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The Individualization of Southeast Asian Tourism: Aspects of the new appreciation of low-budget backpacking as a tool for local development

1. Pacific Sunset between Asianization and Crisis: an introduction

Third World tourism, the tourism from the industrial countries of the North to the semi-periphery of the South, is booming (WTO 2000). At a share of 14,3% (1999) of international tourism, its economical and socio-cultural impact is being fully realized nowadays. No doubt, the search for the untouched exotic continues and constitutes an indispensable factor in today's western leisure society. The farther the distance, the higher the social value and prestige derived from trips to less developed countries.

Almost wherever it is viable, Third World governments are actively pursuing tourism growth in their countries. They are particularly interested in international tourism (McDonnell & Darcy 1998), believing it brings their countries numerous economic benefits including employment opportunities, small business development, and foreign exchange earnings. They tend to assume that more money is earned by attracting tourists who can afford luxury goods and services, despite the fact that this often leads to a country's dependence on imported products, foreign investment, and expatriate skills, resulting in repatriation of resultant profits (Baskin 1995). But those financial benefits received from luxury tourism developments in the Third World very rarely "trickle down" to be of any significance to people at grassroots level.

	International Arrivals (in Mio.)				Average Annual Growth (in %)
	1995	2000	2010	2020	1995–2020
Europe	336	393	527	717	3,1
East Asia & Pacific	81	93	195	397	6,5
North-/South America	110	130	190	282	3,8
Africa	20	27	47	77	5,5
Middle East	14	18	36	69	6,7
South Asia	4	6	11	19	6,2
World	565	668	1006	1561	4,1

Source: WTO 2000

Table 1: World Tourism Regions

Southeast Asia's growing popularity among tourists from all over the world is reflected by the world's highest growth of tourism, making the region one of the most popular tourist destinations of the 90s (cf. table 1), which Harrison (1992) predicted a decade ago.

However, European-based tourism – admittedly on a much smaller scale – has been existing for as long as 150 years, when the British tour operator Thomas Cook organized his first trips to Asia in the mid-19th century. Colonial accommodation has been popular with Dutch and British tourists since the early 20th century, whereas the first beach infrastructure dates back to 1917, when the Thai Royal family opened up the beach resort of Hua Hin. Bali, on the other hand, could boast more than 3000 international tourists p.a. in the 30s, supporting the Indonesian island's reputation as a human paradise on earth. However, the global expansion of Third World tourism did not take off before the late 60s, when long distance vacation became affordable to a wider range of people in the booming industrialized countries of the north, especially Americans and Europeans (Vorlauffer 1996). Nevertheless, western tourists only play a minor role for Southeast Asia's current tourism, since Asian tourists have come to account for 80% of the region's international tourism (Uthoff 1998). The increasing Asian middle-class, though, hasn't been in the position to replace the conventional western-style package tourist: The Asian economic crisis has been preventing a further expansion of Asian package tourism since 1997, when the breakdown of both economic bubbles and political systems successfully destroyed the myth of the Asian miracle. In Indonesia, for example, both economic experts and tour operators had expected tourism to become the main source of state revenue in the 21st century: More than four million tourists in 1996 (1986: 825.000) spent 4,7 billion US-\$ annually and provided jobs for 1,4 million Indonesians (Siebert 2002).

Meanwhile, the economic recession in the industrializing "tiger states" has led tourism development to a standstill: On the one hand, an estimated 200 million Asians are no longer willing to afford trips to and within Southeast Asia; on the other, American and European package tourism was decreasing dramatically as well, with a harsh minus of arrivals ranging from 13% to 20% (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore), a slight decrease of 2% in the Philippines and even a small increase in Thailand, whose long-established tourism infrastructure prevented a complete breakdown in 1998. Confirmed orders for 150 aircraft for Asian airline companies have been cancelled already, causing unemployment in non-touristic sectors as well – apart from beach resorts all over Southeast Asia never to be completed due to bankruptcy and lack of investor interest. Despite huge discounts and special promotion offers, tourism has been facing its worst crisis since the beginning of mass tourism thirty years ago, despite a remarkable rebound in 2000.

Country	Tourism Arrivals 1999 (in mio.)	Tourism Revenues 1999 (in mio. US-\$)	GDP-Share of international tourism (%)		Number of people employed in tourism (%)	
			2000	2010	2000	2010
Brunei	–	–	2,3	2,1	2,0	2,7
Indonesia	2,48	–	2,8	2,7	2,3	3,3
Cambodia	0,26	–	3,9	4,0	2,9	5,6
Laos	–	103	6,3	5,7	5,6	6,5
Malaysia	7,93	2.822	3,8	2,9	3,2	3,3
Myanmar	0,20	35	2,7	2,5	2,4	2,9
Philippines	2,17	2.534	3,7	4,5	3,4	5,5
Singapore	6,95	4.362	4,5	3,4	3,1	5,6
Thailand	8,65	6.680	6,3	6,3	5,0	8,9
Vietnam	1,88	–	2,2	1,6	1,9	1,9

Source: WTO 2000

Table 2: International Tourism in Southeast Asia

However, on closer examination we find that the importance of tourism development for national welfare considerably differs from country to country (cf. table 2). Actually, Thailand's leading position in regional tourism becomes obvious in terms of tourism employees – almost every eighth Thai might be working in tourism by 2010, compared to a stable 1,9% in Vietnam, which was supposed to be the boom country of the early 21st century. Thailand's top position is also reflected by tourism's role for the national GDPs: At 6,3% (2000, 2010) no future growth is expected; in most Southeast Asian countries (except Cambodia and the Philippines), however, the share in question is supposed to decline, which might suggest a future concentration on non-touristic business fields: Tourism has lost its reputation as a never-ending story of success.

2. Spoiler or Saviour: Individual tourism as the 'golden goal' of tourism planning?

"Yes, we went on a trek. We rafted on a river. Very boring. I want to do something different, and everybody wants to do something different. But we all do the same thing. There is no – ah – adventure." (Garland 1997: 19)

When Alex Garland, an experienced backpacker himself, wrote the novel *The Beach* in 1997, backpacker critique was released from narrow scientific circles to offer public insight. Starring Leonardo di Caprio, the film became a blockbuster soon after, describing the hippie lifestyle of young backpackers on their Thai dream island Ko Phee Phee – no doubt a reflection of backpacking as a travel style no longer to be denied by authorities and tour operators. However, today's average individual backpacker considerably differs from the image provided by Garland, being less escapist and more comfort-oriented than presented.

Whereas package tourism to and within Asia seems to be on the gradual decline, apparently waiting for quieter times worldwide to come, individual tourism keeps on booming (Siebert 2002). While international luxury hotels and high-price tours are badly effected by the consequences of the abrupt slowdown of the worldwide travel-mania, backpackers continue to travel around the region as they have been doing for decades. Thus, the main goal of this paper is a discussion of the transformation of low-budget backpacking tourism within this region, which must be regarded as the birthplace of mass backpacking: The first commercial underground guidebook ever covered the area as early as in the mid-70s. "Southeast Asia on a shoestring", first published in 1975 and – presently featuring 936 pages – in its 10th edition now, has established well-trodden paths from Bangkok to Bali and contributed to the rise of some sort of mass tourism on a sub-cultural level itself. This so-called "yellow bible" opened up the opportunity for international travellers to roam around the region by themselves.

Despite the lack of specific statistical data on that aspect, the trend towards individual travelling is obvious. Today's backpackers are ascribed the lead in diffusing tourism outside Europe and initiating a notable redirection of tourist arrivals to Third World countries. Fifteen years ago, every sixth arrival in the world was a youthful traveller between 15 and 29. As an example, about 50% of Thailand's tourists travel on their own, with an increasing number of youthful backpackers among them (Dearden and Harron 1994). With the dramatic decrease of (package) tours to Southeast Asia as a consequence of the Asian crisis, the regional attitude towards individual tourists may change, since they might keep at least parts of the present infrastructure running.

This paper tries to consider both pros and cons of backpacker tourism in terms of whether it promotes local level development. Based on the author's field work in Southeast Asia from 1990 to 1993 (Spreitzhofer 1995), special emphasis will be put on the socio-economic background, travel behaviour and use of local infrastructure of the post-hippie backpackers encountered a decade later in the course of further research. However, important issues such as travel motives and travel routes have been dealt with in greater detail in other papers, as well as a discussion of the hippie-based history of early backpacking and the ephemeral concept of the so-called alternative tourism in general (Spreitzhofer 1997, 1998, 2002). The concept of backpackers spearheading mass tourism has been analyzed extensively in former studies (Aramberri 1991, Butler 1990, Riley 1988) and will not be discussed in this paper, either.

The presumption that high-spending tourists bring the greatest benefits to Third World countries is generally questioned (Adler 1985, Scheyvens 2002). Does the low-budget tourism of the late 90s come up to the requirements of a 'better', socially responsible Third World tourism? Does today's individual tourism provide a chance for sustainable development, offering appropriate ways for both local and regional participation in the world's fastest growing industry? Special focus will be put on backpacking travelling in terms of its claim of offering a proper form of sustainable tourism: The aftermath of the recent economic crisis

might lead to rethinking the concept of tourism in general and a transformation of established travel modes, tourism roles and clichés.

2.1 Tacitly ignored, urgently needed: The socio-economic background of Southeast Asian backpackers

The academic literature provides clues as to how the backpacker segment can be described. In general, backpackers may thus be characterized by a preference for low-budget accommodation, an increased emphasis on meeting other people (both fellow travellers and locals) at their travel destinations, an independently organized and flexible travel schedule and considerably higher travel length. Everybody travelling differently is labelled a 'tourist'. A connecting element among this heterogeneous group of mainly young, 'alternative' travellers is thus the self-established and maintained contrast to mass (mainstream) tourism, which becomes apparent not only on subconscious levels of mutual refusal and contempt, but also on the very surface level of self-description (Jones 1992).

Members of this specific group call themselves backpackers, (budget) travellers, globetrotters, trekkers or adventurers. These terms will thus be used synonymously in the following discussion. Backpackers would hardly ever accept the term (alternative) 'tourist', since they do not regard themselves as tourists. In their opinion, only mainstream, mostly package tourists can be made responsible for the so-called coca-colonization of Third World countries. Backpackers are often keen on sharing the local lifestyle (Loker 1993: 33), citing "meeting the people" as a key motivation (Riley 1988: 325). Their recreational activities are likely to focus around nature (such as trekking), culture (village stays and more), or adventure (including river rafting or riding camels) (Rotpart 1995). This is associated with the tendency of backpackers to travel more widely than other tourists, seeking unusual or out of the way locations and/or experiences (Haigh 1995). According to Riley, "the less traveled route and more difficult way of getting there has a high degree of mystique and status conferral" (1988: 321).

At least long-term low-budget backpacking tourism in South-East Asia seems to be characterized by the dominance of male western, mostly (northern, western and central) European travellers, whose average age is about 27. This fact basically corresponds to Riley's (1988), Mazur's (1994) and Dearden and Harron's (1994) results. Furthermore, it is to support the theory that more and more young people postpone their entrance into the labour market, making use of their relative independence in terms of family constraints and responsibilities. Japanese and Taiwanese tourists, who dominate the region's package tourism sector in quantitative terms (WTO 2000), are clearly underrepresented. This indicates that the individual tourists' major origin is generally independent of a region's main tourist countries of origin. Similar results have been achieved by

a recent backpacking study in Australia (cf. Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995: 832). A striking feature is the lack of South European travellers, which could be interpreted to be due to language barriers. Only English and (partly) French and Dutch are former colonial languages within Southeast Asia and thus widely understood.

The tight budget many backpackers impose on themselves is largely related to the longer duration of their travels. Perhaps because of its association with the "hippie" and "drifter" tourism of the 60s and 70s, the backpacker segment of the tourism market has not always been welcomed by Third World regional or national governments (Cohen 1973; Erb 2000; Hall 1997; Hampton 1998; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995): Longhaired male backpackers were even denied entry into Malaysia and Singapore in the 60s (Spreitzhofer 2002). Much credence has been given to the stereotypical image of the backpacker as an unkempt, immoral, drug-taking individual (Heinen 2001: 11f). In Southeast Asia, the interest paid by most government planners to the backpacker sector is either negligible or negative. According to Hampton, this "sector is at best tacitly ignored, or at worst actively discouraged in official tourism planning" (1998: 640).

2.2 The myth of the common backpacker: Heroic adventurers, hedonistic ego-tourists or miserly invaders?

"Today's typical youthful traveler is not accurately described as a hippie, ... or an adherent to a 'counterculture'. Western society has undergone some major changes and the contemporary long-term traveler reflects them ...", as Riley (1988: 326) pointed out at the boom time of Asian tourism. Actually, the clear-cut identification of explorer types and drifter types doesn't seem to be applicable any more, since the backpacking of the late 90s appears to be no longer a phenomenon of a minority of well-defined hippie dropouts on the one hand and bourgeois adventurers on the other.

One criticism of backpackers is that, in ensuring that their funds will last for the duration of their travels, they become excessively concerned with bargain hunting (Goodwin et al. 1998). They may regard haggling as a game, to the extent that they exploit artisans and traders so desperate for a sale that they accept unreasonably low prices for their products (Bradt 1995). However, status among travellers is closely tied to living cheaply and obtaining the best 'bargains' which serve as indicators that one is an experienced traveller. Budi, an experienced tour guide, argues that the average independent tourist to Indonesia has changed somewhat in recent years: Now tourists are going to Indonesia not to see the culture or the people, but to compete with other travellers about how cheaply they can travel. They all want to be the winner, and don't realize how rude they are to local people (cited in Wheat 1995: 50).

Furthermore, their very search for authentic experiences is based on exclusion of other tourists (Jamieson 1996), which is why Mowforth and Munt suggest

that backpackers can be included in the category of the self-centred tourists they call "ego-tourists" (1998: 135). Possibly, backpackers' more lasting influence will involve the problem of seeking out new destinations but failing to understand cultural norms of appropriate behaviour in these new locales (Bradt 1995). Some suggest that backpackers simply do not care about local customs and acceptable behaviour, instead showing blatant disregard for social norms (Noronha 1999). Acting out their perceived freedom from social commitments and constraints (Jamieson 1996) may lead then to culturally and socially inappropriate behaviour. This seems to be a problem particularly in backpacker ghettos or enclaves, places where large numbers congregate to experience home comforts (from good phone and internet services to familiar foods, such as the ubiquitous banana pancake) and the company of tourists of similar mind. Such places can be mainly found in urban centres such as Bangkok (Khao San Road), Singapore (Beach Road) or Jakarta (Jalan Jaksa), working as bottlenecks of interregional transport and traveller communication.

Backpacking as just another variant of global tourism which reinforces inequitable links between the West and the Third World? Actually, the comparatively big general length of stay in Asia does not necessarily imply a longer stay at one place. As was pointed out, the actual stay at one of the traveller spots was limited to some hours or days. The desired closer contact to the local population, which was mentioned as a main difference to mainstream package tourism until the mid-80s, is not bound to be considered a general feature. "There's nothing to do in that village. And they aren't interested in us, either. Should I make friends with the becak-drivers?" (Australian female, aged 32, cited in Spreitzhofer 2002, forthcoming). Budget or "alternative" travel may be criticized as an illusion of "nice" cottage capitalism, soothing ideological anxieties while extending commercialization and the tourism industry. Rather than working towards social transformation, alternative travel seems to tinker at the edges of capitalist expansion into new market niches (Scheyvens 2002). Tourism is part of the processes of modernization and globalization, but local actors are agents in this process, and not just the recipients of modernization processes.

2.3 Positive or negative contributions to local development?

Few tourism researchers have explicitly examined ways in which individual tourists, who usually are backpackers for transport reasons, contribute to local development in Third World contexts. A body of evidence on this issue does emerge, however, when research on related issues is also scrutinized. For example, some useful ideas have been expressed about budget tourism in general, and about backpacking in Australia and New Zealand. Such evidence, as a whole, suggests that there may be much to gain from aiming "low", and providing for backpackers. However, both economic and non-economic development criteria need to be considered (cf. table 3).

Economic Development Criteria	Non-Economic Development Criteria
They spend more money than other tourists because of longer duration of visit.	Enterprises catering for backpackers are generally small and thus ownership and control can be retained locally.
Adventuresome nature and longer duration of visit means money spent is spread over a wider geographical area, including remote, economically depressed, isolated regions.	Local people gain self-fulfillment through running own tourism enterprises rather than filling in menial positions in enterprises run by outside operators.
Do not demand luxury, therefore will spend more on locally produced goods (such as food) and services (transport, homestay accommodation).	Because they operate their own businesses, local people can form organizations which promote local tourism, giving the community power in upholding their interests and negotiating with outside bodies.
Economic benefits can be spread widely within communities as even individuals with little capital or training can provide desired services or products. Formal qualifications are not needed to run small enterprises; skills can be learned on the job.	The interest of backpackers in meeting and learning from local people can lead to a revitalisation of traditional culture, respect for the knowledge of ensuring low overhead costs and elders, and pride in traditional aspects of one's culture.
Basic infrastructure is required, therefore minimising the need for imported goods (such as the use of bamboo and thatch to create a beach stall).	Backpackers use fewer resources (like cold showers and fans rather than hot baths and air conditioning), therefore are kinder to the environment.
Significant multiplier effects from drawing on local skills and resources.	Local servicing of the tourism market challenges foreign domination of tourism enterprises.

Source: Scheyvens 2002: 152

Table 3: Backpackers' Contribution to Local Development

2.3.1 Backpacker Expenditures benefit the local entrepreneurs

A key reason behind the negative attitude of Third World governments to backpackers has been the perception that their living on a budget means they bring little revenue to the destinations. This perception has been seriously challenged, however, by research in New Zealand and Australia which found that, largely due to the longer duration of their stay, international backpackers actually spent more money than any other tourist category. In Australia, for example, a 1992 survey revealed that the average expenditure per backpacker was US\$2,667, compared to an average for all tourists of only \$1,272 (Haigh 1995: 1ff). Furthermore, backpackers spread their spending over a wider geographic area, bringing benefits to remote and otherwise economically depressed regions where other tourists rarely venture, except perhaps if they dash past in their luxury coach (Baskin 1995; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). Backpackers

can contribute significantly to local economic development because they generally purchase more locally produced goods and services than other categories of tourists (Hampton 1998; Goodwin et al. 1998; Wheeler 1999; Wilson 1997). While there are exceptions to this generality, what needs to be stressed is that in economic terms backpackers are worth more to the local economy than they commonly receive credit for. The very nature of this practice often results in their spending more money locally, while the more structured nature of package tours limits contacts with local people. For example, while package tourists are delivered to the compound of their hotel, backpackers arrive at bus and train stations where local traders have more opportunities to sell them their wares (Holden 1995).

Similarly, tourists staying in higher class seaside resorts are likely to find that they have a private beach, fenced off partly to shield the guests from local touts. Further down the beach, however, these same touts can find backpackers willing to buy a sarong, some jewelry, or a fresh pineapple. As another example, tourists visiting the Komodo National Park in Indonesia, attracted by the unique "Komodo dragon" reptile, also support this trend. Those in the highest spending category visit Komodo from cruiseships which provide all food and accommodation, so that they spend very little on Komodo; and the same applies to those who use charter boats for their visit. Budget tourists, however, use the government ferry, which necessitates a stay of at least one night on Komodo's main island, and consequently they spend two to three times more money within the park than other tourists (Goodwin et al. 1998).

2.3.2 Backpacker infrastructure requires minimal investment

Local people and products can meet the needs of backpackers largely because they do not demand luxury. Backpackers are generally not so concerned about amenities (e.g., plumbing), restaurants (e.g., western-style food), and transportation (e.g., air conditioning) geared specifically to the tastes of the mass tourist. If a budget traveller place has an appeal to western tastes (e.g., banana pancakes), it requires minimal infrastructure (Riley 1988: 323). The lack of importance of infrastructure is witnessed by "beach shacks" selling food and drink to backpackers, or families renting out rooms in their homes to backpackers, as is common practice all over Southeast Asia. These tourists may even be interested in staying in very basic accommodation, because of the adventuresome nature of this experience.

When local resources and skills are used to provide facilities for tourists, there can be important multiplier effects. On Gili Trawangan in Eastern Indonesia, for example, backpacker bungalows are built of local bamboo and concrete blocks manufactured in the village, and they are furnished with bamboo tables and chairs made in neighbouring Lombok and curtains made of the traditional *ikat* fabric (Hampton 1998: 649). Such ventures can be economically viable even

with small numbers of tourists because of low overhead costs and minimal leakages (Wall and Long 1996).

2.3.3 Backpackers are likely to support local trade

Backpackers are also likely to support certain economic enterprises developed by local communities which other tourists, because of their less flexible travel schedules, can not. For example, there are many skilled artisans in the Third World whose work is much admired by backpackers, among others. But it is these budget tourists who can decide to attend a workshop on craft manufacture, such as weaving, carving or pottery. The spread of economic benefits within communities may be greater when catering to tourists on a budget, as more community members can participate. Catering to backpackers will not usually require community members to have any formal qualifications; rather, they can develop skills on the job or build on their existing skills.

Contrary to the beliefs of many tourism policymakers, it appears that starting small can offer greater economic benefits to a community than investing in more sophisticated, capital-intensive projects. Therefore, if tourism moves "up scale" in an area, local people can lose important economic advantages they have gained. This is certainly a concern in Pangandaran, a fishing village in Java which has developed into a beach resort popular with backpackers as well as domestic tourists. Pangandaran may not retain the feeling of being a village for long, particularly as tourism development here has been identified as a major priority by the government. Major land ownership changes have started to occur with both a proposal for a golf course and the development of a five-star hotel on what was previously communal village land. Such dramatic changes will have the greatest effect on lower-class people: the poor. Many of them live on and cultivate household crops on *tanah negara* (the nation's land) which appears slated for tourism development. They face the possibility of being displaced from their homes and losing employment in their informal sector jobs as the tourism product moves up-scale and creates demands for higher standards of facilities and services (Wilkinson and Pratiwi 1995: 295).

Some governments are slowly starting to recognize the economic benefits backpackers can bring. Following the interest from tourists expected to accompany filming of the *The Beach* in Thailand, for example, the Tourism Authority of Thailand is now welcoming backpackers, largely in recognition of the fact that the nature of their spending leads to local-level jobs.

2.3.4 Backpackers could increase local participation and interest in development projects

It has been suggested that through supporting smaller players in the industry, backpackers pose a threat to such corporate domination: Given the political will

to constrain the larger players, backpacker tourism could increase local participation in real development, part of a more sustainable long-term strategy which attempts to balance local economic development needs against powerful interests wishing to build large international tourism resorts (Hampton 1998: 655). As was suggested in the case of Pangandaran, communities providing services to backpackers are more likely to retain control over their enterprises.

Controlling one's own enterprise is certainly a positive step in the direction of self-determination for people otherwise dependent on tourism for menial jobs or handouts, and appears more likely to lead to self-fulfillment. For example, there is a notable difference for an individual "... between being a cleaner in a large international hotel compared with being the owner of a small *losmen* [homestay], cooking and serving at tables in their own place" (Hampton 1998: 650). Thus, he notes further, "... low-budget tourism might be the least destructive path to follow in spite of the government's promotion of upmarket hotel development." Erb (2000) has similar concerns about plans of regional Tourism Board officers to encourage luxury resort development in the otherwise backpacker-dominated areas of Flores, Indonesia.

When communities control their own tourism enterprises, as is more common where they provide for the budget sector, they are in a better position to participate in local business or tourism organizations through which wider development goals and the well-being of their people can be promoted. In Bali, Wall and Long (1996) explain how a strong tourism organization was initiated in one neighbourhood where homestays were common. Its aims were to promote tourism in the area, to protect the local environment, and to address any issues which concerned the community, including the in-migration of outside entrepreneurs.

2.3.5 Backpacker enclaves transform run-down parts of cities

There is also evidence that the development of backpacker enclaves has transformed some run-down, crime-ridden parts of cities in the Third World. In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for example, a *kampung* (urban village) which formerly housed the red light district and was characterized by poverty is now a thriving backpacker area with numerous small businesses in a setting of well-kept lanes and houses. "The local kampung residents are in no doubt at all that the arrival of the backpackers has transformed their place for the better." (Hampton 1999: 7)

Similarly, Edward Hasbrouk (a political activist and tourism writer) has suggested that backpackers in Thailand "... are the foreign tourists least interested in, and least drawn to Thailand by, sex tourism", and that the renowned backpacker ghetto in Bangkok, Khao San Road, is the only area in this city not characterized by sex tourism (cited by Bly 2000). The backpacker tourism development could be used as the city regeneration strategy, particularly for the decline inner city area, as long as the balance between the provision of tourist

commodification and the remaining old part of city still exists (Piadaeng 2002): "The most interesting issue here is that almost all of the Southeast Asian backpacker centres are sharing some similarity in terms of tourist commodifications. Old houses, shop-houses, or other previous uses in the inner city have been converted into cheap accommodations, restaurants, pub, snack bars, internet cafes, travel agencies, and numerous kinds of back-up facilities ... It is a process of internal transformation rather than a replacement of individual components that is generally done in the form of self-organization by the locals rather than supported by the government."

A glimpse at table 4 suggests that backpacker centres have turned into, more or less, tourist theme parks.

	Bangkok	Jakarta	Ho Chi Minh-City
1. Basic Data			
Existence since	1970s	1970s	1990s
Location	central	central	central
Expanse	1 km ²	600 m ²	100 m ²
Trend	Stagnation	Stagnation	Rapid Expansion
Lingua Franca	English	English	English/French
2. Units of Low-Budget Infrastructure:			
Accommodation	9	8	5
Restaurants	21	7	4
Travel Agencies	21	—	—
Book Swaps	5	—	—
Laundries	1	—	4
Foto-/Copy-Shops	4	1	1
3. Units of General Touristic Infrastructure:			
Souvenir Shops	19	1	—
Money Exchange	10	1	—
Overseas-Call-Offices	3	1	—
Hospitals/Doctors	4	—	—
Jeweller's	6	—	—
Optician's	1	—	—
Hairdresser's	1	—	—
Boutique/Tailor's	27	7	—

Source: Fieldtrip data, in Spreitzhofer 1995

Table 4: Khao San Road (Bangkok), Jalan Jaksa (Jakarta) and Pham Ngu Lao Road (Ho Chi Minh-City): A Comparison of Urban Backpacker Enclaves

Bangkok's Khao San Road for instance, which is in the centre of the Baglampoo low-budget area, has not accidentally been chosen as the location of the prelude for Garland's novel *The Beach*. It has been the biggest South-East Asian traveller agglomeration since the 70s and constitutes a secluded western world of its own. On only half a mile length, pure budget accommodation (9 units), western-style budget food (21), low-budget travel agencies (21), copy and (second-hand) book

shops (9) as well as pure touristic infrastructure could be found (cf. Table 4). The air-con coach transport to Chiang Mai, which is Thailand's second largest town and the centre of hilltribe-trekking agencies, is offered much cheaper than any kind of public transport. This is definitely a result of the super-regional interconnection between Bangkok's guesthouse-owners and Chiang Mai's trekking agents (cf. Wheeler 1999), which is just one example for the existence of independent low-budget transport networks. Besides, there are general practitioners, dentists and hairdressers, there is even a police station.

A decade after the author's first intrinsic field work, Bangkok's backpacker ghetto is no longer an insider's tip: On June 12, 2002, more than 2750 different websites concerning Southeast Asia's major tourist road could be found in various search machines, ranging from cartoons (www.nashken.com/sketch-book/thailand/09.html), Khao San business and trade corporations (www.medialine2k.co.uk/around-khaosan/about.htm) and BBC hints (www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/alabaster/A126442) to traveller reports clearly depicting the typical cosmopolitan way of life: "... Völlig erschöpft kam ich dann um 23 Uhr in BKK an und stieg in einem Guesthouse in der legendären Khao San Road ab. Hier hat sich alles in zwei Jahren wahnsinnig verändert. Einige kleine Garküchen sind verschwunden bzw. haben den Standort gewechselt, die süße alte Schneiderin, die immer unter einem Dach aus Lumpen und riesigen Bananenblättern mit einer alten Nähmaschine saß, ist weg und musste wohl einem CD (vorher gab es nur Kopiekassetten) Stand weichen. Die Travellerszene besteht nicht mehr nur überwiegend aus verlausten zotteligen 'Haste mal 'nen Joint'-Typen, sondern man sieht immer mehr Charters-touris, jüngere Traveller, die einem bestimmten 'Traveller Trend' folgen und 'Normale'. Noch mehr Bars, Massage und Beauty-salons, Tattoo-Shops und Batikklamottenstände sind aufgetaucht. Neue Internetterminals und CDshops, die beliebten Bananapankakes und nun auch Falafelstände an jeder Ecke. Alles was man als Traveller – ob Israeli, Deutscher oder Japaner – eben so braucht. Außerdem hat sich in den Hintergassen und Höfen eine Techno-Szene etabliert, die 'wilde' mini-raves, kleine full moon parties, veranstaltet. Für mich war das wie im Kino ..." (www.geocities.com/chrisi_vietnam/KSR.htm; June 3, 2002)

It is argued that the dispersion into pure 'touristic' business reflects supply and demand, supporting the change of attitude and behaviour among today's budget travellers. The aspects of counter-culture observed by Cohen (1973) seem to have been replaced by a low-budget subculture. Copy products, ranging from fake Rolex watches to fake Benetton sportswear, are a major source of income for informal salesmen in all backpacker enclaves. It is striking that the different perception of role behaviour between package tourists and backpackers still tends to be seen as a clear-cut criterion of distinction among the respondents of the author's latest studies. Actually, low-budget travelling does no longer necessarily imply the rejection of fashion suits for the times back home after the trip, as a number of interviewees pointed out.

3. Conclusion: Give individual tourism a fair chance

"... if backpackers would like to distance themselves from the unjust face of global tourism, there's a long trek ahead ... [They] need to be more critical, more honest – and less selfishly enthusiastic – about how they currently benefit from a patently unfair global system." (Noronha 1999: 5)

Clear evidence has been provided as to the potential benefits backpackers can bring in terms of promoting local development in the Third World. As a matter of fact, the standard of education among individual tourists appears to be well above average: About a quarter of the Southeast Asian long-term travellers are university graduates and another third are senior high school graduates, as shown in former studies carried out by the author. This is why the insight into global connections and dependencies is supposed to be much easier for individual tourists than for ordinary package tourists.

Communities can provide services and products demanded by these tourists without the need for large amounts of start-up capital or sophisticated infrastructure, and they can retain control over such enterprises. Conversely, comparatively few local people have the skills, knowledge, networks, and so forth to be able to establish businesses which cater to luxury tourists, so such enterprises are often monopolized by outside owners and bring few local benefits (Spreitzhofer 2002, forthcoming). In addition, the foreign exchange brought in by backpackers often surpasses that provided by other international tourists who stay for shorter periods of time, and these expenditures are spread far more widely than most, both geographically and to marginalized social groups. This is not to suggest that this sub-market should be the main form of international tourism pursued by Third World governments. In fact, it is likely that smaller-scale, budget-oriented enterprises will exist along with larger-scale developments in many circumstances (Jenkins 1982). At the same time, for too long, Third World governments have overlooked the ways in which individual backpacker tourism may bring numerous local economic benefits to small-scale entrepreneurs and informal sector actors. Actually, there are also significant non-economic benefits which can come to communities from this form of tourism. Aiming "low" builds upon the skills of the local population, promotes self-reliance, and develops the confidence of community members in dealing with outsiders, all signs of empowerment.

However, this paper has also raised concerns about the behaviour and attitudes of Southeast Asian backpackers which, in some circumstances, can be harmful from the perspective of local peoples. This may particularly be the case in ghettos or enclaves frequented by them (Bly 2000, Piadaeng 2002). However, a simplistic analysis which asserts that they are all self-centred individuals following each other around the world on a well-trodden route in search of sex, drugs, and banana pancakes, is neither correct nor helpful. Neither is the suggestion that backpackers are necessarily the saviours of local level development in the Third World. In the past, commentators have distinguish-

hed two major limitations for local communities in engaging with tourism: the unequal distribution of benefits and the fact that control often remains with outsiders (Ashley and Roe 1998). Therefore, local communities need to be empowered with both knowledge and confidence so that they can assert some control over any backpacking tourism which occurs in their area and determine the limits of their involvement with this segment of the market.

Tourism involves both hosts and guests and responsibilities by both parties. As such, backpackers should not assume that by choosing what they see to be an alternative tourism experience, their ethics will be beyond scrutiny. Given the growing significance of the backpacker market and its impact on Third World societies, environments, and economies, further research into Southeast Asian backpacking tourism is warranted. Is it transforming into just another variant of mass, institutionalized tourism, as the author has claimed in former papers, or haven't distinct types of backpackers emerged, some of whom are quite independent and others who are more institutionalized? If so, what implications do these different types have for communities in different destination areas?

Undoubtedly, Third World tourism destinations have been incorporated into the global economic system on what are often unfair, exploitative terms. Not only in many Southeast Asian countries the tourism industry is still dominated by foreign ownership and capital with little meaningful local involvement. There are positive signs, however, which indicate that by catering to backpackers, Third World peoples are able to gain real benefits from tourism and control their own enterprises. Considering the viewpoints provided in this paper, the temporary shift to interest in individual tourism as a consequence of the Asian crisis might constitute a chance to face the transformation of backpacking, which stopped being synonymous with disapproved hippie ideologies at least two decades ago. The facilitation of regional visa and entry regulations seems to prove the increasingly liberal attitude of Southeast Asian governments to individual tourism, thus adapting to the global trend to individualize all parts of life: With the exception of Vietnam and Myanmar, valid passports are sufficient for entry into almost all states of the region at the beginning of the new decade; actually, both countries have opened up many restricted areas – traditionally first visited by individual explorer-type backpackers – within the past few years to increase tourism expenditures. A rebound of the former concentration on package tourism seems to be unlikely, since backpacking is becoming a both common and widely accepted way of travelling to Third World countries and no longer a privilege of escapist youthful long-term travellers.

Regardless of the Asian crisis, which clearly showed the dependencies on international tour operators, most regional governments – including the former communist Indochina states Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam – finally seem to have opted for international tourism to boost their economies, taking into account the acceleration of socio-cultural change caused by the spread of Lonely Planet-guided backpackers throughout the region. However, due to the globalization of communication technology, reduced censorship of local media as a consequen-

ce of international pressure groups and increasing internet resources all over the region, the role of individual tourism as a key reason for negative influence on some formerly non-touristic areas should not be overestimated any more. Many autocratic leaders such as the former Indonesian president Suharto have been pushed out of office and need no longer be afraid of backpackers roaming around areas they are not supposed to go to for aspects of human rights. Currently, Southeast Asian governments are doing their best to present their countries as safe, exotic, and politically stable destinations, where the benefits of individual tourism should be spread evenly among their inhabitants. However, the positive contribution of backpacking to sustainable development must not be overrated: The advantages to local communities will depend on the attitudes and behaviour of backpackers themselves.

Abstracts

Individuelle Reiseformen, vielfach fälschlich als Alternativtourismus bezeichnet, sind heute aus dem Tourismusaufkommen der sogenannten Dritten Welt nicht mehr wegzudenken. Südostasien gilt als die Wiege des Rucksacktourismus und ist an touristischer Dynamik derzeit weltweit unübertroffen. Ökonomische wie soziokulturelle Folgeerscheinungen dieser Art des Billigreisens wurden durchwegs negativ bewertet, bis dramatische Tourismusrückgänge – mitverursacht durch die asiatische Wirtschaftskrise der späten 90er Jahre – die Abhängigkeiten von internationalen Reiseveranstaltern und intensivem Pauschalismus in Südostasien aufzeigte. Der vorliegende Beitrag versucht eine Analyse von historischen und aktuellen Entwicklungstendenzen des regionalen Reise-marktes und stellt das Konzept des vielkritisierten Rucksacktourismus als Möglichkeit vor, ökonomisch wie sozial nachhaltige Entwicklung für breite Bevölkerungsschichten anzukurbeln.

Individual tourism, formerly often mislabelled alternative tourism, has become a well-established and mostly welcome way of travelling to Third World countries. Whereas the economic and socio-cultural consequences of low-budget backpacking in Southeast Asia, both one of the most dynamic tourism destinations and the cradle of Lonely Planet-guided travellers, were considered negative and devastating for a long time, the Asian crisis of the late 90s has made many governments rethink their dependence on international tour operators and large-scale package tourism. After a short discussion of both history and dimensions of international tourism within the region, the concept of backpacking as a form of sustainable development is introduced, which offers opportunities for grass-roots development for a wide range of people.

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Friedl, Harald. 2002. Tourismusethik. Theorie und Praxis des umwelt- und sozialverträglichen Fernreisens. Schriftenreihe Integrativer Tourismus & Entwicklung, Bd. 3. Profil, Wien-München. ISBN 3-89019-530-X.

Die Schriftenreihe „Integrativer Tourismus & Entwicklung“ versucht seit geraumer Zeit Ansätze und Beispiele zur positiven Umsetzung einer nachhaltigen Entwicklung aufzuzeigen. Vorliegendes Buch, das in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Zentrum für Tourismus und Entwicklung (Respect) entstanden ist, greift eine so umstrittene wie vielschichtige Thematik auf: Die Tourismusethik von Reisenden und Bereisten, die der zunehmenden Dynamik der globalen Verflechtung auch im touristischen Bereich ausgesetzt ist und einer Vielzahl von Assoziationen unterliegt. Führen Reisen in die Dritte Welt in eine ökologische und soziale Sackgasse oder überwiegen die ökonomischen Chancen? Harald Friedl, Grazer Reiseleiter und Publizist, weiß nach zahlreichen Reisen wohl, wovon er spricht – sein interdisziplinärer Ansatz verbindet historische und philosophische mit ökologischen und praxisrelevanten Gesichtspunkten, wobei die Frage nach der individuellen Verantwortung des Reisenden genauso aufgeworfen wird wie Aspekte von deren Durchsetzbarkeit in einer globalisierenden Branche. Neben den dargestellten regionalen Unterschiedlichkeiten werden verallgemeinerbare Trends vor dem Hintergrund weltweiter Modernisierungs- und Globalisierungsprozesse herausgearbeitet: Arm gegen Reich? Die Nutznießer weltweiter Mobilität stehen immer noch jenen gegenüber, die in marginalisierten Ländern der Peripherie zunehmend härteren Lebensbedingungen ausgesetzt sind. Tourismus als Motor nachhaltiger Entwicklung? Friedl ist um ideologiefreie Sensibilität bemüht, die auf 256 Seiten in einem bunten Spektrum von tourismusrelevanten Aspekten ausgebreitet wird: In elf Großkapiteln präsentiert er Sichtweisen und Definitionen von Tourismus, beschreibt die historische Entwicklung von der „Grand Tour“ bis zum „Hybridtourismus“ und „Golftourismus“; anschließend folgt eine hervorragende Zusammenstellung der Schattenseiten des Ferntourismus aus ökonomischer, soziokultureller und ökologischer Sicht vor dem Hintergrund internationaler Zwänge und Vernetzungen – die Rolle der Akteure der internationalen Tourismuspolitik (Welttourismusorganisation, Welthandelsorganisation, Vereinte Nationen, Kommission für nachhaltige Entwicklung) wird dabei genauso thematisiert wie die Bedeutung von Urlaubern und Reiseleitern als Verantwortungsträger: Erst im letzten Abschnitt des Buches erfolgt dann – gestützt auf 150 Seiten tourismusrelevanter Abhandlung davor – der Übergang auf die theoretischen Grundlagen der Tourismusethik, was einen unübersehbaren stilistischen und inhaltlichen Schnitt darstellt. Die etwas spröde, jedoch fachlich fundierte Annäherung an Friedls Hauptanliegen bildet jedoch nur den Brückenschlag für praxisrelevante Tipps und Prinzipien, die Reisen als Vehikel für mehr Erlebnisqualität präsentieren: „Respekt, der Schlüssel zur Begegnung

mit der Fremde“ (S. 211) wird zur Grundlage für sozialverträgliches Reisen, das Gefühl für Umwelt und Natur genauso beinhaltet wie die Kunst des Handelns und Kaufens: „Reisenden Hedonisten akzeptable Verhaltensnormen nahe zu bringen ist die große Herausforderung für die angewandte Ethik“, meint der Autor abschließend. Wer die Grundlagen und Konsequenzen seiner Reisetätigkeit kennen und reflektieren will, dem sei dieser „Wegbegleiter“ jedenfalls dringend empfohlen.

Günter Spreitzhofer

Spreitzhofer, Günter, Martin Heintel. 2000. Metro-Jakarta. Zwischen Nasi und Nike. Suhartos „Neue Ordnung“ als Motor der Regionalentwicklung in Westjava? Peter Lang: Frankfurt-Bern-New York. 257 Seiten, zahlreiche Abbildungen, Tabellen und Fotos. ISBN 3-631-35992-6.

Das dynamische Wachstum des Megastädte des Südens rückt vermehrt in den Mittelpunkt vor allem ökonomischer Studien, die wachsende Zusammenhänge zwischen Urbanisierung, (gezielter) Internationalisierung und (unvermeidlicher) Globalisierung thematisieren. Der Großraum Jakarta, als *Jabotabek* oder *Metro-Jakarta* mit einer Bevölkerung von über 20 Millionen bereits heute die größte Stadtregion Südostasiens, war im Gegensatz zu vergleichbaren Metropolen wie Bangkok oder Manila – jedoch bis dato nie Ziel einer umfassenden Untersuchung zu den aktuellen Phänomenen der ökonomischen, ökologischen und sozio-kulturellen Transformation, mit denen sich Hauptstadtregionen der Dritten Welt verstärkt konfrontiert sehen.

Der vorliegende Buchbeitrag versucht – abgelöst von den spezifischen Fragestellungen eines interdisziplinären mehrjährigen Forschungsprojektes unter der Leitung des Instituts für Geographie und Regionalforschung („Migration in Megastädte der Dritten Welt – Vergleichende Fallstudien in ausgewählten Kulturkreisen“) – einen möglichst umfassenden Einblick in die Entwicklung einer (vormals scheinbar grenzenlosen) Boomregion zu geben, deren enorme Wachstumsdynamik bis Mitte der neunziger Jahre nicht zuletzt ein Produkt der stadtgestalterischen Ambitionen von Langzeitpräsident Suharto war: Der Schwerpunkt der Betrachtung liegt auf der Amtszeit des wohl letzten wahren Potentaten der Region, die als Periode der 'Neuen Ordnung' (1967-1998) sowohl (zunächst) den Modernisierungsschub der Metropole wie auch (zuletzt) die Labilisierung des Vielvölkerstaates nachhaltig mitbestimmte.

Jakarta, das niederländisch-koloniale Batavia, wurde unter Suharto, dem selbsternannten „Bapak Pemangnan“ (Vater der Entwicklung) zum Zentrum internationaler Investition und Aushängeschild des Vielvölkerstaates Indonesien gepusht: Zuletzt flossen über 70% aller ausländischen Investitionen in die Stadtregion an der Jakarta Bay, deren visionäre Zukunftsprojekte („Waterfront City“, über 30 Reissbrett-Satellitenstädte im suburbanen Raum) angesichts der

steigenden politischen und ökonomischen Fragilität zur Zeit kaum realisierbar scheinen. Die Studie beleuchtet die widersprüchliche Entwicklung der metropolitenen Hauptstadtregion Jabotabek während dreier Jahrzehnte Autokratie: Zwischen Kampung und Korruption, Burgerking und Becak, Nasi Goreng und Nike – eingebettet in nationalstaatliche wie demographische Rahmenbedingungen versuchen die Autoren, Zusammenhänge von ökonomischer Liberalisierung, ökologischer Degradierung und sozio-kultureller Transformation genauso aufzuzeigen wie die Zukunftsperspektiven der ‚Primate City‘, die als zentrale Industrieregion von der südostasiatischen Wirtschaftskrise 1997 hauptbetroffen war. Die Fülle an akribisch recherchierten Fakten gibt dem Werk bisweilen einen recht journalistischen Touch, wenn nicht nur wie üblich – Graphiken und Abbildungen, sondern auch Cartoons und Fotomaterial zur Visualisierung herangezogen werden; leider kann die Druckqualität mancher Bilder nicht überzeugen. Die Zielgruppe des Buches scheint jedenfalls auf eine Leserschaft ausgerichtet, die nicht nur auf einen engen wissenschaftlichen Zirkel beschränkt ist. Eine 30-seitige abschließende Bibliographie zu den Themenverknüpfungen „Indonesien – Urbanisierung – Jakarta“ geht über das Wesen eines üblichen Literaturverzeichnisses deutlich hinaus und vermag die Bestandsaufnahme indonesischer Zukunftsperspektiven noch zu vertiefen.

Spreitzhofer und Heintel zeigen Trends und Perspektiven der Stadtentwicklung Metro-Jarkantas genauso auf wie nationalstaatliche und regionale Rahmenbedingungen in Java, einem der großen Ballungsräume der Welt: Auf nur sechs Prozent der Staatsfläche leben über zwei Drittel der 220 Mio. IndonesierInnen eine Verschärfung der Disparitäten in dem südostasiatischen Archipel der 16.000 Inseln scheint unausweichlich, wie die beiden Autoren auch abschließend folgern. „Angesichts kontinuierlicher Globalisierung und politischer Labilität erscheint der angestrebte Aufstieg zur ‚Global City‘ ungewiss wie nie zuvor.“

Gabriele Achatz

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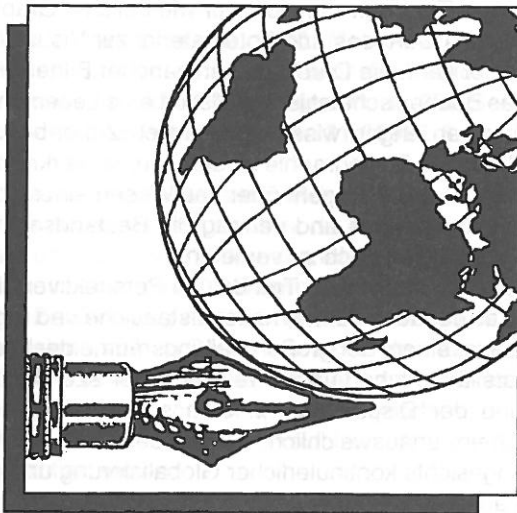
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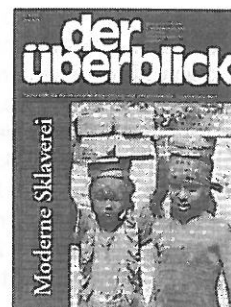
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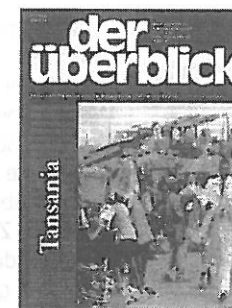
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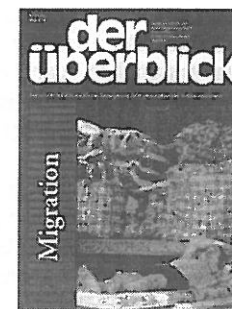
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