

Travellers and their journeys: A dynamic conceptualization of transient migrants' and backpackers' behaviour and experiences on the road

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Abstract

In this article it is argued that 'the journey'—as an embodied form of travel from one place to the other—is a fruitful analytical starting point to bring migration and tourism studies in closer dialogue with each other. With our focus on the 'en route' behaviour and experiences of two prototypical mobile figures (the transient migrant and the backpacker), we go beyond the usual categorical divisions of human mobility based on temporality (temporary tourists vs. long-term migrants) and politicization (welcomed tourists vs. unwanted migrants). With our empirical findings on migrants' journeys and our analysis of published articles in tourism studies, we identify three aspects (personal transformation, social networking and risk taking) along which we conceptually mirror and merge the embodied journeys of the prototypical travellers. The analysis identifies relevant commonalities of different mobility processes and illustrates that individuals on the move easily jump over the categorical divide of migrants/tourists across time and space. We finally use these insights to contribute further to a mobility-driven research agenda in migration studies.

Keywords: journey, migration, tourism, personal transformation, social networking, risk taking

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1. Introduction



Figure 1. Tourists and migrants (Desiree Martin 2008, AFP/Getty Images).

After a nerve-racking passage, 45 African immigrants arrive on 13 November 2008 at the port of San Miguel in Tenerife, located in Spain's Canary Islands (see Fig. 1). These travellers have moved to the Canaries in order to reach 'the good life' in Europe and escape the restrictions and frustrations of everyday life in Africa. They are only temporary visitors to the Islands as they usually stay several weeks at the reception camps before they get transferred to Spanish mainland or expelled to their countries of origin. The local authorities are very concerned about these travellers as border security guards can barely handle the approximately ten thousand arrivals and reception camps become overcrowded. Moreover, these travellers are at the centre of a fierce public debate around immigration and are often accused of stealing local jobs and being involved in criminal activities. As such, much time and money is invested in preventing these 'unwanted' travellers from arriving at European shores.

From above, and behind glass, three tourists are staring at the migrants. Being travellers themselves, they have moved to the Canaries to escape the restrictions and frustrations of everyday life in Europe and seek relaxation. They are only temporary visitors to the Canary Islands as they usually stay several weeks in one of the tourist resorts. Even though reception facilities and beaches may sometimes get overcrowded, local authorities are very pleased to welcome the yearly four million tourists who are considered a vital element of the local economy. Much time and money is invested in attracting these 'wanted' travellers to the Islands.

The migrant and the tourist are illustrative figures used by several authors to understand the contrasting realities of globalization in terms of power and access (Clifford 1997; Lenz 2010; O'Reilly 2003; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2009; Williams and Hall 2000). A very

prominent discussant of the polarization of mobility is Zygmunt Bauman who formulates a contrast between ‘tourists’ and ‘vagabonds’:

The tourists stay or move at their hearts’ desire. They abandon the site when the new, untried opportunities beckon elsewhere. The vagabonds know that they won’t stay for long, however strongly they wish to, since nowhere that they stop are they welcome. The tourists move because they find the world within their reach irresistibly attractive, the vagabonds move because they find the world within their reach unbearably inhospitable. (Bauman 1998: 309)

While migration and tourism studies are both extensively present in the field of mobilities studies (Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007), we feel that they form rather segregated strands of debates subsumed under the header of mobilities research. Furthermore, as Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013) argue, we need to question whether the mobilities turn leads to fundamental new perspectives, or whether it only provides different vocabulary for similar social processes. In migration research, for instance, the transnational turn (Portes 1999; Faist 2000) has already led scholars to think and talk more in terms of interconnectivity and mobility to understand migrants’ lifeworlds. Similarly, cosmopolitan starting points in tourism studies (Swain 2009) have resulted in dynamic conceptualizations and phrasing of tourist travel in this debate.

In the light of the emergence of mobilities research, this paper attempts to concretely bring migration and tourism studies in dialogue with each other and provide a new research perspective for migration research. While politicization (wanted tourists vs. unwanted migrants) and temporality (temporary tourists vs. permanent migrants) are usually taken as the frameworks to divide or mirror these mobilities, we take the dimension of ‘experience’ as our analytical starting point. We thereby concentrate on ‘the journey’—as an embodied form of travel from one place to the other—of two prototypical travellers: the transient migrant and the backpacker. These prototypes are chosen as their behaviour and experiences during the journey are clearly articulated. Backpackers are usually defined as a group of self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple destination journey, extended beyond what is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern (Sorenson 2003: 851). Figures such as the young Australians taking their Big OE (Overseas Experience) in Europe, or European backpackers in Australia are the prototypical heroes of this mobility. Transient migrants are also committed to non-institutionalized and dynamic forms of travel, the difference being that they do not necessarily embark voluntarily on these adventures, but often do so because they lack legal travel opportunities. Migrants from Central America moving step-by-step to the United States (Vogt 2013) and Africans moving to Europe (Triulzi and McKenzie 2013) are illustrative actors in this respect.

This mobility-oriented analytical starting point of ‘the journey’ is an interesting angle to discuss migration, as migration research tends to overlook experiences of travel and still conceptualizes mobility in a static way, as people moving from A to B (Cresswell 2006). The journey is mainly discussed ‘after’ migrants have reached their destinations and relatively little attention has been put on what happens ‘in between’ (for exceptions see Khosravi 2010; Burrell 2008; Schapendonk and Steel 2014). However, in the field of tourism studies the journey itself is much more at the centre of attention. It is framed as an essential part of the travel experience (Riley 1988). In other words, tourism studies deal with the process of

how being ‘on the road’ is reproduced as an important life experience. At the same time, with the exception of literature on backpackers (Noy 2004; Löfgren 2008; Allon and Anderson 2010), tourism studies generally overlook the embodied travel experiences of tourists, such as sitting in airplanes and waiting for buses (for an exception see Farias 2010). Through conceptually mirroring and merging the embodied journeys of the transient migrant and backpacker, we aim to further unravel the complexities of what it means for migrants to be ‘on the road’ and ‘in between’. We particularly intend to enrich migration research with empirical insights and conceptualizations originating from mobility-driven backpacker literature. In so doing, we not only transcend existing categorical rigidities of modernity that limit our institutional responses to migration (Betts 2010), we also contribute to a common analytical framework to understand the multiple mobilities of our age.

2. Who is the migrant, who is the tourist?

While migrants and tourists have been polarized to understand the unequal effects and excesses of globalization, there is also increasing attention to the overlapping of both typologies of travellers (Leed 1991; Bianchi 2000; Feng and Page 2000; Williams and Hall 2000). Researchers increasingly acknowledge that flexible forms of migration are undermining the distinction between tourism and migration (King 2002; Blunt 2007).

It has for example been noted that many migrants enter a country as tourists but then overstay their tourist visas and become migrants (van Liempt 2007; King 2002). Some irregular migrants are even called ‘tourists’ by their co-migrants if they have not secured their stay in a certain destination (Staring 2009). Tourists on the other hand, non-Western ones in particular, may already have a ‘migrant experience’ at Western airports when being ‘classified as an unwanted person, under constant scrutiny, trying to pass through the gates of Fortress Europe’ (Löfgren 2008: 93). Besides, many migrants have their tourist experiences as they visit tourist attractions, take pictures in front of tourist sights and send these pictures homewards. And if migrants move onwards to new destinations (van Liempt 2011), return to their countries of origin (Salazar Parreñas 2010) or experience a longing to do so (‘homesickness’) they sometimes behave and feel like tourists or temporary sojourners.

Tourists may also turn into migrants, depending on the duration of their stay and the type of activities they undertake. They may for example find opportunities in terms of work, fall in love, buy houses in their destination (van Noorloos 2012; O’Reilly 2003) or decide to settle down for retirement reasons (King, Warnes and Williams 2000). Some tourists (e.g. backpackers in Australia) work (regularly or irregularly) long hours in restaurants, hotels and farms in order to finance their long stay in a certain country (Allon and Anderson 2010). The services demanded by tourists are interestingly enough also often delivered by labour migrants which again shows the overlap between the two categories (Williams and Hall 2000). Tourism may thus overlap with as well as generate migration. Migration on the other hand may also generate a demand for tourism, particularly for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives, the so called ‘visiting friends and relatives tourism’ (VFR) (Feng and Page 2000) or ‘ethnic’ tourism (Kang and Page 2000).

Despite this typological overlap, both forms of travel are usually analysed with very different socio-political frameworks. Apart from lifestyle migration, migrants' movements are usually framed in negative ways, as migrants are believed to be 'pushed away' from their places of origin. Furthermore, much emphasis is put on policy problems in the countries of destination such as the tension between a transnational identity and local integration (Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes 2006). While large flows of tourists are also increasingly recognized as policy problem (Hughes et al. 2008), and some attention is given to normative issues in tourism literature (Bianchi 2000), tourism is still framed in much more positive terms, with an emphasis on the liberating experience of travelling and the positive contribution to local economies of the countries of destination. Another difference in terms of socio-political frameworks is the fact that migrants are regularly positioned in a social collective with its social responsibilities. They often finance their journeys by borrowing money from family members and, as a kind of reciprocal process, they are supposed to support their communities 'back home' by sending remittances (Philpot 1968). Tourists, on the other hand, are usually celebrated as independent and empowered travellers exploring the world and freeing themselves from any form of social obligation (Greenblat and Gagnon 1983).

In this context it is also important to note that within migration and tourism studies much attention is given to differentiating between various types of migrants and various types of tourists. An important difference is that migration research focuses mainly on the voluntary–forced continuum in order to distinguish 'refugees' from 'migrants' (O'Connell Davidson 2013; Betts 2010), while in tourism studies such distinction is absent for obvious reasons. On the voluntary side—which is not to say that tourists cannot feel any social pressure to travel to far and exotic places instead of staying close by—tourism studies discuss the novelty–familiarity continuum to differentiate tourists in terms of their preference to experience excitement or comfort when travelling (Edensor 2007; Basala and Klenosky 2001).

What is furthermore interesting is that both fields use the level of 'fixity' of the movement as an important differentiating factor. Tourists moving to pre-packaged destinations with the help of travel agents are clearly distinguished from backpackers who usually avoid commercial facilitations of the tourism industry and rely on instant information from other travellers, locals and/or guidebooks to make travel decisions (Greenblat and Gagnon 1983). Similar typologies exist in migration studies as 'settler migrants', moving to pre-determined destinations with the help of certain labour recruitment programmes or migration networks, are regularly distinguished from 'free floating migrants' (Piore 1979). In the case of the latter, smugglers, traffickers and other informal intermediaries determine to a large extent the outcome of the migration process (van Liempt 2007; Alpes 2011). Tourists are often viewed as active agents 'gathering and negotiating the world they encounter' (Crouch and Desforges 2003: 10)—although they too often very much have to depend on intermediaries which may even be fraudulent.

In what follows, we compare migration and tourism studies with each other on the topic of 'the journey' of transient migrants and backpackers. It is important to note that both prototypical travellers still constitute a heterogeneous group with respect to the diversity of rationales and meanings attached to their travel experiences (Adkins and Grant 2007). We are mindful of the potential of creating new barriers to understanding, while seeking to dissolve those between migration and tourism journeys. Ateljevic (2000) argues in this

context for a holistic approach in the study of tourism–migration relationships. Notwithstanding, we take the above comparison based on temporality and political framing further as we give specific consideration to similarities and differences in terms of travel behaviour and experiences.

3. Comparing transient migrants and backpackers

For the analysis of transient backpackers' journeys we rely on published material from extensive case studies on backpackers from different countries and conducted in different countries (Allon and Anderson 2010; Elsrud 2001; Noy 2004; Maoz 2005). We used a snowball approach that started with articles published in the most important tourism journals after 2000. We thereby were mainly interested in geographic and ethnographic/anthropological literature that contributed further to a better comprehension of the qualitative dimension of backpackers' journeys. For the analysis of transient migrants' journeys we build on our own extensive fieldwork conducted with migrants travelling towards Europe in fragmented ways. Between 2003 and 2004, Van Liempt has interviewed 56 migrants who had travelled in irregular ways from various regions (Iraq, Horn of Africa and the former Soviet Union) towards Europe (van Liempt 2007). Schapendonk has interviewed a similar number (57) of West and Central African migrants aiming to reach Europe between 2007 and 2008. Van Liempt conducted the interviews upon arrival and Schapendonk in two so-called transit countries (Turkey and Morocco).¹ In order to grasp the dynamics of migrants' travel, Schapendonk also followed 13 of his respondents through time and space. This longitudinal aspect implied the tracing of migrants' trajectories by means of telephone calls and Internet conversations as well as conducting follow-up interviews with migrants in different places on their journeys. In addition, he interviewed 36 Africans in the Netherlands about their journeys (Schapendonk 2011).

Our reading of our interviews and tourism literature led to three overarching and interconnected aspects of every migration and tourism journey which allow us to compare the two prototypical travellers. All travellers experience 'personal transformation' during their journeys and engage in 'social networking' that helps them in handling the 'risk taking' involved. This threefold operationalization of 'the journey' has an intellectual basis that is further fuelled by insights from mobilities studies:

- (a) Personal transformation: mobilities researchers have a special interest in how movement is discursively framed (Ernste, Martens and Schapendonk 2012). This first dimension deals with the issue of how the journey is experienced, perceived and appreciated by the traveller and his social environment.
- (b) Social networking: mobilities researchers refute the notion that mobility processes are empty and meaningless spaces (Urry 2007). They underline that interpersonal interaction takes place during journeys and that social relations are (re-)made by mobility (Burell 2008). This dimension points at the social relations and networks that develop during journeys and, in turn, affect the outcome and experience of journeying.

- (c) Risk taking: mobilities researchers have a special interest in what people do when being mobile and how individuals experience their movement into ‘the unknown’ (Kellerman 2006; Spierings and Van der Velde 2008). This dimension highlights that journeys involve being among strangers, in unfamiliar places and perhaps even in dangerous situations which can be exciting for some and fearful for others, often resulting in the use of strategies to handle risk and uncertainty.

With these three aspects in mind we reflect on the frequently-made categorical distinctions of the tourist vs. the migrant. Using the same means of transport does not make them travellers of the same type (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013) but, as we will argue in the remainder of this paper, migration and tourism mobilities materialize in some respects very similarly.

4. Personal transformation

The first time I left my country, I went to Spain, to the Canary Islands; it is only three hours flying from Nouakchott. I stayed there for only three months, just because it was too big a change for a 16-year-old girl. The language, well actually everything in daily life was different! I had the feeling that I had to start all over again, and I thought to myself, well if this is it to be abroad, I am not happy with it. I also missed my family a lot . . . I still think that if I had focused on my new life there I could have succeeded in Spain, but I could not handle it emotionally. (Mauritanian migrant talking about her journey from Mauritania to Spain, cited in Schapendonk 2011: 91)

You’re different as life experience goes. That is, when I left the country I was quite ignorant. I left ignorant in that I didn’t know many cultures; I didn’t cross paths with many cultures. I may have read about them, or seen them on TV, but I didn’t actually meet them . . . You see, when you leave the country you don’t know that much, and when you return you suddenly know everything. You also know yourself differently, because you put yourself in many situations. (Israeli backpacker explaining his personal change during his trip to New Zealand, cited in Noy 2004: 87)

Contrary to tourism studies, in migration literature little attention is paid to how migrants recount stories of their extended and adventurous trips (Burell 2008)—with the required personal transformation sometimes being more than a person can prepare for and handle, as the above quote of the Mauritanian woman illustrates. Within tourism studies the socially reproduced travel experience is given more, or even most, attention (Elsrud 2001; Noy 2002). The backpacking tourism literature, especially, points out that participating in a trip can be transformative. It is often discursively constructed as a ‘rite of passage’ from youth into adulthood (Riley 1988; Noy and Cohen 2005) and the lengthy and independent nature of the journey may enhance social prestige after having returned homewards (O’Reilly 2006). The trip usually takes place during the period between the end of youth and the upcoming time of being beset with obligations. The journey is also constituted as a ‘fateful moment’ (Giddens 1991), that is, a moment constructed as formative or transformative in the stories the youths tell of themselves and their identity. People describe themselves as wiser, more knowledgeable, more socially and emotionally adept after the journey. One of the most striking characteristics of the backpacking narratives is that they consistently describe deep and profound personal changes as a result of the trip. However, this involves a

discursive focus on positive experiences and narratives of disappointment being silenced (Noy 2004). The Israeli backpacker just quoted affirms the existence of this idea that participation in a trip generates change, which may involve differences experienced as confusing and even overwhelming as well as a feeling of displacement (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013). At the same time, returning home for backpackers may result in 'reverse cultural confusion' (Hottola 2004) involving problems in readapting to the 'origin' society.

Although they are less prominently present, similar notions can be found in migration stories. Philpot (1968) for example noted that references to a man's migration in Montserrat are often in terms of a rite of passage (he went out to make himself a man). Much more attention in migration research is paid to the issue of how the act of migrating is framed in terms of social prestige in the countries of origin. In this framework, the sending of remittances as a way of supporting communities back home is of vital importance (Faist 2000). This research focus in migration studies underlines that, besides a personal transformation, migration is regularly framed and discursively constructed as a collective transformation (Hahn 2007). In the case of Senegal, a country that is often referred to in the context of contemporary irregular migration to Europe, different researchers outline how migration replaced education as the main vector for the accumulation of social success (Ludl 2008; Riccio 2005). The restrictions on their travel in this particular direction explain to a large extent their involvement in high risk migration. In a similar way, Horst (2006) explains in her study on Somali refugees what happens when the desire to go overseas as a 'rite of passage' is in vain. She explains the meaning of 'buufis' as the madness that at times occurs when people's dream to migrate abroad is shattered. Something similar was described by Rousseau et al. who investigated young Somali and Ethiopian people's substitution of dream travel for real travel which puts them at risk of losing contact with reality and sliding into madness (Rousseau et al. 1998, 388). These studies show that dreaming about migration (as a collective route to social success) in a country where migration is only an option for the lucky few is a very different process than dreaming about migration or preparing oneself in a country where one can simply apply for a visa (Carling 2002). The high aspiration to migrate in combination with the inability to do so points to the fact that imaginative travel and physical travel are closely intertwined (Urry 2007).

Acknowledgement of the importance of the desire to change scenery or lifestyle, or the inversion of 'the normal', is something that is very prominent in tourism studies (Smith 1977; Urry 2002; Maoz 2005). Although it is not at the core of migration studies, with discussions on lifestyle migration being an exception, this field does pay attention to the increasing number of people who take the decision to migrate based on their belief that there is a more fulfilling way of life available to them elsewhere (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). The term 'lifestyle migration' is, however, usually restricted to those migrants having affluent backgrounds in the developed world and moving towards various destinations, including developing countries (Korpela 2010; van Noorloos 2012; Dürr 2012). There is a partial overlap between lifestyle migration and tourism (O'Reilly 2003) as tourism is based on all those distinctions Urry (2002) recognized between leisure and work, home and away, everyday and holiday. It is about escaping the drudgery of the routine and the known in order to 'gaze' on the exotic and otherness—although often 'tamed for easy consumption' (Edensor 2007). To enrich migration studies, more space should be offered to study the deliberate aspiration of a personal 'rite of passage' and the related intent to experience the

unknown and exotic. We argue that tourism, backpacking in particular, can be seen as a lens through which the discursive framing of migration might be better perceived.

5. Social networking

I went to Kano first [a regional capital in the north of Nigeria]. I looked for transport by asking around for some traders to transport me to Zinder [Niger]. There I met three other Nigerians, and we formed the Nigerian crew. We were like brothers, you become good friends. You have to trust each other. We eat together, sleep together and arrange transport together . . . We had to prepare because we knew that the journey through the Sahara is very difficult, very dangerous! Together with some other people, I think in total there were 20 migrants on our truck . . . Once we entered Morocco we [the Nigerian crew] separated, because everybody has their own plan. The people with enough money went to Europe . . . [I] went to Rabat. (A Nigerian migrant talking about his journey through the Sahara desert, cited in Schapendonk 2011: 116)

It is like home here. You meet people from every corner of Ireland: East, West, every corner and every country . . . It is unbelievable. It's the atmosphere . . . When I wake up in the morning and there's ten people there from nine different countries. Everyone's having a laugh. It wouldn't happen in Ireland . . . They look after you . . . They'll give you a job . . . Find you somewhere to kip down with friends and stuff like that. (An Irish backpacker talking about his experience in Australia, cited in Allon and Anderson 2010: 15)

Both transient migrants and backpackers have conversations about the 'road'. In tourism literature these conversations are described and analysed as routinized travel chat, as a way of entering a conversation, obtaining information and exchanging tips, or even as status-constructing conversations (White and White 2008). In the 1970s, Vogt (1976) and Cohen (1972) already pointed to the interpersonal relationships which are formed during travel which allow for a dense verbal inter-traveller network. These include word of mouth from the experienced traveller to the newcomer. Later, Riley (1988), Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) and Murphy (2001) indicated that these frequent interactions are commonplace and often primary motivations for travelling. Today the Internet has made the network of relationships among backpackers 'portable and accessible anywhere and anytime' (Mascheroni 2007: 534). Internet cafes initially aimed at staying in contact with home have now also become meeting places of backpackers (Mascheroni 2007). Yet, tourists are certainly not always found in an unfamiliar milieu where they act and feel like temporary strangers (Larsen 2008), as the above quote originating from a study by Allon and Anderson on Irish backpackers in Australia illustrates.

Tourists may even form what in migration studies are called ethnic communities. Sorensen (2003) points out that there is a slight difference in the sense that backpacker communities have a high turnover rate and are constantly changing. Tourist sociability and networking, which may differ between different types of tourists, with backpackers seeing social interaction with other travellers on the road as an important reason to backpack (White and White 2008), has mainly been approached as having a temporary character. Tourists are usually seen as 'temporary strangers' who have entered (by choice) culturally unfamiliar territory (Greenblat and

Gagnon 1983) and connect with guides, hotel owners, co-tourists, and local populations for only a limited period of time. Still, the impact these communities have on localities should not be underestimated. Allon and Anderson (2010) argue that backpackers in fact occupy whole neighbourhoods in Australian cities and form communities. They talk about ‘bubbles’ related to the backpackers’ ‘tendency to easily become part of an isolated and self-contained community of travellers . . . with little connection to the “locals”’ (2010: 17). Wilson and Richards (2008) furthermore talk about backpacker enclaves that have become important arenas for social and cultural exchange. They provide comfort as well as points of contact with home. They are also often used for collecting travel information (Howard 2007). Thus, while tourist sociability is usually seen as floating and short-term, long-term and everyday connectivity also shape many aspects of the backpacking experience. The enclaves and social bubbles that backpackers live in problematize the earlier notion of a personal rite of passage which suggests a sudden and substantial shift between home and away.

In contrast to the general image of the backpacker as an independent traveller (an image which clearly should be questioned based on the above), the migrant is almost always positioned within a social environment—the community in the country of origin—or within two social environments—the communities in the country of origin and destination. In this respect, many studies outline that migration must be seen as a household strategy as if migrants depart ‘in the name of the family’ to support the living situation of the social collective (Stark and Bloom 1985)—producing strong social pressure to undertake the journey and succeed in doing so. This is mainly the reason why migrants from underdeveloped areas are portrayed as the new promising agents for development who are expected to remit money and to contribute to social change ‘back home’ (Skeldon 2008). However, there are several empirical studies that argue quite the opposite by indicating that migrants leave as individuals and do not refer to any kind of family project (Kalir 2005; Alpes 2011). In fact, it is suggested that some migrants do not so much move ‘within’ a certain social context, they rather move ‘from’ a social context that is characterized by social obligations, traditions and control by elders (Lambert 2002). The latter shows an interesting parallel with tourist experiences, as escaping the restrictions of everyday life is very central to this form of travel.

While the tourist is seen as the temporary traveller, the migrant is expected to integrate and to sustain longstanding social ties in the country of destination. By taking travel experiences as the point of departure, however, we notice that temporary sociability is vital to understand migratory processes. As the quote of the Nigerian migrant shows, the migrant journey may resemble the usual backpacker experience in which friendships are easily made, but also easily dissolved. In this context, several migration studies underline the role of transit solidarities (Akcapar 2010; Suter 2012) and travelling collectives (Brachet 2005; Collyer 2007) during migration journeys. Others focus on the floating and temporary, yet vitally important, trust relationship between the migrant and the migration facilitator (smuggler) (van Liempt 2007; Alpes 2011). This traveller–facilitator relationship in migration does not differ very much in form and intensity from the tourist–guide relationship (Salazar 2010).

What we may conclude from this analysis of the dynamics of journeying is that for both the tourist and the migrant social connectivity is an important form of ‘resource management’ (Greenblat and Gagnon 1983: 99; Schapendonk 2011). The joys and fears of travelling depend very much on the en route navigation of social ties. Typical

tourist-connections, lasting only for a few hours or a couple of days, may also be important to understand the travel of migrants. This is tellingly described by Eric Leed (1991: 234) who states the following:

Journeys necessitate the ability both to form attachments and to break them. The traveler, in having to learn how to make contingent, transient, terminable relationships—which are not necessarily superficial—‘soon . . . becomes accustomed to making friendships quickly, enjoying someone intensely, and then breaking off with little sorrow’ (quote from J. W. Vogt 1976).

Thus, to enrich migration studies, inspired by backpacking literature, it is very worthwhile to explore in more depth the role of floating connections and temporary ties in migration processes and the importance of sociality and formations of community.

6. Risk taking

Taha was the first to cross the river together with the smuggler. But before they had reached the other side, I saw the boat capsize, and Taha fell into the water. The river took him and he was gone—just like that. This image keeps coming back to me. It was horrible. The river was so cruel. I will never forget this. The smuggler completely freaked out. He wanted to go back to Turkey and kept mumbling: ‘What do I tell his family? How do I explain this?’ He told the group it was impossible to continue. We all went back to Istanbul. (An Iraqi migrant describing his panic during his smuggling process across the Turkish–Greek border, cited in van Liempt 2007: 132)

I’ve had some very strange feelings coming from England to India, to Nepal, seeing all the new sights, new smells, everything else. That’s scary in a way because it’s like, ‘phuu, what’s going on, what’s happening?’ At one point in Nepal, for example, this thing that I seen in the valley on the way to Pokhara, just a normal every-day outdoor setting with the river and the rock, but it was because it was something I hadn’t ever seen before, smelt before or experienced before. It was like ‘wow’, this is in a way scary because it’s like all new. (A backpacker from England talking about his journey through different Asian countries, cited in Elsrud 2001: 606)

Tourism in general is considered to be about encountering unfamiliarity, including other people and places (Gibson 2010). At the same time, different typologies of tourists exist according to the degree of unfamiliarity and familiarity they prefer and are willing to accept (Basala and Klenosky 2001; Cohen 1972; Smith 1977). Backpackers usually are typified as having a more ‘adventurous lifestyle’ than other tourists (Elsrud 2001) by avoiding the well-trodden paths and finding excitement in exploring more unknown terrains. Risk taking is also an important tenet of backpacking culture—for the full local experience—(Gogia 2006) and backpackers also seem less ‘risk apprehensive’ than general tourists (Larsen, Ogard and Brun 2011). It must be said, however, that this risk taking and apprehension does take place in a relatively safe environment, in countries where backpackers are not likely to encounter visa problems and political instability. In that sense, tourism in general is perceived as a relaxed, risk-free and fun-filled undertaking, while migration is usually seen as a stress- and risk-filled undertaking (Williams and Baláz 2012). The latter may even result in life-threatening situations and possibly even death, as is emphasized by the experience of the Iraqi migrant just quoted.

The levels of risks involved in regular and irregular migration journeys differ considerably. High risk migration typically involves a spectrum of risks with different combinations of probability and severity: the risk of dying represents maximum severity—for instance, when being transported in sealed containers or ships that are not seaworthy (Bade 2004; van Houtum and Boedeltje 2009), but perhaps less probable, while economic loss, physical abuse, or other forms of hardship are less severe events, but are much more probable (van Liempt 2007). The subjective assessment of risk and its degree is often based on information gathered and it may even involve religious beliefs: ‘it is up to God what the outcome of the journey will be’ (Hernández-Carretero and Carling 2012: 415). In addition, migration behaviour is conditioned by the social acceptability of risk taking and by the range of alternative options. Many migrants are fully aware of the difficulties, dangers and uncertainties of irregular migration, but still see it as a preferable alternative to the predictable hardship of staying put (van Liempt 2007).

Apart from the social aspect, putting oneself in the presence of others and developing a network of relations en route provide the most up-to-date information for both migrants and tourists—producing ‘informational familiarity’ (Baloglu 2001) with upcoming challenges and destinations. Travellers not only collect information on the road but also before departure to make plans—both phases involving different needs and also often different sources of information (Chang 2009). Before departure, tourists may consult intermediary travel agents as well as friends and relatives who they will visit abroad or who have been there before (Murphy 2007). Similarly, migrants do not move and assess related risk on the basis of ignorance, although this is something which anti-migration campaigns often postulate (Nieuwenhuis and Pécoud 2007). They often make use of the knowledge of other migrants still abroad or those who have already returned, as well as smugglers and traffickers, as ‘travel agencies’ (Williams and Baláz 2012). Such illegal agencies usually operate worldwide and offer a variety of services—which sometimes even resemble official tourist services—such as ‘smuggle guarantee’ and ‘children’s discount’ (Bade 2004). For transient migrants undertaking the trans-Sahara journey, the stopovers in transit towns such as Agadez, Dirkou (Niger) and Oujda (Morocco) are vital in terms of receiving fresh information about their routes (Brachet 2005). Migrants also surf the Internet in these towns in order to find new information in terms of asylum procedures and visa regulations (Schapendonk 2011). As a cumulative effect, these communication hubs (including money transfer agencies and phone shops) are important sites for migrants in terms of social interactions, which may provide them with knowledge regarding migration opportunities. In hostels, bars and other physical spaces for social gathering like Internet cafes, or virtual ones on the Internet (Mascheroni 2007), backpackers exchange and discuss information and experiences as well. In a narrative study of Israeli backpackers, Noy (2004) talks about dialogues that can become ‘persuasive stories’. Then, stories told not only ‘describe’ destinations and experiences but also ‘prescribe’ them as must-sees.

The form and frequency of conversations about and on the road also suggests another important function beyond the manifest purpose of obtaining information, namely the naming, mapping and handling of uncertainty and risk. Conversations among travellers can be an important strategy to ‘enhance the quality of their trip by decreasing the level of associated uncertainty’ (Fodness and Murray 1997: 505) and to avoid disappointments. They can also prevent ‘culture shocks’ and assist in dealing with unfamiliarity—which

some backpackers may associate with discomfort or even risk (as illustrated by the backpacker's quote above), and others may see as attractive and exciting (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013).

We do not want to play down either the serious nature or dreadful consequences of migration here, but the analytical focus on migration journeys as full of risk means that feelings of joy, excitement and relaxation are often overlooked or neglected—leading to a biased notion of what it means to migrate. Although he was an exception, it is worth mentioning that we have met one Togolese migrant who undertook the trans-Saharan journey from West to North Africa who pinpointed not only the risks and hardships of the trip, but also the beauty of the landscape. He never had seen such things in his life before. Similarly, only minor attention is paid to the bumpy roads of tourist travel in general, when there is hardly any tourist who has not experienced some inconvenience, such as may be involved in standing in long line for security checks and endless waiting for a delayed flight (Löfgren 2008). When on the road, backpackers may feel misunderstood or feel lost but may also experience more severe situations when facing 'external instances of risk, exploitation, and abuse' (Allon and Anderson 2010: 19).

In addition to paying more attention to the transformative power of migration and its social aspects we claim that embodied experiences of the journey should receive much more attention in migration research (Burell 2008). To enrich migration studies, inspired by backpacking literature, we would suggest more in-depth analysis of migrants' journeys as physically demanding, sometimes threatening but at the same time relaxing and exciting. Such an analysis of migrants' embodied experiences of 'troubles', 'tranquillities' and 'thrills' on the road also needs to pay attention to the roles and effects of travel information and irregular 'travel agencies'.

7. Conclusion

This article fits within, and builds on, a wider upcoming debate arguing that tourism–migration relationships are important for understanding the nexus between different types of mobility (Sheller and Urry 2006). While migrants and tourists may visit the same countries, their journeys are often divided by control mechanisms of mobility regimes (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), as illustrated in the opening picture. Yet, the commonalities in terms of travel behaviour and experiences of transient migrants and backpackers enable us to identify further when and how fixed categorizations restrict our understanding of human mobility. In that respect, alongside our threefold operationalization of the experience of the journey (personal transformation/social networking/risk taking), we have pointed to three travel dynamics of backpackers' journeys that have the potential to enrich our understanding of contemporary migration, and especially our understanding of the migration journey. In the following, we extrapolate these insights towards a mobility-driven migration research agenda.

First, the emphasis in backpacker literature on individual experiences and personal transformation can be of added value for migration studies. This does not imply that we intend to isolate migrants from their networks and consider them autonomous agents

deciding independently where to go. It is rather a modest plea to be more sensitive to narratives of personal change, spatial reorientation, unfamiliarity and other emotions attached to individual mobility processes. Migrants' mediation of individual success while at the same time having responsibilities towards their communities would then be an interesting research focus. Second, and in relation to the former, it is worthwhile to explore in more depth the role of floating connections and temporary social ties in migration processes. This notion, being so common in backpacker literature, will create more dynamics to our discussions on migration networks, which are regularly approached as static and mechanic meso-structures linking together migrants' strong and weak ties. A social networking approach (Schapendonk 2014) will emphasize that networks rely on social efforts that are based on interdependency and social negotiation. Third, while encountering unknown people and places and possibly even experiencing hazardous situations en route, backpackers and migrants seek and exchange information and are in need of assistance. They do this as a strategy to handle risk and uncertainty during their mobility phases. To enrich migration studies, with the help of backpacking literature, we would suggest a more in-depth study of migrants' strategies to prevent risk, find tranquillities, and bypass certain thresholds, including the roles and effects of travel information and intermediaries. However, at the same time we submit that it is important to not overlook the joyful and adventurous moments of migration, which are manifestly part of the backpacking experience. An integrative research agenda including both the 'ups' and 'downs' of migration would in our view be a fruitful way forward. The journey, or in a broader sense, migrant career paths provide interesting angles in this respect.

The general finding is that much happens within the space and time of the journey that is interesting to mirror and possibly merge with the conceptualization of other types of mobility as well. Although we focus on two prototypical journeys whereby 'routes' and 'processes' rather than 'places' and 'integrations' are the main characteristics, this article has provided broader insights into the experience of travel possibly leading to interesting (and less evident) comparisons, such as: the trader and the tourist, the retired bon vivant and the refugee, the commuter and the expat, the soldier on a tour of duty and the trafficked prostitute, the transferred soccer player and the recruited housekeeper. When we are sensitive to not only what makes these mobilities different but also similar, we prevent ourselves from creating clear-cut divisions and falling into typological fixities, or 'binary troubles' (O'Connell Davidson 2013) that do not help us very much in achieving a better understanding of the human movements that shape so many aspects of the world we live in today.

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Note

1. The distinction between ‘migrants upon arrival’ and ‘migrants in transit’ is not a clear-cut categorical divide. Some migrants in the Netherlands found themselves in transit-like situations while some ‘transit migrants’ in Turkey and Morocco were de facto stayers as they spent long periods in their current living places (Schapendonk 2011).

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