR, and further afield – on their journeys down to the islands and elsewhere. I argued that not only does the affiliation with certain backpacking objects change; the socio-technical configurations in which they emerge. I thus link the nature of things with the places in which they operate, and describe the backpack as an intensely changeable object (changing the identities of the person associated with it). I investigate the intricacies of a what is deemed a remarkable (performative) object - the backpack – to discover what makes it a technology of becoming. A suitcase, however, sort of wants to stay in a place – it is quite rigid and sticks to the ground. Unless it has wheels, it has to be lifted up and then it does not travel far; as an object it is not inclined toward the style of travel that backpacking involves.

In sum the ontological genesis of the backpacking tourism network that I describe reveals an ‘assemblage’ constructed out of material semiotic chains of power. I argue that backpacking may be most productively re-imagined through a revisioned and politically charged framework for understanding selves and things. This framework is most radically informed by notions posited by post-processual materialists. Therefore, for me, ontological strategies of being a backpacker do not mean the death of the reader or the death of the text, but rather, the imaginative and creative re-editing of backpacking performance in terms of how backpackers may relate, both to appropriate textuality yet ultimately to the wider arena of selves and identities beyond the formalised constraints of theory, epistemology and any a priori backpacking principles. To respond to Urry (1990) it really is neither the viewing subject, nor object of the gaze, that is caught, captured and manipulates. It is both. It is not the field of vision but the affective relations, the
networked affiliations, the moments of ontological connectivity that constitute the tourism experience.

Regarding Chapter 6 and 7 material praxis in backpacking and backpacking spaces - I am partly inspired by Susan Sontag’s use of place as an emotional site: How is backpacking (space) activated through backpackers strategies of narration? Instead of locating the performative nuclei only inside text, (though this still has performative energies) backpacking identity is formed as ‘body-in-place’. Thus I conclude that the performative durability of backpacking is not to be found within guidebooks, but rather in the experience of reading them. This reconfigured backpacking identity can be read as a multiplicity. A multiplicity is neither one thing nor another; it is the network of relationships between things. Backpacking is thus reconstituted as essentially linked with and also constitutive of the situations in which it is produced. Thus, at the same time I question backpacking identity I also perform adissolution of the category: a deconstruction. Similar to my earlier dissolution of the category of travel itself (the dissolution of the distinction between home and away I mention in chapter 1). I am now left with questions, not answers. Has materialism essentially changed the semiotic tradition? Or has the semiotic radically subsumed the social such that cultural representation is the same as a material reality? Has the relationship between the cultural and the material altered in ways yet acknowledged? Finally, what exactly does the materialist turn mean for the practice of poststructural studies? And precisely what does it portend for the ongoing politics of backpacking identity?

In chapter 6 I focussed on the performative energies of things. As Parkin (1999) observes in a study of human migration, objects really do embody important continuities in the lives of people. They aid the maintenance of personal memories long after the object has been explicitly used. Constructions of self, therefore, rely heavily on significant objects to make peoples lives, complete, rich and memorable. Which brings me to the afterlife of backpacking things. What happens to the guidebook and the ubiquitous backpack? There are always multiple futures, of course. The guidebook may collect dust on a shelf; it may be stored on a bookcase – adding to the collected things in ones home; the backpack may lie forgotten in the back of a cupboard, it may go on a trip completely ‘other’ to backpacking; or remain in storage awaiting its next trip. Things like us are in constant states of becoming.
Oscillation and definition

I write in my introduction that this thesis does not constitute another typology of backpacking. Moreover I argue the quest for definition itself is a polarising and abstract pursuit. However, in terms of contribution to the interpretation of the performance of backpacking identity - the preceeding chapters, taken together, do constitute a definition of sorts. This definition of backpacking, however, is one born of oscillation and not resolve. It is a definition, in part, formed around the interplay of various discourses, material objects, and spaces, all of which have been forced into re-definition and re-invention before and in response to, my *networked* logic of backpacking identity construction. I would also like to emphasize that the symbolic (linguistic) interpretation of backpacking artefacts follows, rather than precedes, the material connectivity of the same objects. At first, this might seem rather paradoxical. However, I tend to think of words as incredibly abstract whereas objects, even symbolic objects, are tangible and concrete. The word ‘backpacker’, for example, is a very abstract thing; a speech act, with multiple connotations depending on the context in which it is spoken, or read, and in the case of writing, lines and squiggles on the page or, in the context of hypertext on the computer screen. Thus backpacking is less a fictional synthesis as some would have it, and more a very real thing. But it is still not a category. It is both too ambiguous and too complex for that.

Viscosities and ‘gloopiness’

There are some strands of poststructuralism, such as radical deconstruction, or Baudrillardian simulation, that might posit backpacking (or backpacking identity) as a fictional synthesis (an umbrella term, so to speak), linguistic, or imaginative. I have demonstrated, however, that whilst this might be the case (in literary or symbolic analyses) I argue that although backpacking does exist arbitrarily, it is still ‘real’ it is materially affiliated, embodied and ‘spaced’. In this ‘return to the real’ I find that backpacking identity is not as ‘free-flowing’ or unhinged as radical postmodernism would
have it. In other words, although a fluidity certainly inhabits the performance of backpacking (Richards and Wilson 2004), importantly there are (something that I term) ‘viscosities’ within this performance. Moreover, the relative fluidity that Wilson and Richards (2008) point to in backpacking identity construction is suggestive of the ‘entangled tourist’; where identities are dependent upon the moment in which they are produced (see also Ren, Pritchard and Morgans 2010 work that advances socio-material studies of the tourist in critical tourism research). Thus I argue a kind of ‘gloopiness’ redefines the fluidity from time to time, and it is this zone in which the performative is most enabled. This ‘gloopiness’ engenders a metaphoric density in the affectivity of the performance (something akin to a sticky residue) heightening, lessening and exacting the performative encounter.

This viscosity differs in ‘relation’ with the various allegiances (see Figure above ‘Multiple alliances’); among the variety of artefacts, people and spaces in which backpacking identity is embedded. Thus moving among the terrain of backpacking I find identity to be relational and literally made in the gap between people, places and things. The proximity of backpacking bodies and things in spaces (akin to territorialism) makes them viscous (Saldhana 2006/2007). The viscosity of backpacking bodies therefore heightens the territorialisation (sense of ownership and occupation) of space, and this is particularly visible in both KSR and the beach environments of southern Thailand.

Contrary to the formulations of some postmodernists, ‘things’ are very much a site of active cultural production, not just of exchange. That is, backpackers are actively engaged in the ongoing reproduction of the site of practice and this includes the transformation of the things they use. Backpackers actively align with or against the power and influence of the various domains of becoming. They can accept or reject the performative embrace of things, and seek to avoid the demands ‘placed’ upon them. The subject matter is thus inherently rhizomatic: just as backpacking is constantly shifting, so is the knowledge produced about them. This creates ‘situated knowledge’ that recognizes the limits of what it can know. It also reveals much about the epistemology of backpacking artefacts and makes a larger point about what can be said and known about the lives of others both human and non-human. This thesis is also, therefore, an exercise in challenging the authority of Cartesian knowledge, or in the very least it tests the limits of that which Cartesian knowing can know.
In the wake of paradigmatic and methodological wars, a post-paradigmatic time of epistemological and theoretical diversity in tourism research calls for rethinking backpacking tourism. I argue for engaged and performative methodologies that represent a shift in emphasis from quantitative and distanced research methods to approaches which develop an appreciation for complex possibilities. Through a methodology informed by poststructuralism, performativity and Actor network theory I suggest that I have possibly enriched the investigation of backpacking identity by questioning the methodology itself, in order to reassess how my own identities inform a project that seeks to understand the identity of others.

**Backpacking Identity Constitution**

Backpacking identities are constituted by a massive realm of physical objects and material infrastructures that facilitate and perform multiple possibilities of identity. Backpacking is performed by and through the incessant reproduction of norms (in narrative and material form) at various intersections across the network. I have argued that the performatve capacities of backpacking (that of inscription and translation power) performs backpackers in their travelled worlds (after having created these constructs) and ‘relates’ them to certain other things (people, lexis, objects and space) that have, themselves, been (and are) continually performed. There are localised and temporary exchanges, through encounters with people and things, (guidebooks, and so on) which act to sustain (infuse and refuel) and produce a sense of being a backpacker. Backpacking is constituted multiply, vicariously and produced in the moment in which it is formed.

I posit that the acts of translation that occur from the result of substitution between backpacker and guidebook are one among many powerful exchanges operating within backpacking socio-cultural networks. These actors, particularly, are conceived in dynamic terms, as a system of negotiations through which backpacking identity is contested and ontologies are both alternately given and denied access to (see chapters 4 and 5). In its multiple alliances (Figure 8) a trace of backpacking always remains and does so in slow yet constant fluctuation. Each context of both production and reception opens a window of opportunity for the acting performer (actanct in the language of ANT) to claim the right to
exercise something akin to agency; or more precisely, performativity. I find that my own historical affiliations (as former backpacker, as researcher, as white male, Western) that translations are always already historically situated utterances. This historicity is informed by the interference from the other domains of becoming I discuss (see chapter 3) and in other ways that may remain elusive. I believe that the ‘how’ to engage the historical situatedness of entities must be one of the key objectives for anybody working at the intersection of people and things.

I applied ANT to study the genesis of backpacking ontology. In this process I uncover the formation of (new) backpacking identities. I thus wish to argue for an understanding of backpacking against that of categorical essentialism, and instead one that is co-constructed from material affiliation. The perpetual oscillation of the backpacking subject within and against the contours of this network tells, ultimately not only of the subject but of the limitations of subjectivity and ultimately to backpackings infinite potential for engaging the resources of memory, agency, originality and innovation, that continue to perform it differently. Researching backpacking identity is multi-faceted, complex, paradoxical, multisensory, and thus requires the hybrid methodological approach which I adopted.

**Backpacking identity as contingent, materialised and networked**

Representation is one of the most critiqued and heterogeneous concepts in the history of modern philosophy. The poststructuralist stance that practices of representations take place over representations has made the concept of representation anathema for many theorists who prioritize embodied practice, materiality and affect over discourse and ideology. Yet this is not the case in a posthuman actor-network methodology. That is, rather than ‘prioritise’ (itself a reductive trope) ANT can hybridise representations with reality positing simultaneity over priority, and relation over difference. Importantly backpacking is a highly mediated social construct of constantly shifting relations and definitions. Indeed the performance of backpacking always lies ahead and before any definitional capacity.

My research framework posits backpacking identity as structured in an affective field. Throughout this construction I am careful not to (re)create a dichotomy between
discursive and material effects. As I have argued in chapter 6, the material is not ‘other’ to discourse anymore than it is an ‘other’ to the social. Rather, in order to conclude my feelings on backpacking identity more fully, I draw upon the image of mutuality between materiality and discursivity which involves a constant mutuality between affect and language insofar as interpretations of the social are never properly outside either dimension. This complexity became a key issue of reflexive and methodological concern. How can I locate performance nuclei in a world where the capacities to act are distributed across a wide array of materials? First I problematised ‘locate’ and then I turned to ANT.

Given that the subject-object divide so permeates the language of thinking: philosophy. It is has been difficult to find language that adequately conveys the co-constitutive nature of backpacking identity that I believe to be empirically mandated. To combat this I have used a language of performativity and actor-network theory. Thus I am consciously informed by the works of Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Bruno Latour and perhaps also by the wider, more public cultural conceptions of backpacking as founded in Western notions of overseas travel (colonial, subjected and based on the oppositions of home and away, self and Other). Thus rather than attempt to escape these conditions, it is hoped that I have managed to reflexively negotiate some of these ontological foundations and offer an interpretation of backpacking identity construction that is nuanced, rigorous and revealing. I am also, like this thesis, a product of my own historical sensibilities.

In sum, to return to my statement of intention I did not construct a typology of backpacking. On the contrary, I argue for the impossibility of fixing backpacking identity. However, neither do I wish to implode backpacking identity research. Instead I have questioned the effectivity of epistemological and ontological space both inside and outside of language and offer some suggestions surrounding the performative nuclei of backpacking identity (the embodied, material and spatial affiliations). Indeed my ultimate goal has been to explore the terra incognita of worlds that move in, out and between backpacking discourse. Thus to return to my fundamental inquiry, How is backpacking identity organised, constituted and performed? I argue that backpacker-becoming is a process whereby individual backpackers are continually negotiated through means which are spatialised, discursive, corporeal and materially embedded. My thesis stylised and
applied a posthuman networked analysis to explore how durability in backpacking identity is achieved.

To offer some final conclusions: backpacking identity both is and is not a fiction; is contingent and transcendant, fragmented yet always networked; always in the process of being constituted, can be engaged in realism and cannot; its essence can be considered a fallacy and a guarantor. And though I have attempted to employ strategic subversions of self/other, researcher/researched, backpacker/tourist, social/material many more are necessary should tourism research continue to (re) discover backpacking identities in a postmodern world. Given the current academic juncture, in which we find ourselves in an epoch of paradigmatic and critical ‘turns’, it is easy to slip into Nietzschean nihilism or reach a philosophical impasse as we necessarily grapple with a multitude of (social) possibilities. I hope this thesis in part way negotiates these turbulent times, indeed it is a product of them.

Who is to say for certain what constitutes the genesis of an idea or what represents its most faithful moment of reconstruction after the fact, but one thing is certain. It happened (Kroker 2004:4).
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