The artisan backpacker: a development in Latin American backpacker tourism

Anne-Katrin Broocks*
Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology,
University of Hamburg,
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 – Flügelbau West (ESA W),
20146 Hamburg, Germany
Email: anne_broocks@hotmail.com
*Corresponding author

Kevin Hannam
The Business School,
Edinburgh Napier University,
Craiglockhart Campus,
Edinburgh EH14 1DJ, UK
Email: k.hannam@napier.ac.uk

Abstract: This article examines the phenomenon of the artisan backpacker in Latin America based upon ethnographic research. We show that Latin American youth have developed their own way of travelling, based upon the existing mainstream Western and Israeli backpacking culture and infrastructure but using their own specific economic activities to finance their travel – selling self-made jewellery. While they share a similar value system, the so-called dominant backpacking ‘code of honour’, we also identify another value, namely a deeper involvement in the local, often indigenous culture and nature. Similarities could also be discerned between the ideological system of the artisan backpacker and the volunteer backpacker, particularly in terms of the need for risk creation. The lack of sufficient monetary resources shapes the ways in which artisan backpacker’s travel. They use different modes of transport and accommodation than other backpackers and they need to plan their days around their economic activities: crafting and selling their jewellery. However, through trading and bargaining, the artisan backpackers are able to improve their international business skills, their English language skills, and their geographical and touristic knowledge. They additionally became more embedded with the local population in order to negotiate their own identity as Latin Americans.

Keywords: backpackers; artisans; indigenous tourism; lifestyle mobilities; handicraft production; ethnography; Latin America.


Biographical notes: Anne Broocks has an MA in Social Anthropology and Latin American Studies from the University of Hamburg, Germany. She has worked as a consultant in the practice of tourism development including with the German development agency GIZ.

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Kevin Hannam is Professor of Tourism Mobilities at Edinburgh Napier University. He is the Founding Co-Editor of the journals *Mobilities* and *Applied Mobilities* (Routledge), co-author of the books *Understanding Tourism* (Sage) and *Tourism and India* (Routledge) and Co-Editor of the recent books *Tourism and Leisure Mobilities* and *Event Mobilities* (Routledge). He is currently Vice-Chair of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education and Research (ATLAS).

1 Introduction

In the last decades a significant amount of literature on backpacker tourism has been published (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010). The regional focus of this research has been mainly on Western backpacking and independent travel in Europe, South East Asia, as well as the Australasian regions. On backpacking in Latin America however relatively little qualitative or quantitative research has been published (Hampton, 2010). Anderskov (2002) has examined identity making processes in Central America, but there has been no examination of indigenous Latin American independent travel. Based upon our research we suggest in this article that a new type of backpacker has emerged in Latin America, namely the artisan backpackers – indigenous entrepreneurial backpackers that make goods as they travel to finance their own mobility but who nevertheless, follow established Western backpacker routes and ideologies within Latin America. They produce and sell jewellery and other artefacts or engage in street art activities in order to finance their travels but have also adopted certain characteristics of the Western backpacking culture. In this paper we show how these self-referenced *artesanos* have developed their own culture of backpacking related to their unique economic background and their desire to engage and develop their own cosmopolitanism and cultural capital.

The self-referenced term *artesanos* can be misleading, as in English it means artisan and usually does not describe travelling. Thus sometimes within backpacker culture you also hear of the *artesano viajero* – the travelling artisan. We use the term ‘artisan backpacker’, which is in English closest to the self-referenced term.

Handicrafts, as souvenirs or interior decoration of tourism businesses, are well known to be part of the tourism value chain. Usually it is small producers or businesses on a grass-root level supplying and also adapting the local material culture to supply tourist demands. It is known that craft production and sales can re-vitalise local culture and provide income for local communities (Chambers, 1997; Connell and Rugendyke, 2008), but can also be harmful for local communities as well as tourism if sales are carried out in a too offensive manner (Bah and Goodwin, 2003). Much research in this area has focused on the significance of crafts for tourists (Anderson and Littrell, 1995; Littrell et al., 1993; Swanson, 2004; Decrop and Masset, 2014) and the economic outcome of craft sales for local communities (Ashley, 2000; Tice, 2010). The difference in Latin America is that the artisan backpackers, while being tourists themselves, as well as part of the local community, produce their own type of crafts while travelling, mainly aimed for the wider backpacker tourism market which they vicariously belong to: crucially the artisan backpackers produce the souvenirs of the backpacker culture in order to be able to participate in it. It is therefore necessary to clarify, what characteristics artisan backpackers have within the tourism economy to understand their culture. We argue...
below that artisan backpackers do not manage their craft production with the principal purpose of profit and growth; instead it is an extension of their personalities and their identities, as their self-ascribed name shows. Their business model shows innovation – a key attribute of ‘entrepreneurs’, not for profit but for living their individual lifestyle supported by their business – a key aspect of lifestyle mobilities (Duncan et al., 2013).

Thus, as most Latin American youth cannot save money in advance of their travels (as most Western and Israeli backpackers in Latin America do), an alternative means of creating the necessary economic resources has had to be invented, which has led to their unique travel pattern. They draw upon alternative economic strategies combined with a mobile lifestyle (see Duncan et al., 2013; Kannisto, 2014). The paper is organised in the following manner: a brief literature review of the key features relating to contemporary backpackers. The research procedure and methods of data acquisition and analyses are then explained. This is followed by an analytical discussion of the principal dimensions of artisan backpacking culture in Latin America. Overall, this paper aims to give an overview of the development of artisan backpacker culture in Latin America, not an ethnographic overview of backpacker culture in general in Latin America.

2 Literature review

In most recent studies, the backpacker has been identified as an exhibitior of highly fluid journeys that include multi-destination itineraries (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Cohen, 2004; Hampton, 1998; Hamzah and Hampton, 2012; Hannam and Ateljevic, 2007; Hyde and Lawson, 2003; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Maoz, 2007; Muzaini, 2006; Noy, 2004; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Sørensen, 2003). Backpacker’s abilities to cover significant geographical regions in relatively short timeframes has been used to identify them, somewhat romantically, as ‘boundless’ or ‘nomadic’ tourists (Butler and Hannam, 2012). Indeed, this perhaps signifies that mobility is an intrinsic feature of their journeys (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004; Hannam and Ateljevic, 2007; Hannam and Diekmann, 2010; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Sørensen, 2003). The assertion of independence has been identified as a key ingredient for backpackers when constructing journeys, and the absence of it, according to Elsrud (2001), may significantly reduce the levels of excitement or adventure felt during their travel experiences. It has also been argued that many backpackers will go to considerable lengths to assert their individuality either by avoiding other tourists, or activities that are deemed to be too mainstream (Maoz, 2007; Sørensen, 2003). Moreover, the ‘flashpacker’ has been identified as a tourist who shares many of these demands, even if they reveal higher disposable incomes or embark on itineraries that are frequently shorter in duration (Butler and Hannam, 2014; Germann Molz and Paris, 2015).

Other studies that have observed backpacker travel behaviour suggest that independent tourists frequently seek unusual routes, as well as the avoidance of crowds (Elsrud, 2001; Muzaini, 2006; Sørensen, 2003). It is argued that they achieve this by arranging independent itineraries which permit flexibility and the opportunity to engage in new experiences. Yet, contrary to this assertion, it is also implied that backpackers are frequently bound by financial restrictions, and will thus, for example, rely upon public modes of transport when travelling between destinations (Butler and Hannam, 2012; Maoz, 2007; Muzaini, 2006; Noy, 2004). Moreover studies show that not all backpackers only travel and spend money, but – also to extend their journey and acquire necessary
The artisan backpacker

skills for working in a global world – travel and work (Duncan, 2008; Pizam et. al., 2000; Uriely and Reichel, 2000; Uriely, 2001; Wilson et al., 2009), for example on working holiday visas. Volunteering, too, has become a major activity while backpacking with organised networks or through gap year operators (Kosnik, 2013; Lyons and Wearing, 2008).

All of these studies, however, tend to focus on Western or Israeli backpackers. While, Asian backpackers from a variety of destinations have recently been researched (see Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006), there has been a significant lack of analysis of local backpackers in South America.

3 Methodology

The data for this paper was collected between 2007 and 2010 during two visits to Latin America and a variety of subsequent meetings with informants from 2010 to 2013. One of the authors [following Marcus’ recommendations on ‘multi-sited ethnography’ [Marcus, (1995), p.97f]] travelled in the same manner as the backpackers, following backpackers from different backgrounds to wherever was necessary. After an orientation period in South America she decided to mainly follow the ‘lonely planet’ routes and only go to other places when travelling with informants.

The first auto-ethnographic journey consisted of seven months duration, commenced in Lima, Peru and ended in Cartagena, Colombia. On this trip more than 20 different geographic locations were visited and the focus was on the different identities of Western, Israeli and South American backpackers. The main aim of this first research was to develop an ethnographic overview of the transnational backpacker culture in South America. Only a few weeks into the research it became clear that there was a different type of backpacker, the artisan backpacker, and special focus was placed upon following this type of backpacker.

The basis for this research was participant observation, as described by Bernard (2002, p.322). In contrast to participant observation in other cultures, in the case of the ‘backpacker’ it was actually possible to ‘go native’. However, constant role reflection was necessary and this was achieved with the help of diary entries. The participant observation took place in different hostels along the South American backpacker trail but also through a three month internship with the National Institute for National Parks in Bolivia. In a hostel in Lima – one of the authors worked against food and lodging as a ‘backployee’ for four weeks in order to get a better idea of the volunteering many backpackers participate in to save costs, and to get in touch with the South American backpackers and workers. Additionally participant observation took place in all the daily activities backpackers usually engage in, from visiting iconic destinations such Machu Picchu to more mundane travelling on mini buses.

In addition to participant observation, research methods included semi-structured interviews, unstructured conversations, a logbook and field notes, time allocation studies of the average backpacker activities, a quantitative survey at the beginning of the research on backpacker tourism opportunities in the Andes in the area around La Paz, and photographic documentation of symbols of backpacker culture as ‘aide-memoires’. Webpages (for example of hostels) and Facebook pages of informants were also utilised to develop contacts on the move.
In total 70 informants were engaged with as part of the overall data collection: 30 were western backpackers, 14 were artisan backpackers, 12 were Israeli backpackers and 14 were other informants working in backpacker tourism (tour guides, hostel owners etc.). By ‘engaged with’, we refer to the broader ethnographic process which included informal conversations which were written up in the form of a research diary as noted above. Of the 70 informants, 28 agreed to be formally interviewed. Seven of these interviewees agreed to be interviewed, but did not agree to be recorded and for these handwritten notes instead were taken during the interview. Interviews were conducted only with people that had been ‘known’ for more than two days, hence the sample is based upon and influenced by this selection criteria. This was deemed necessary in order to acquire a degree of trust with the interviewees and to be able to verify statements they made during the interview in comparison with their observed everyday behaviour. The semi-structured interview questions covered a number of key areas, namely, demographic background, experiences of Latin America, experiences of intercultural exchange, experiences of local community tourism, as well as a general narrative about their travel biographies. All of the informants interviewed or observed were informed about the research activity and gave their consent to be part of the research. All of the interviews took approximately one hour and, were recorded as mp3 and later transcribed. The language of the interview was German, Spanish or English, whichever felt more comfortable for the informant. All informants have been anonymised in this paper.

The second research trip took place in Central America, from Playa del Carmen, Mexico through Guatemala to Costa Rica and Bocas del Toro, Panama in 2010. This short six week trip was mainly to understand the dynamics of backpackers in Central America and to make comparisons with the observations made previously in South America. Again, the process of travel and research was similar to that described above but no formal semi-structured interviews were conducted. Additionally some of the informants from the two research phases were met again in their home countries (2009 in Israel) or in other places (2009 Spain, 2010–2015 Germany). This gave further data on the longer term developments in their lifestyles. Finally, before writing this paper, all data collected in the research was clustered and put into spreadsheets and qualitative data analysis was done with the help of a text management programme. Data from the interview transcripts and the ethnographic diary was coded accordingly to different themes, cross-referred and re-assembled according to connections.

4 The artisan backpackers

Understanding the economic base of different backpacker types is fundamental for understanding their group specific travel behaviour (Hampton, 1998). The difference between Western and Israeli backpackers, on the one side, and the artisan backpackers, on the other side, lies in the opportunity to raise money before their travel. Most backpackers from Western countries and Israel who are travelling in Latin America either work beforehand or are funded by their parents, allowing them to accumulate the necessary economic resources to fund their travels (Anderskov, 2002; Cohen, 2011; Uriely et. al., 2002). Artisan backpackers can be differentiated from the other two groups as they have less monetary resources available, which has led to them developing new economic activities, social patterns and travel plans as the following respondents identified:
“Sometimes you don’t earn anything for days, no one buys anything. I once got sick in such a time and I did not even have the money to buy medicine or to go anywhere else. [...] But usually the other artesanos will help you out. [...] What really helps is that in Latin America everything is negotiable, no price is fixed. You can often get things for half the price, especially if you are a local.”

[Daniel, Venezuela, 30+]

Here, Daniel emphasises two things. Firstly, the fact that there is a degree of solidarity between the artisan backpackers – that they help each other out. Secondly, he also highlights that being a local allows him to negotiate things cheaper than other backpackers. Nadim, further commented that:

“I have less money than other tourists. So I can’t afford to go in the fancy buses, I have to hitch rides or take the slow and cheaper buses. And I will not travel to stay one day here, two days in the next place. I travel to really get to know the place. Here in the Hostels I am helping building new rooms and I have lived here for four months. I can sleep here in the hammock and I get food often. [The owners] have become my family.” [Nadim, Argentina, 25+]

Nadim reflects on using a different, slower means of transport (local buses) than other backpackers. Moreover, he also conveys that he becomes embedded in particular places and that he feels that his hosts have become his family. Having less money thus shapes the artisan backpacker’s activities, their accommodation choices, their modes of transport and the duration of their stays when travelling. While other backpackers or flashpackers used the more expensive buses or their own cars, artisan backpackers relied on the cheaper public transport system and on the willingness to share and help of other people, as well as their negotiation skills.

Travelling with an artisan backpacker, one of the authors had to wait outside, while he would buy bus tickets – so that he could negotiate a good price. Her ‘Western’ appearance would have ruined ‘his deal’. The tendency to bargain on prices for food, accommodation and transport was widely used by all backpackers. The way in which Spanish was spoken in terms of language and accent between the artisan backpackers and their hosts was of significant help for them when bargaining. Whilst most Western backpackers are not accustomed to the activity of bargaining they find it disconcerting that Israelis sometimes may use their ability to bargain to their full advantage (Noy and Cohen, 2005). Artisan backpackers seemed to be less harshly judged by Western backpacker even for bargaining as hard, partly because they were themselves perceived as ‘locals’ and thus valued as knowing what was appropriate within Latin America. Israeli backpacker’s bargaining skills did not stop when buying artisan backpackers products, so they were not the most favourable customers for the artisan backpackers either. It was also experienced that through the bargaining process backpackers got to know each other better and sometimes spent some time ‘after business’ together socialising. Thus the bargaining skills became a resource, too, for Western and Israeli backpackers to engage more with local culture, but also for the artisan backpackers themselves in promoting their own cultural values and products and also in terms of getting to know the Western and Israeli backpacker culture better in terms of travel, music and dress. This aligns with the findings of Pizam et al. (2000) that the higher the intensity of cultural contact between host and working tourists the more positive is the experience of the country and the host, and the higher is the satisfaction of the tourist with their stay.
Even though artisan backpackers are travelling in Latin America, the Latin American culture is not, therefore, the only host culture. The Western and Israeli backpacker culture becomes a host culture for the artisan backpacker. Artisan backpackers sell their products mostly in touristic places, as other backpackers and tourists frequently appreciate their products much more than many of the local people. Artisan backpackers produce their crafts mainly out of four materials:

1. yarn with the macramé technique (a special way of knotting)
2. metal wire (mainly for jewellery)
3. leather (for jewellery, but also for clothing, shoes and accessories)
4. sculpture (using a sort of modelling clay that can be baked in the oven to harden it to produce jewellery, accessories and decoration).

Several types of gems or glass stones, glitter, feathers, pearls, fossils, shells, seeds and other natural material are added. These four materials are the main ones used, but creativity in production appears useful to avoid competition. The goods the artisan backpackers produce and sell are different types of hand-produced jewellery, as well as clothing and several types of accessories and souvenirs (see Figure 1, ‘The Artisan Backpacker’).

Figure 1  The artisan backpacker (see online version for colours)
The colours, styles and shapes may be described as coming from ‘hippie’ and fairy-tale themes, often with strong romanticised and stylised nature topics and exotic influences, which may be called broadly ‘ethnic’ in this context: symbols which are then worn by the Western backpacker in order to ‘look local’ (Muzaini, 2006). Even though the production style may vary with individuals, similarities were extremely obvious and all of the Western backpackers questioned during the research could identify typical artisan backpacker crafts. Thus the jewellery produced by the artisan backpackers seemed to be a well-received symbol of affiliation within the mainstream backpacker culture, which conversely also allowed the artisan backpackers themselves to participate in it. This was similar to the music played by artisan backpackers which was strongly influenced by local instruments, especially drums. Thus the artisan backpackers seem to have developed a product, which the Western and Israeli backpacker culture is willing to pay for (economic capital) and which also brings them cultural capital.

Whilst the Western and Israeli backpackers attend leisure oriented activities, which cost money, the artisan backpackers needed to spend a fair amount of their time accumulating money through the fabrication and selling of their hand craft products. Their daily routine was thus different: for example, artisan backpackers spent their days mostly sitting alone or in small groups at street corners and in tourist locations producing the hand-crafted items. At the same time their products were frequently being presented to possible buyers (Western and Israeli backpackers as well as locals) on cloths or stalls laid out in front of them, being visible to everyone passing by. They were often ‘on alert’ due to their lack of a work permit. There seemed to be fewer opportunities for the artisan backpacker to just go into a hostel, as the Western and Israeli backpacker’s did, to enjoy a ‘home away from home’, where they can relax and be only surrounded by their ‘own kind’ (Wilson and Richards, 2008). However, some artisan backpackers reported that they found local people helping them and hosting them for a while, representing something similar to the hospitality found in the Western backpacker’s homestay accommodation. Occasionally, artisan backpackers visited and entered the enclavic space of the Western backpacker hostel (Hottola, 2005), but most of the time this was for work and they did not integrate into the Western backpacker world – even though some ‘after work socialising’ occurred. Hence, the artisan backpacker inhabits a liminal space, mostly on the edge of the dominant Western and Israeli backpacker world, selling jewellery, working or making music.

Besides the production of souvenir crafts and jewellery for Western and Israeli backpackers, artisan backpackers also tended to do other jobs in addition, such as working in the kitchens in hostels, or informal activities, for example juggling at traffic lights in the cities, making music, presenting fire shows and hair braiding at tourism spots. They were concurrently musicians, artists and/or service providers. Some jobs were considered as necessities, others were seen with more passion – the more creative the job, the higher it was valued. Many backpacker hostel owners appreciated the artisan backpackers as volunteer workers (or ‘backployees’ as they were called in one Hostel in Lima, Peru) and valued their ‘cultural input’, as their products often helped associate the hostel with indigenous Latin American culture. They also sold their products in handicraft markets organised by the local governments or tourist information centres, as for example on the Feria de artesanía in Víleabamba, Ecuador.

No artisan backpacker interviewed, had an official economic licence to trade and their activities were always generally informal. According to Koens (2014, p.15), “informal work describes licit activities that are unregistered by or hidden from the state – either for
tax, social security and/or labour law purposes”. For artisan backpackers the explanation why they worked informally was straightforward even though it was not always clear for other actors: artisan backpackers travelled through different countries and would have to acquire a new license in each country, frequently involving long waiting times and complicated bureaucratic processes. In fact, the artisan backpackers rated the different Latin American countries in terms of how easy it was for them to get an entry visa and how difficult it was to sell their products. Additionally artisan backpackers seemed to enjoy the risks of informality and integrated this illegality into their identities, perceiving themselves as ‘outsiders’, ‘rebels’ and ‘hippies’. The overall tendency within artisan backpackers culture was to work only as much as was necessary to experience travelling, thus the activity of selling crafts and jewellery was a method to travel and not the other way around. When asked why they travelled, they referred mainly to ‘getting to know other cultures and people’, ‘exploring nature’ and to gain ‘freedom’. Such statements resonate with the wider, mainstream Western and Israeli backpacker culture (Welk, 2004; Hannam and Ateljevic, 2007).

One Peruvian artisan backpacker declared that working as an artisan backpacker facilitated real freedom, because the production and sale of craft work was their ‘credit card’. The smaller economic resources of the artisan backpackers though led to a need to create backpacking activities further off the ‘beaten track’, distinguishing them from the mainstream backpacking Industry: as one artisan backpacker argued - due to insufficient money, he had to climb Machu Picchu all by himself, with his own tent and no guide, hiking only during the night to not get caught by National Park authorities. Even though this story might be related to ‘risk creation’ in backpacking (Elsrud, 2001), the lack of economic resources seemed to put artisan backpackers at greater risk than other backpackers.

Welk (2004) has suggested that the backpacker value system is a rather flexible ‘Code of Honour’ consisting of five criteria:

1. travel with rather limited expense
2. get to know new and different people
3. be free, independent and open-minded
4. organise the trip to be independent and self-contained
5. travel for as long as possible” [Welk, (2004), p.79].

These codes of honour were also valid for the artisan backpackers and demonstrated that the broader hegemony of Western backpackers values. However, our research outcomes suggest the addition of one more ‘badge of honour’ which applied to the artisan backpackers in Latin America (Broocks, 2009): namely a deep involvement in the local, often indigenous culture and nature, including interaction with and absorption of knowledge relating to the local populations. Even though most of the artisan backpackers were Latin American they did not necessarily belong to the majority of the population that they were travelling through. Thus, their interest was more specifically in alternative indigenous lifestyles within Latin American societies and they were more interested in the cultures of the indigenous populations. As such the crafts they produced reflected this as the respondent below exemplified:
“My products are all organic, they come from nature: seeds, shells, stones. Everything ‘pachamama’ gives us. […] My dream is to live one day in a house on a little lake, being totally self-sufficient with solar [energy] and pumping my own water.” [Maria, Argentina, 25+]

Pachamama is traditionally the female goddess of the earth especially in the Andean tradition of the Aymara and Quechua. There was often reference made to *pachamama* by the artisan backpackers in referring to the idealised alternative lifestyles, living closer to nature and in a community. Often the artisan backpackers come from other countries or other classes in society, so that their knowledge of the indigenous groups was relatively limited and romanticised. There was significant interest in trying to get to know a ‘back to the roots’ way of living in contrast to the perceived Western, technologically dominated way of life. There were strong ideological similarities to the Woof volunteering network, as explored by Kosnik (2013), who describes the ideals of the network members as “moving to the country, living off the land, in harmony with nature and humanity, living self-sufficient and sustainably, avoiding the “alienating forces” of money and capitalism, and merging the spheres of home and work place” [Kosnik, (2013), p.243].

Artisan backpackers thus explored (and often romanticised) the indigenous populations in Latin America. The artisan backpackers talked passionately about their experiences with ‘shamans’, local remedies and ‘traditional’ religions. There was significant interest from artisan backpackers in trying local herbal drugs related to ‘traditional’ medicines such as the San Pedro-Cactus (*Echinopsis pachanoi*). Nevertheless, the specific work the artisan backpacker developed while travelling gave these young Latin Americans an opportunity to acquire capacities and social resources relevant for more mainstream working in tourism or overseas similar to Western and Israeli working tourists (Duncan, 2008; Uriely and Reichel, 2000; Uriely, 2001; Wilson et al., 2009). One artisan backpacker explained that he left Venezuela as he did not want to struggle under poor living conditions. Instead he became a surf instructor in Costa Rica in a famous backpacker and surfer town. The biography of one Colombian artisan backpacker demonstrated the ability to create a social network necessary to migrate while backpacking: he got to know a female Finnish backpacker while travelling and decided to spend a year abroad in Finland for his studies. During that year he founded his own small company importing local crafts from Peru and Bolivia to Finland and sold them at festivals and markets in Europe. He said that through his life as an artisan backpacker he had learnt English as well as cultural practices such as how to bargain with Europeans. Thus, working as an artisan backpacker had helped him to get used to travel and living abroad and also provided him with an opportunity to try out entrepreneurship, which helped him to gain the necessary confidence to later open up his own business. The specific way artisan backpackers travelled using local buses and accommodation also gave them an opportunity to get to know aspects of their own indigenous Latin American culture, as well as the Western and Israeli backpacking culture. Thus the artisan backpacker is able to travel and acquire information and skills in order to open up future opportunities though the establishment of an international social network of contacts.
5 Conclusions

In recent years Western backpacker tourism has developed into a mass phenomenon which has also been demonstrated by the growing density of the backpacker facilities throughout Latin America (Hannam and Ateljevic, 2007). Special bus services already connect hostels and restaurants now owned by former Western backpackers, and tour companies design their routes in terms of the demands of Western backpacker. Our qualitative data from Latin America shows strong similarities to other aspects of mainstream backpacking cultures around the world but also significant differences.

Unique to Latin America are the artisan backpackers, young people who fund their travels by selling self-made jewellery. In contrast to the ‘traditional’ mobile merchants or craftsmen of Latin America the group overlaps culturally and spatially with Western and Israeli backpackers. While they share a similar value system, the so-called dominant backpacking ‘code of honour’, in Latin America we can identify another value, namely a deeper involvement in the local, often indigenous culture and nature. Strong similarities could also be discerned between the ideological system of the artisan backpacker and the volunteer backpacker, particularly in terms of the need for risk creation.

The lack of sufficient monetary resources though shapes the ways in which artisan backpacker’s travel. They used different modes of transport and accommodation than other backpackers and they had to plan their days around their economic activities: crafting and selling their jewellery. Through trading and bargaining the artisan backpackers are able to improve their international business skills, their English language skills, and their geographical and touristic knowledge. They additionally became more embedded with the local population in order to negotiate their own identity as a Latin American.

Nevertheless, like many lifestyle travellers, artisan backpackers agreed that they produced and sold their hand crafts in order to facilitate travel, rather than the other way around. For the artisan backpacker the Western mainstream backpacking culture provides unique opportunities to participate in the globalised world and can also open up options for further education or other entrepreneurial activities and helps to build the resources for ongoing mobilities.

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