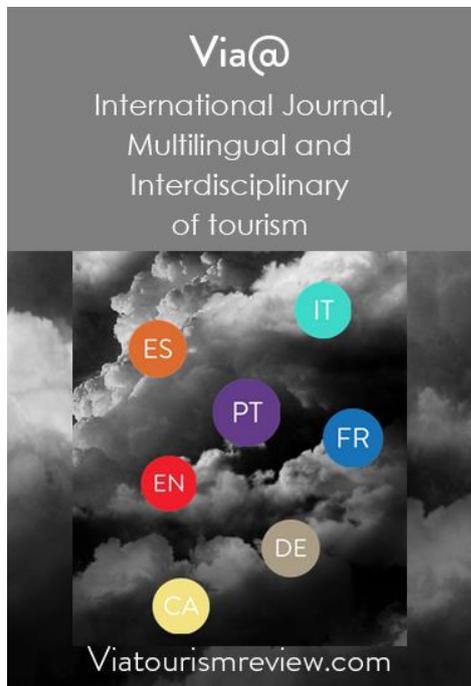# Via@ Tourism Review

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The backpackers' "round the world" trip, standardised journey?

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Abstract

At times portrayed as a dissenter against mass tourism, the backpacker is at the same time described as being bound to his own illusions of freedom and reduced to use pre-determined routes and accommodation. Based on the observation of a gap between the backpacker's ideals and his practices, the article examines the standardisation of backpacking by studying an emblematic subgroup of this type of journey: backpackers on a "round the world" trip. Through the use of a sample group of profiles which turn out to be as diverse as backpackers are in general, the survey carried out in Thailand by means of questionnaires and interviews enable us to examine the standardisation of routes and the stakes surrounding the planning of the trip. The article reveals that routes are structured by the aviation network and that they are strongly standardised in certain areas of the world, such as in Southeast Asia, where enclaves and "beaten tracks" are plentiful. Planning still appears to be hardly framed by commercial offers, and depends largely on the individual project of the backpacker on a "round the world" trip, which we particularly interpret here according to the relation to work. The relation to place which is produced by these

Key words: *"Round the world", backpackers, flashpackers, Southeast Asia, routes, planning*

Introduction

Social science research which focusses on "backpacking" expresses divergent views on the normative value associated with this practice. At times portrayed in the wake of the *routard*[1] as a dissenter of mass tourism, and more largely, of the Western consumer society, the backpacker is at the same time described as being bound to his

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[1] "*Routard*" is a French word which refers to a person travelling by foot or hitchhiking on a low budget. The term was highlighted by the success of the travel guide "*Le Guide du Routard*", which was first published in 1973. (translator's note based on the definition by the "*Larousse*" dictionary)

own illusions of freedom and reduced to use pre-determined routes and accommodation (Demers, 2012, p. 86). According to E. Cohen (2004), there is a gap between the ideal which colours the backpackers' discourse, and their practices. The quest for authenticity related to the model of the drifter[2] identified in the 70s (Cohen 1972) might have lost weight vis-a-vis practices which are more related to a search for an entertaining experience of the world. The idea may no longer be to seek a better place to live, but to take a break. And if the anti-tourist attitude is one of the very principles of the backpacker's identity building (Welk 2004), it does not prevent the latter from going through tourist enclaves which are specific to backpackers, connected to each other by "beaten tracks" (Richards and Wilson 2004a). Throughout research, which has been increasing since the 1990s, one can observe an evolution of the very notion of the phenomenon, "from a de-marketing concept to a marketing label" (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004, p. 61), marking the integration of backpacking into a massifying market.

If researchers underline the increasingly standardised dimension of backpacking, this practice remains loaded with imagination referring to a feeling of freedom, a major element of the social construction of the phenomenon which moreover ensures its attractiveness (Richards and Wilson 2004b). One term stands out in this vision: the "round the world" trip. The expression evokes a form of finiteness which confers a positive and important status. It not only evokes the idea of a roaming which embraces the shape of the Earth, but also the possibility of seeing it all, of exploring all cultures, landscapes, and other objects of alterity, the one after the other, within the same trip. Using stories of "round the world" trips collected on blogs, J.G. Molz (2010) shows how these backpackers perform "global geographies" which both produce and consume differences throughout the same journey. "Round the world" trips have also become tourism products offered by airline companies and travel agencies, and some blogs are practically tourist guides for the "round the world" trip.

The article aims to question this gap between ideal and practice in view of the potential specificity of backpackers on a "round the world" trip. We will therefore base ourselves on two features related to the drifter's ideal, from which the backpackers' contemporary practices seem to move away: the search for new destinations, and the lack of planning. Are backpackers on a "round the world" trip more liable to go off the beaten track, or on the contrary, do they reinforce the dynamics related to enclaves and pre-determined routes? Do they organise the space-time of their journey in a more planned manner? In short, could the "round the world" trip also be largely standardised?

This article first proposes to question the specificity of backpackers on a "round the world" trip by looking at a broader sample group of backpackers. The socio-demographic data collected within the framework of one same survey enabled us at first to assess the strong heterogeneity of this sub-group, reflecting backpackers in general. We thereafter addressed the two issues related to the drifter's ideal which are called into question: the standardisation of routes and the planning of the trip. The recourse to routes collected in a precise manner and within the framework of in-

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[2] The typical ideal of the drifter proposed by E. Cohen in 1972, then developed in 1973, corresponds to a tourist who ventures off the beaten track, with no defined route, planning or travel objective, and who tries to live like and amongst the populations which he meets.

depth interviews enables us to emphasise a standardisation reflecting backpacking in general, but which needs to be qualified in the view of the diversity of profiles.

A mixed survey protocol

These results come from a survey conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Thailand. It lead to the collection of 141 questionnaires in places dedicated to sociability, in the tourist streets of the Kao San Road district, in 14 guest-houses in Bangkok and 4 on Ko Phangan, which were differentiated according to their cost and location. This sample group of 141 people is composed of 21 couples, 7 duos of friends, and 85 people travelling mainly alone. The respondents, identified as backpackers, were selected on the criteria of a journey lasting more than 3 months and passing through at least 2 countries. The proposal for a questionnaire was made at random in public places and in a more targeted manner in guest-houses in order to reflect the composition of the profiles. The questionnaires tackled the backpacker's demographic and socio-professional characteristics, as well as the journey and past mobilities of the person. After collecting all of the stages of the respondents' routes, the questionnaire was followed in 48 cases by semi-structured in-depth interviews, particularly within the framework of an observation in the guest-houses. The approach is thus mixed, combining systematic and ethnographic data. This article focusses in particular on 23 of its 141 backpackers, which can be isolated from the others because they go or will go through at least 3 parts of the world during their journey, the Asia-Pacific being regarded as one part of the world[3]. The stake related to this absolutely imperfect definition of the "round the world" trip is precisely to use it as a tool in order to discuss the experiences of these individuals. Though it does not enable us to generalise, the size of the group makes it possible to grasp the experience related to the backpacking trip through a specific angle.

Who goes on the "round the world" trip?

For about ten years, various researchers have been pointing out the problem of the use of the term "backpacker" with regards to covering a diversity of situations (Cohen 2004; Hampton 2013). Whether this diversity is increasingly strong, or whether it has been a blind spot of the first observations in this area of research, it is necessary to take it into consideration in order to sharpen the knowledge of the phenomenon and to replace it in the broader progress of mobility studies in relation to globalisation. The backpackers phenomenon considered in its diversity finds for instance a relevant place in research relating to lifestyle mobilities (Duncan, Cohen, and Thulemark 2013), lifestyle migrations (Benson and O' Reilly 2009; Benson and

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[3] The routes of the backpackers met in Thailand go very regularly through Australia, yet without them falling into a "round the world" project. It was thus considered more relevant to isolate a more specific part going through other continents, in particular Africa or America.

Osbaldiston 2014) or privileged migrations (Croucher 2012). At the crossroads between tourism and migration, such research examines the international mobilities of profiles as different as global nomads (Kannisto 2014) or pensioners on international migration (King, Warnes, and Williams 1998), individuals which have in common the search for a better living environment and stem from relatively rich national contexts.

Collecting questionnaires makes it possible to draw up a diversified image of the backpackers we met in Thailand, thereby corroborating the results of recent research. The backpacker, a young student, European, white, stemming from the upper middle class, is no longer the only typical figure which can cast light on this travelling style. In terms of nationality, Hamzah Muziani (2006) underlines the increasing presence of backpackers of non-Western and specifically Asian origin. According to Peggy Teo and Sandra Leong (2006), the classical representation of the backpacker as being white has largely hidden these non-Western groups from local populations in the destinations, and also from researchers who, being generally Westerners, have focused on travellers resembling themselves. Social origins also demand attention. For instance, the media has recently covered the departure of members of the French working class, identified as "young people from the *banlieue*" [suburban ghettos], to spend extended holidays in Thailand (Ouamrane 2012). Finally, it is now acknowledged that one of the recent evolutions of the phenomenon is the emergence of flashpackers, portrayed by J. Jarvis and V. Peel (2010) as independent travellers, older than 25, travelling within the framework of a break in their career, or of an extended holiday. The latter have more resources at their disposal, but seek to travel like backpackers.

One could suppose that the practice of the "round the world" trip corresponds to a sub-group within this diversity. The fact of travelling through several continents and not just one part of the world indeed implies a cost, time, and an aptitude for mobility and the appropriation of places with very varied cultures. If backpackers on a "round the world" trip show a consistent socio-demographic profile, one could then suppose that beyond a global scale route, they would share specific practices and a common vision of travel. Summarised in table 1, the results of the survey show that within the group of backpackers on a "round the world" trip, diversity is in fact a generalised trait. Based solely on a group of 23 people, these results cannot be generalised to all backpackers on a "round the world" trip. They make it possible to grasp the composition of our sample, a tool for analysing the ethnographic survey.

In terms of nationality, the group of 23 backpackers on a "round the world" trip comprises a vast majority of Europeans, in particular Britons, but as in the general group, there is also a North American, Asian and South American presence. In terms of travelling situation, the profile of men alone is even more dominant in the group of backpackers on a "round the world" trip than in the general sample, and the "couple" situation appears in both cases in 2nd position. The median age is higher in the group of backpackers on a "round the world" trip: 29 years old, whereas it is 26 for the general sample group. This age corresponds with the professional situation of the backpackers who we met: predominantly workers who were on a break or had quit their job. A proportion which is rather close to the backpackers of the general case were still connected to their studies, whether travelling before, during or right after them. In the case of the backpackers on a "round the world" trip, there are fewer students but more people working online. The socio-professional categories of

the respondents who worked are varied but largely representative of the middle class, combining intermediate professions, white collar and educated professionals, and employees. Within the group of backpackers on a "round the world" trip there were no blue-collar workers, while only 5 backpackers of the general sample group were in that situation. Finally the level of studies is relatively high in both cases with a majority of backpackers who have attended higher education, mainly up to bachelor's degree.

	All interviewed backpackers (141)	**Backpackers on a "round the world" trip (23)**
Nationalities	-**100 Europeans** (of which 25 Britons) -14 North Americans (of which 1 South African with dual nationality) -10 Asians -7 South Americans -6 Middle Easterners -4 Australians	-**17 Europeans** (of which 7 Britons) -2 North Americans (of which 1 South African with dual nationality) -2 Asians (Japanese and Korean) -1 Chilean -1 Israeli
Age	Mean: 27,8 years old Median: **26** years old	Mean: 28,3 years old Median: **29** years old
Travelling situation	Man: **52** Woman: 33 (of which 1 with a child) Couple: 42 (of which 1 with a child) Duo: 14	Man: **13** Woman: 3 Couple: 7 Duo: 0
Professional situation	Studies: 60 Work (break or stop): **73** Online work: 6	Studies: 6 Work (break or stop): **14** Online work: 3
Level of studies	Secondary school (2nd cycle): 45 Short sup. cycle or bachelor's degree: **68** Master's degree: 26	Secondary school (2nd cycle): 4 Short sup. cycle or bachelor's degree: **15** Master's degree: 4

**Figure 1. Overview of the characteristics of the backpackers
on a "round the world" trip compared with those
from the whole group of backpackers we met.**
Source: B. Le Bigot, 2014-2015 survey in Thailand.

Within our sample, isolating the backpackers whose journey passes through at least 3 continents does not enable us to find a specific socio-demographic profile enabling us to interpret their travelling style, except for a similarity with the flashpacker profile, which is a little older. This sub-group is greatly diversified, reflecting backpackers in general, and it is by concentrating on this diversity that we propose to analyse the standardisation of their practices.

On the world's "beaten tracks"?

G. Richards and J. Wilson (2004a) underline the emergence of pre-determined routes, or "beaten tracks", which connect the enclaves where backpackers gather.

The discovery of new destinations and thus the quest for travelling "off the beaten track" is however indeed part of the drifter's ideal, still permeating the discourse. What is the case for backpackers on a "round the world" trip? Does the fact of passing through several continents impose more logistical constraints related to transport? Does this exert pressure on the latter, leading them to fly over places in a more superficial manner and thus to end up all the more frequently in enclaves?

The influence of air routes

The main routes of the first backpackers[4] are well known: they followed in the footsteps of the hippies of the 60s, setting off from Europe to finish up in Kathmandu or Goa (Cowherd, 2010; Lagadec, 2003). The "route to India"[5] or "hippy trail" was popularised by tourist guides, notably through the first edition of the *"Guide du Routard"*, "From the Middle East… to India"[6], or through the first edition of the "Lonely Planet", "Across Asia on the Cheap"[7], both published in 1973. Since the 80s, these routes have also become served by air routes. However, as N. Cattan (2004) explains, the aviation network shows a great polarisation, accentuated since the 80s. The liberalisation of air transport policies tends to eliminate the concept of transport with direct links, in favour of connections via air hubs.

Backpackers on a "round the world" trip widely use air transport due to the distances involved to reach various parts of the world. One can therefore make the assumption that the main air traffic lanes have an effect on their routes, in particular because of the variation of costs. The websites of the 3 international air alliances all feature route simulators by which it is possible to calculate the cost of ones' "round the world" trip. They sometimes propose standard routes, as on the site of the alliance Oneworld (figure 1) which shows routes comprising 3, 4 or 6 continents according to a range of increasing prices. The simulations enable us to note that the least expensive routes follow the main air lanes on which a strong competition of prices is exerted. These flows connect Europe to North America, North America to the Pacific, and the Pacific to East Asia, thus excluding Africa, part of Asia and South America.

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[4] In the original text, the specifically French term *"routards"* is used (see footnote 1). (T.N.)

[5] In the original text in French, this route is called « *route des Zindes* » and refers to its naming by the founders of the famous French travel guide *"Le Guide du Routard"* (see footnote 1). (T.N.)

[6] Michel Duval and Philippe Gloaguen, *Le guide du routard. Moyen-Orient...Inde*, Gedalge, 1973.

[7] Tony and Maureen Wheeler, *Lonely Planet*, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, 1973. This book is often referred to by backpackers as a bible and its updated version, *Southeast Asia on a shoestring*, is still very much used.

Niveau 1 : 26 000 miles

Los Angeles – Melbourne – Perth – Kuala Lumpur – Paris – Londres – Los Angeles

Global Explorer - 26,000 miles

**Figure 2. Example of the least expensive route suggested
by air alliance Oneworld**
Source: https://www.oneworld.com/flights/round-the-world-fares/global-explorer,
visited on April 7th, 2016)

Collecting the backpackers' precise routes makes it possible to compare these structural constraints of the air market with real practices. Figure 2 presents the routes of the 23 backpackers on a "round the world" trip who we met during the survey. It enables us to spot concentrations, primarily in Europe and Southeast Asia, which can be explained in particular by the predominantly European origin of the backpackers and the location of the survey in Thailand. More precisely, Europe appears as a criss-crossed destination: the "round the world" trip is an opportunity to go through several countries overland. A series of destinations take shape, in particular through the journeys of Megan and Donan (a 29 year old North American and a 36 year old Briton) travelling by bicycle, and Govert (a 32 year old Dutchman) travelling by car. The map also shows that Africa and South America are only partly explored: the stages are primarily located in Southeast Africa (South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia) and in western South America (Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile). The United States was also crossed overland, by train from Los Angeles for Frans (a 32 year old North American born in South Africa with dual nationalities), by mini-van for Mike (a 24 year old Briton), and New York appears as a crossing point for several backpackers as it is connected to various destinations.
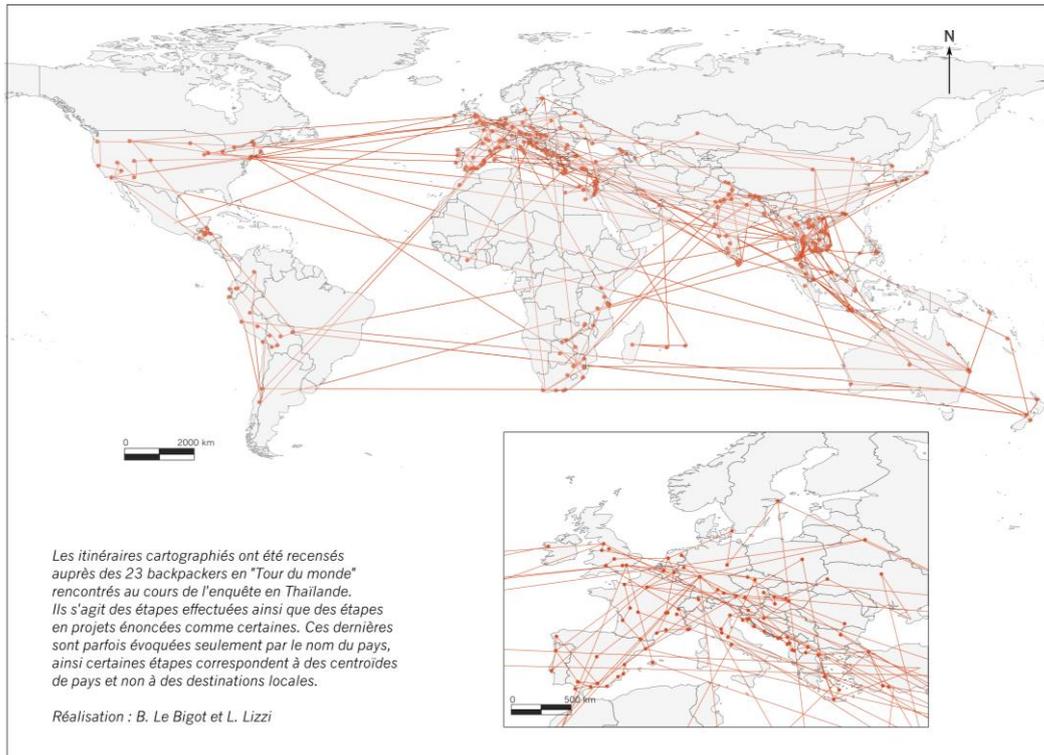
Figure 3. Map of the routes of backpackers on a "round the world" trip.
Source: B. Le Bigot, 2014-2015 survey in Thailand.

The mapped routes were collected from the 23 backpackers on a "round the world" trip whom we met during the survey in Thailand. They correspond to the stages which were completed as well as those they intended to complete. The latter are sometimes alluded to merely by the name of the country; thus certain stages correspond to centroids of countries and not to precise local destinations.

These flows show an original facet of the links which are involved in structuring world space. Just like with financial flows, the network is composed of articulations and interdependencies. The major tourist regions appear, connected together via international air hubs, notably London, New York, Dubai, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok, which take part in the standardisation of routes. Several of these cities are "logistic" destinations where backpackers do not stay. Some destinations are more atypical, such as the Ivory Coast where Cosme and Élise (a 30 year old French man and a 33 year old French woman) meet up with Élise's expatriated father and brother, or the Solomon Islands, which Frans gets to via Australia, and which he describes as "the world's least touristic destination", associated to his childhood dream.

> **The "round the world" trip of the working holiday visas, influence on routes and inequality in access to travel**
>
> Many factors have influence on routes on the global scale, among which country access policies. On this last point, several countries have signed bilateral agreements which allow the access to working holiday visas for nationals of a restricted number of countries and who are younger than 30. These visa policies trace the lines of power of a world divided up between those who have the right passport to embark on a broad range of travel experiences, and those who do not. A Frenchman can for instance stay for one year in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong. These opportunities have a considerable influence on backpackers' routes, in particular whereas the connections between Australia, New Zealand and Southeast Asia are concerned. Some backpackers, such as Hugo, even consider visiting these countries the one after the other, on a working holiday visa "round the world" trip:
>
> "You know that being French enables us to go to so many different places! We can go to Korea, Singapore, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Japan, etc. With a working holiday visa you can live in all those countries during one year. I would like to go to them all, and I must do it before being 30 because after that it's not possible anymore. Fortunately I finished my studies early."
>
> <div align="right">Hugo, a 23 year old Frenchman of Vietnamese origin, has been travelling since 4 months in Asia after an internship in New York to end his master degree in management.</div>

Enclaves and beaten tracks in Southeast Asia

E. Cohen (2009) refers to the existence of a "mental map" of destinations which backpackers share. Several of the interviewed backpackers underlined the difference in the way one can travel in different parts of the world and in particular the difficulty in Southeast Asia to get off these "beaten tracks". The "mental map" might thus be more or less structured according to the territory which one goes through. Markus particularly interprets this issue in relation to how familiar one is with the local language.

> "Asia for example that is not dangerous, but it's so crowded, and all the tourists are in the same place, and that's like, the only place is hostel or stuff like that. In Southeast Asia you're more stuck in one path. Well, if you are in South America you don't have to do that. It's a lot easier, because, if you are in Thailand, you pretty much have to speak Thai if you want to travel out of the beaten track, well if you travel in a English speaking country, where like the rural inhabitants all speak English, it's easier to get to places where you shouldn't be. Like where there is not tourists. Different kinds of adventures. It's more... I can feel it's more adventurous to travelling like Canada than travelling in Malaysia."
> Markus, a 23 year old Swede travelling since 14 months, took on a series of small jobs in Norway after secondary school in order to save money and travel.

Figure 3 makes it possible to compare the destinations of the whole group of backpackers who we met with those of the sample group of backpackers on a "round the world" trip through a selection of four very touristic countries of Southeast Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Burma. Whether they are destinations in themselves or logistic crossing points, the well-known backpacker enclaves clearly stand out: in Thailand, long-standing destinations such as Bangkok, the southern islands and beaches, and the northern enclaves which emerged more recently such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Pai (Cohen 2006; Hampton 2013). Capitals are strong crossing points – Hanoi, Vientiane, Phnom Penh - and in Burma, the two main cities of Mandalay and Yangon. Leisure, partying or cultural destinations such as Luang Prabang, Halong Bay, Shianoukville and Siem Riep (Angkor temple), are among the backpackers' main destinations. Overlapping the destinations of the whole group of backpackers with those of the backpackers on a "round the world" trip enables us to confirm the assertions expressed previously: the latter go through the same enclaves as the other backpackers. Plotting the routes made it possible to detect three main itineraries, leaving from Bangkok[8] towards Northern Thailand, Southern Thailand, and Siem Riep in Cambodia. The backpackers on a "round the world" trip also go through destinations which could be emerging enclaves: East Vietnam and the surroundings of Shianoukville in Cambodia. There are only two destinations which solely appear on the routes of the backpackers on a "round the world" trip. Both are linked to the backpacker's acquaintance with locals. Nakhon If Thammarat on the east side of Southern Thailand, where Jason stays two weeks at a friend's place, and Edge Cho in Vietnam, which is the village where Hugo's family lives, the latter being born in Vietnam.

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[8] The force of Bangkok's centrality can also partly be explained by the location of the survey in this city.
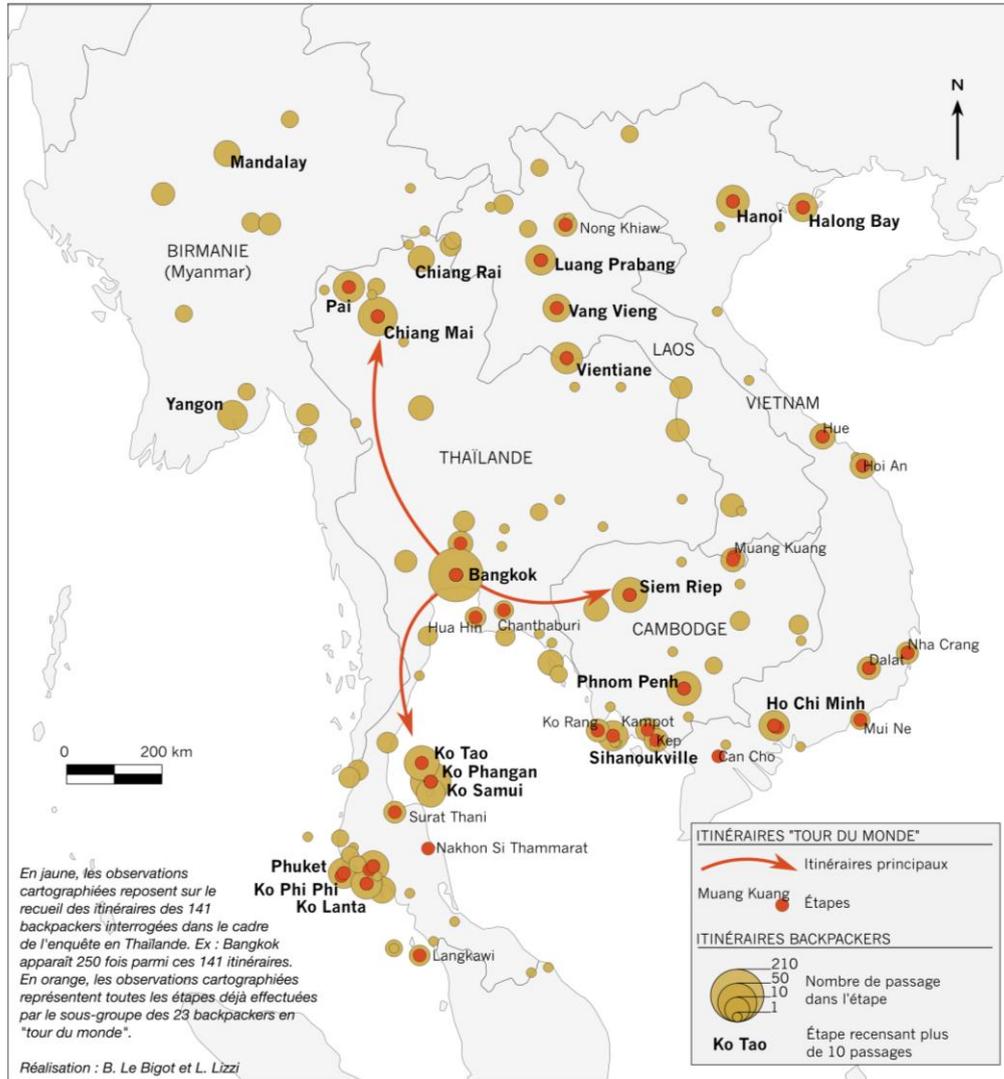
Figure 4. Map of the backpackers' destinations in Southeast Asia

Elaboration : Le Bigot et Lizzi.

ITINERAIRES « TOUR DU MONDE » = « ROUND THE WORLD » ROUTES; Itinéraires principaux = Main routes ; Etapes = Stages ; ITINERAIRES BACKPACKERS = BACKPACKERS' ROUTES ; Nombre de passage dans l'étape = Amount of visits through the same stage; Etape recensant plus de 10 passages = Stage which counts more than 10.
Birmanie = Burma; Thaïlande = Thailand; Cambodge = Cambodia.
Marked in yellow, the mapped observations are based on the routes collected from the 141 backpackers whom we questioned within the framework of the survey in Thailand. Ex: Bangkok appears 250 times among these 141 routes. Marked in orange, the mapped observations represent all the stages which were already completed by the sub-group of 23 backpackers on a "round the world" trip.

The fact of travelling on a "round the world" trip does not seem to be linked to the choice of particularly off the beaten track destinations. These routes appear to be connected to the main air and tourist flows, and follow the paths of the other backpackers in Southeast Asia. The routes overall are standardised, even though top destinations are often combined with one or more destinations linked to the personal network. This kind of more personal stage of the journey also appears throughout

the paths of the other backpackers but we can suggest that the "round the world" trip provides more opportunities to make such combinations.

Organised roaming?

Another characteristic of the drifter shaping the backpackers' ideal is the journey's spontaneity. Is there still a gap between ideal and practice in the construction of the "round the world" trip by backpackers? The diversity of profiles detected throughout the sample group of 23 backpackers on a "round the world" trip corresponds in fact to the diversity of management in this planning, thereby highlighting different relations to place.

A relative resistance to "ready to travel" offers

One of the aspects of planning a "round the world" trip is the appearance of commercial offers framing these trips. One of them, which we examine here, is the "round the world" trip offer proposed by the three international air alliances and some airline companies, which in theory makes it possible to optimise transport costs between several continents[9]. The marketing around these offers clearly shows the potential contradiction between the "ready to travel" offer and the drifter's ideal, as it highlights the unique dimension of the "round the world" trip being composed. One can read on the site of the Oneworld alliance: "Every Global Explorer trip is unique. However, we have prepared some sample itineraries to give you an idea of the possibilities."[10] And on the site of Star Alliance: "Whatever you dream of doing, and wherever you dream of going, the Star Alliance Round the World Fare is your ticket to the world."[11]

Visiting the alliances' websites, it is firstly notable that several dimensions of the trip are defined by the offer, whichever alliance is chosen. Table 2 presents as an example the conditions related to the offer proposed by Star Alliance. The duration, often equal to 3 months, 6 months or 1 year, is fully exploited by the backpackers and thus becomes relatively standardised. This was the case for the 6 backpackers on a "round the world" trip which were interviewed and had this kind of ticket. As for the distance covered, it is connected to the cost of the ticket, which was all the more expensive as the distance increased. One of the heaviest constraints pointed out by the backpackers we met is the preliminary choice of the stages of the trip. The "tourist project", i.e. the intentionality which steers the practice (MIT, 2008), is strongly influenced towards greater anticipation. The route must in addition start and end at the same location, thereby excluding the idea of a trip with no prospect for return. A maximum number of stages are authorised, in this example 16, and stopover cities can only be selected once. Certain stages or segments are compulsory,

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[9] Formulas combining several flights also exist at the level of one same continent.

[10] https://www.oneworld.com/flights/round-the-world-fares/global-explorer (visited on April 7th, 2016).

[11] http://www.staralliance.com/en/round-the-world (visited on April 7th, 2016).

thereby guaranteeing a stock of passengers to the companies which are members of the alliance.

Duration	From 10 to 365 days
Price/distance ratio	From 2800 euros for 42 000 km to 4500 euros for 63 000 km
Preparation	Route set prior to departure
Route	-Same city of departure and arrival -Max. 16 segments, max. 1 stop per city -Transatlantic and transpacific flights -Passing through the main airports of the network of the alliances' companies

Figure 5. Conditions related to the "Round the world"
offer proposed by Star Alliance.
Source: http://www.staralliance.com/en/round-the-world?view=tc.

The survey shows a low use of these offers[12] on the part of backpackers, whether it is at the level of one or several continents: only 8 out of 141 have used them. Among the backpackers on a "round the world" trip, 6 of them chose one of these offers to connect several continents. The effects of the constraints on their planning are varied, as shown by the examples of Sebastian and Tim. Sebastian is a 22 year old Chilean who started his "round the world" year in Australia, where he spent 5 months within the framework of a student exchange. He went on in Asia, passing through Bali, Kathmandu and Bangkok, and will continue in Europe. Out of 12 flights, 6 are real destinations and the 6 others are stopovers, particularly through major airports of the selected alliance's aviation network (Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, Hong Kong and Frankfurt). He does not complain about having had to choose his route beforehand, as this on the contrary enabled him to arrange in advance the encounters with his family in London and his friends in Asia. As for Tim, he is a 24 year old Briton who works online as an independent graphic designer. His trip, which also lasts one year, comprises 10 flights passing through Europe and Southeast Asia, and carries on in the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji). At the time of the survey he was on the island of Ko Phangan for 2 months, working there as a receptionist in a guest-house, renting an apartment, and was in a couple with another backpacker who he met during his trip. He said he really did not feel like leaving for Australia and regretted this forced route. Of the 6, 4 of them bring up the binding aspect of their planning but without expressing huge regret. For Elise and Cosme, the "round the world" offers were too inflexible, and they quickly bypassed it in favour of the more self-sufficient planning which the internet enables.

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[12] The contacts established with air alliances did not so far make it possible to obtain statistical data on these formulas. One cannot thus determine the evolution of the phenomenon for the moment.

Elise. "The "round the world" trip imagined lasted 6 months, costed about 1700 euros and allowed 6 stops, but certain parts of the world were too expensive, and India, where we wanted to bring the ashes of his mother, was excluded. We then checked out other companies and they proposed a bit more, but the offers were not flexible enough, and the trip would have lasted exactly 1 year…"

Cosme. "And there would have been lots of stopovers where you just stay in the airport and have no time…"

Elise. "It was like a tour operator. So he carried on searching during one whole day and one night, and realised that by looking up flights by ourselves and making our bookings progressively, instead of having 12 destinations we could have 44 of them. And as a result we are very lax where time is concerned: so, if we now consider travelling for a year, or a year and half, it might eventually become two years."

Elise and Cosme, two Frenchmen of 29 and 32 years old who have been travelling since 8 months. She continues her remote work as an illustrator and he just finished a bakery training.

Differentiated "projects": conceiving the trip with relation to work

One way of interpreting the backpackers' varied approaches to the planning of the trip is to examine these in the light of their "project", which we consider as being part of the different relations to work. The term "project" is used deliberately here, beyond the very concept of "tourist project", in reference to the "city by projects" of L. Boltanski and È. Chiapello (1999). The latter show how the new management of the 90s moulded a self-construction which is constantly re-energised by the formulation of "projects". The reference to work also makes it possible to reintegrate the long-term journey into broader societal dynamics. This relation to work is of course very strong in the case of working holiday visas, for instance in Australia. Cooper, O' Mahony and Erfurt (2004) make it clear concerning this territory that « Both national and local data show that backpackers are not 'nomads' in the sense of an unstructured travel experience, but are heavily constrained in terms of sites visited and often seek casual employment to pay for theses visits. » (p. 180).

Figure 4 makes it possible to synthesise the "round the world" experiences of the backpackers we met according to their planning, their duration and the activities undertaken in the course of their trip. Through the prism of these criteria, one can make out various "projects". For the people who pursue only leisure activities, the journey is overall rather planned and falls within an excursion. This corresponds to the "time out", mentioned by E. Cohen (2004), contributing to self-development. The job they left in the country of origin will be reintegrated on their return, such as with Frans, an engineer for NASA, or Katarina, a social worker. This job is appreciated but is put aside for a defined period of time. In the case of Elise and Cosme, Elise continues to work online along the way, but the trip is well planned and is linked up to their future life plans: to learn bread techniques throughout the world in order to open a bakery afterwards, and to learn artistic techniques in order to enrich her competences as an illustrator, or even to create a book. In these cases, this period, which is considered as rather exceptional in the course of one's life, is relatively well planned in order to guarantee its success. For some, the job left back home is linked to the trip in a cyclic way, such as is the case for Markus: for several years he has been doing small jobs in Norway over a number of months in order to

save money and go travelling afterwards. There is less planning, the trip is not considered as exceptional, it is linked up with the backpacker's life plan and gives meaning to the periods of work. The more the duration lengthens, the less planning matters; the trip becomes the life plan for an unspecified period of time, in which work is incorporated along the way. It is for instance the case for Mike, who has been travelling for more than 4 years, going from one job to another. In almost all cases, whether the stay is planned or not, the backpackers on a "round the world" trip mention a period of several months preceding the journey, or even several years, during which their life in their country of origin was constrained by having to save up for the trip. The relation between work and travel thus appears to be a particularly inspiring approach in order to widen one's perspective of the backpacker.
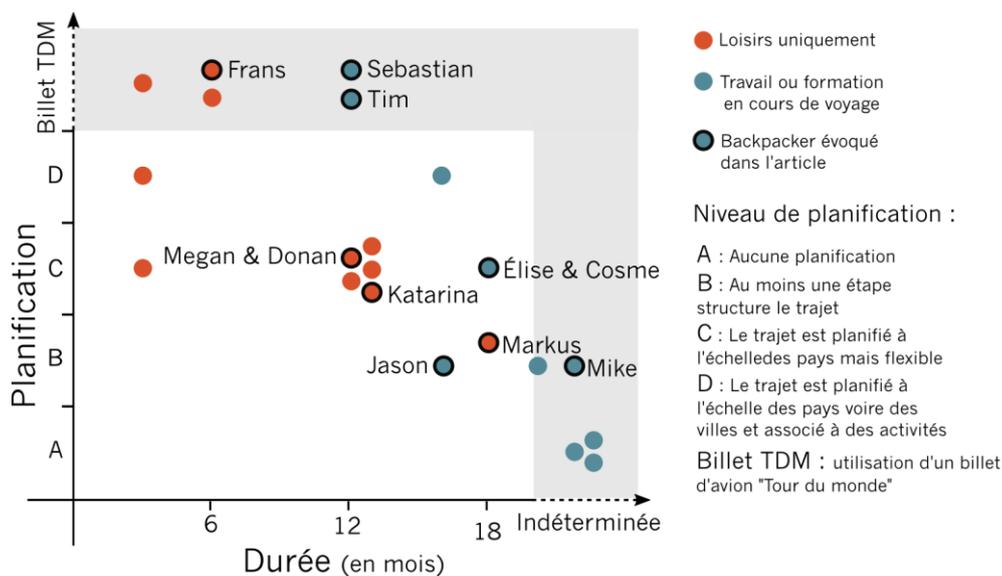
Figure 6. Synthetic graph of the durations, levels of planning and working situations for backpackers on a "round the world" trip

Loisirs uniquement = Leisure only; Travail ou formation en cours de voyage = Work or training in the course of the trip; Backpacker évoqué dans l'article = Backpacker mentioned in the paper; Niveau de planification : = Level of planning; A : Aucune planification = A: No planning; B : Au moins une étape structure le trajet = B: At least one stage structures the journey; C : Le trajet est planifié à l'échelle des pays mais flexible = C: The journey is planned at the level of countries but remains flexible; D : Le trajet est planifié à l'échelle des pays voire des villes et associé à des activités = D: The journey is planned at the level of countries, or eventually cities, and is combined with activities; Billet TDM : Utilisation d'un billet d'avion « Tour du monde » = RTW ticket: Use of a "round the world" plane ticket

The stakes related to planning one's trip and the potential contradictions with the drifter's ideal can also be grasped through presentations of oneself. J. Wilson and G. Richards (2004b) stress the importance of the emic approach[13] to grasp the social construction of the phenomenon through the circulation of speech. In conversations, there are a variety of ways to present one's "round the world" trip,

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[13] The authors base themselves on the interviewees' self-definition as being backpackers rather than on external identification criteria, and are interested in the interviewees' views on the backpacking phenomenon.

to the interviewer, but also to family, friends, and other backpackers. The "round the world" trip can appear as a project which has been planned and mentioned for a long time, thereby strongly marking the identity. For others the "round the world" trip is not considered as such; it is a fact, and is rather expressed through the idea of "travelling" with no intention to stop. Within this framework one can observe that for several backpackers on a "round the world" trip, the long duration induces a substantial feedback on one's travel experiences and their evolutions, and it is in this feedback that one can understand how backpackers themselves try to resolve the contradictions relating to the gap between practice and ideal. For instance, Cosme and Elise say that at the beginning of the trip, they avoided Frenchmen from a fear of association with the overly contradictory image of backpackers who travel but mix between themselves. In the course of the journey they decided to allow encounters to happen. On the long run and passing through several travelling contexts which are specific to backpackers on a "round the world" trip, the latter might notice contradictions more prominently, and, if they cannot solve them, they at least become aware of them.

Roaming on a global scale: in between exploration and appropriation

J.G. Molz (2008) underlines the cosmopolitan attitude of backpackers on a "round the world" trip, whose accounts express the impression of feeling at home everywhere in the world. The collection of experiences seems to show that roaming on the global scale and its more or less firm planning is situated somewhere between exploration and appropriation. For some, it is a question of exploring, of living the differentiation of the world's places in one journey. For instance, Katarina had not planned to take 13 sabbatical months and to remain only on one continent.

> Katarina. « The thing is that I never thought about staying one year in one country. Not country but continent. Now I realise, this an option. To stay, in one, like these guys I met in Africa, they just, they are on the road for maybe a year of something, but they just stay in Africa, and they do all of Africa. This would be an option, but I didn't think about it. (...) »
> B. «What is the difference you think? Between these two options? »
> K. «You get more into, I don't know, you get more into this culture, right? »
> Katarina, a 30 year old German who has been travelling since 2,5 months, is a social assistant on a sabbatical year.

For others, the planning of the trip is connected with the "travelling career" (Richards and Wilson 2004a), i.e. with the trips which have already been made in the past. For the backpacker, it's about going to destinations which he does not yet know. The relation to the place does not go very deep, the idea being rather to complete one's map of the world, almost like a collector. For Frans, this "round the world" trip is a sort of overview, before considering to return to certain destinations. These choices of destinations are thus mainly guided towards the destinations which he does not know yet:

> « I think in my mind for this trip it is to sample, how is the culture, how is the places, all over the world -tchtchtch (bruit signifiant saut rapide), and then next trip I can say ok, there I really like, I go there for one month, may be, sort of to get the taste of... »

> Frans, a 32 year old man with dual nationalities, born in South Africa, living in North America, has been travelling for 1,5 months, and is an engineer for NASA on a sabbatical leave of 6 months.

For the backpackers who work during the journey and those who do not plan their trip much, settling in certain destinations is long-lasting and shows a significant appropriation of the place. The act of creating a social network, generally composed of Westerners, to find a small job, or to decorate a new home, sometimes a tourist accommodation, highlights well the hybridity between work and leisure, between here and elsewhere, between habitual and in-habitual experiences, which is specific to certain profiles of backpackers. Sometimes, the trip in itself even becomes habitual, and the round trip of a few weeks to one's country of origin is experienced like "a holiday within the holiday". This relation between appropriation, exploration, and planning is of course often a mix, combining some unknown destinations which are quickly explored, and some destinations with a longer-lasting integration.

Conclusion

Although they are engaged in a practice of strong symbolic value, the backpackers on a "round the world" trip, according to the results of the survey, share with the other backpackers the characteristics of a travelling style which appear to be relatively standardised by the uniformity of routes and the planning related to these routes. The use of pre-determined itineraries seems to depend considerably on the tourist environment, and in particular on the presence of a market specifically addressed to backpackers, as is the case in Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the drifter's ideal of autonomy and spontaneity still influences their practices, dissuading them from recourse to overly constraining commercial offers. Moreover, the diversity in the profiles of these backpackers, and in particular their relations to work, makes it possible to elaborate more or less planned projects, far from uniformity, and sometimes approaching the drifter's ideal, in search of another lifestyle elsewhere.

The backpackers on a "round the world" trip illustrate quite well the diversity that one can find with backpackers in general. One can nevertheless propose certain particularities based on these results. Where routes are concerned, the fact of passing through several continents gives more possibilities for combinations, and necessarily confers a more original character to the journey of the backpacker on a "round the world" trip. He has more opportunities to get off the beaten track, by for instance making use of the extension of his social network. Also, it is perhaps among them that one can find the most backpackers who consider the trip to be other than an excursion, and more as a lifestyle, without necessarily wondering about the place of this lifestyle in the host society or back home. Lastly, it seems that the "round the world" trip still benefits from a rather exceptional status, in such a way that it strongly marks the individual identity and is connected with a project which is highly regarded back home.

In the end, the gap between ideal and practice which has been examined throughout this article via the stakes of the standardisation of the "round the world" trip can be seen as an example among others of the "new spirit of capitalism" described by L. Boltanski and È. Chiappelo (1999), always mobilising a legitimate "already there", which appears here to be the drifter's ideal of freedom and transgression. According to them, "it is pointless to search for a clear separation between impure ideological

constructs, intended to serve capitalist accumulation, and pure, utterly uncompromised ideas, which would make it possible to criticise it. Frequently, the same paradigms find themselves engaged in condemnation and justification of what is condemned." (p.59). Backpacking thus remains to be interpreted within this tension.

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