



THE POST-MAO GAZES

Chinese Backpackers in Macau

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Abstract: This paper offers insights into backpacker tourism from the People's Republic of China. Chinese backpackers are a distinctively post-Mao reform generation growing up at a time when China shifts from Mao Zedong's socialist policies to Deng Xiaoping's policy explorations with capitalism. Through distanced virtual ethnography of a leading internet forum, it has been discovered that the forum members' post-Mao backpacker gazes appropriate the postcolonial spaces of Macau in ways that contradict existing backpacker ideals and media and academic portrayal and stereotyping of Chinese youths, particularly concerning gender role adoption and the exoticising of postcolonial leisurescape. Backpacking in Macau also reveals the communal and differentiated nature of the tourist gaze and Chinese mobilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Proponents of the mobilities paradigm in the social sciences have variously argued that peoples, places and images in social life have been, and are, increasingly mobile (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Larsen, Urry, & Axhausen, 2007, p. 85; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Urry, 2004). Deriving from studies on backpackers originating from mobile developed economies (Cohen, 1972, 1973; Elsrud, 2001; Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Murphy & Pearce, 1995; O'Reilly, 2006; Riley, 1988; Sorensen, 2003; Uriely, Yonai, & Simchai, 2002; Vogt, 1976), backpacker, budget and youth tourism studies have seen mobility across national borders and geographical boundaries as an integral and unproblematic component of backpacking and

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expressed as practices of freedom, decadence, adventure, self-transformation and rites of passage. Building upon the efforts of the mobilities paradigm, this paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of this political-geographic aspect of backpacking. In particular, what happens when backpackers originate from countries where citizens did not travel freely within and across national territories and still face travel restrictions from many countries, and what happens when backpackers travel into a formerly colonised and ceded territory?

After an initial preoccupation with backpacker, budget and youth tourism practised by citizens from affluent ‘developed’ economies, attention is beginning to turn to the conduct of such travels by peoples from developing economies and fast-expanding urban spaces in Asia. Research to address this initial Eurocentrism can be observed in the works of Muzaini (2006), Ong (2005) and Teo and Leong (2006). More recently, such nascent efforts are furthered with studies on Chinese backpackers (Lim, 2009; Shepherd, 2009). Such investigation has uncovered the more communal nature, high usage of internet forums for socialisation and shorter length of stay characterising Chinese and Asian backpacking, but not how it affects lived experiences. Such research efforts into Chinese backpackers happen alongside increased scholarly interest in Chinese outbound tourism (Arlt, 2006; Chan, 2009; Cheng, 2007; Nyiri, 2009; Ryan & Mo, 2002) and the role of nationality in shaping travel and the tourist motivation (see, Maoz, 2007; Pizam & Sussmann, 1995). In particular, Arlt (2006) argues that Chinese outbound tourism has arrived at a third stage of increased diversification of tourism motivations and practices. Focusing on the interaction and power-relations between host countries and Chinese tourists, Chan asserts that Chinese outbound tourism is constituted in a “disorganised tourism space” (Chan, 2009, p. 67). Substantial existing research on Israeli and Australian-New Zealander backpackers has helped tourism academia understand the ways in which national peculiarities such as compulsory military service and turbulent political situation in Israel (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Maoz, 2004, 2007; Noy & Cohen, 2005) and the strong gap year culture in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United Kingdom (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; O’Reilly, 2006) foment specific travel motivations and performances. However, little is known about backpacker, youth or budget tourists from Mainland China.

Post-Mao China has undergone rapid and sweeping socio-cultural changes (Halliday, 1980; Lee, 1999; Smith, 1993; Wang, 2003; Zhang, 1999). In addition to informing tourism academia about the increasingly complex nature of Chinese outbound tourism segments, an analysis of Chinese budget tourists also has the potential to shed light on the conditions and contradictions of the post-Mao Chinese society and particularly the *balinghou* (post-80s) and *jiulinghou* (post-90s) generations that constitute Chinese backpacking or budget tourism. Collectively dubbed the ‘Generation Y’ of the Chinese society, these post-Mao generations have been argued by existing research to possess a materialistic and self-centred ‘me-culture’ (Rosen, 2009; Sabet, 2010; Sima & Pugsley, 2010; Wang, 2005; Zimmerman, 2010). Born in the 80s and 90s, the *balinghou* and *jiulinghou* generations of Chinese youths

grew up at a time of rising capitalism and a retreat of socialism as political power shifted from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping in the late 70s (Halliday, 1980; Lee, 1999; Smith, 1993; Wang, 2003; Zhang, 1999).

Building upon the conceptual architecture of French philosopher Michel Foucault's '*le regard*' or 'the gaze' (Foucault, 1994, 1995), tourism researchers have responded to Urry's (2002) call to attend to the existence of different forms of gazes and their implications on the tourist self and setting in tourism (Bruner, 1991; Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Hollinshead, 1999; Maoz, 2006; McGregor, 2000; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Ryan, Hughes, & Chirgwin, 2000). This paper follows such an approach to the analysis of Chinese budget tourism in Macau. In doing so, this analysis seeks to go beyond the more static view of cultural values of Chinese tourists (see e.g., Mok & DeFranco, 1999) to investigate how post-Mao gazes in Chinese budget tourism are shaped by shifting discourses in contemporary Chinese society. While Xiao (2006) analysed the discourses of power brought about by Mao's successor Deng Xiaoping's policies, Xiao's analysis focuses on tourism development in China and does not consider the ways in which individual tourists make sense of and negotiate their tourism subjectification. In particular, this paper seeks to discover the ways in which such gazes are constructed and performed as Chinese backpackers travel to and negotiate a formerly ceded territory.

China has two Special Administrative Regions—Macau and Hong Kong. These are formerly colonised territories which are now granted fifty years of internal self-governance by the Chinese Central Government within the 'One Country, Two System' framework. Formerly a colony of Portugal, Macau borders the southern city of Zhuhai at the town of Gongbei (see Fig. 1).

According to the *Statistics and Census Service Macau SAR Government*, tourist arrivals from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong (also the highest) are not classified as domestic arrivals. However, Macau does grant Chinese tourists more privileges than they would receive in many other tourist destinations as the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) exists and allows Chinese tourists from an increasing number of mainland cities to visit Macau and/or Hong Kong independently.

Tourist arrivals in Macau under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) are significant both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of numbers, they made up 28.7 and 22.1 percent of total tourist arrivals in 2008 and 2009 (see Table 1). Despite a tightening of visas granted to Guangdong residents in July 2008 (AsiaOne, 2008), visitor numbers from the mainland remained stable. Currently, there is no existing study that maps the exact range of tourism motivations and activities of tourists visiting Macau under the Individual Visit Scheme (also known as the Facilitated Independent Travel). However, from Vong (2007), it is understood that a significant portion of the tourists who visited Macau on the IVS are gaming tourists. Less is known about the IVS tourists who are not chiefly motivated by gaming. This study looks at the social construction of the tourism motivation of one fragment of this non-gaming IVS tourist segment—the Chinese backpackers. Despite their small numbers, this is a significant group

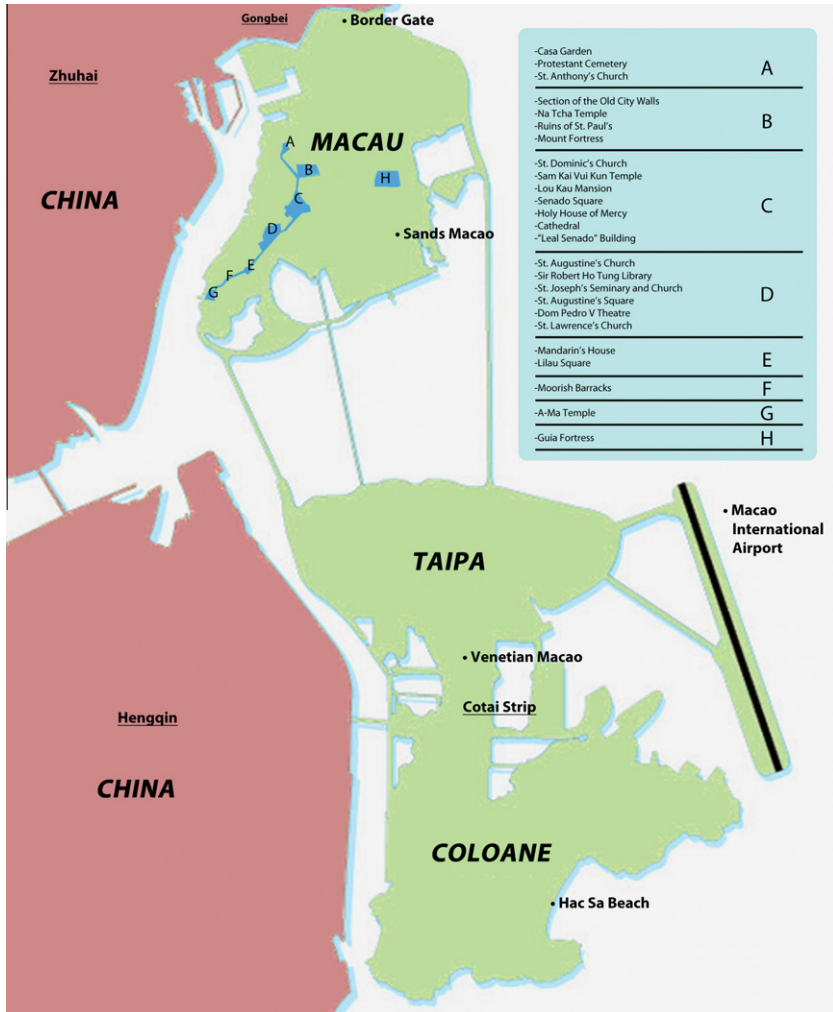


Figure 1. Map Illustrating the Location of Attractions and Places in Macau and Zhuhai Mentioned in the Paper

Table 1. Visitor Arrivals by Place of Residence (Source: Statistics and Census Service, Macau SAR Government)

Place of Residence	Mainland China		Hong Kong	Taiwan	Japan	Others	Total
	IVS	GPT					
2008	6,586,403	5,026,768	7,016,479	1,315,865	366,920	2,620,750	22,933,185
2009	4,809,878	6,179,655	6,727,822	1,292,551	379,241	2,363,604	21,752,751
2010	5,486,173	7,742,885	7,466,139	1,292,734	413,507	2,563,973	24,965,411

as group package tours to Macau are likely to decline in favour of independent tours as more destinations acquire the Approved Destination Status and as the Chinese outbound tourism market matures (Arlt, 2006).

To cast light on the travel motivation and performance of independent Chinese travellers, a greater understanding of Chinese backpackers is necessary. To this end, the discursive spaces of a key Chinese backpacking forum on cyberspace are analysed in this paper. This analysis builds on a burgeoning interest in ethnographies of the internet (Beaulieu, 2004; Hart, 2004; Hine, 2000, 2005; Rybas & Gajjala, 2007) in the social sciences and adopts a virtual ethnographic method where the online environment is the site of fieldwork. A thematic and discursive analysis of the text articulated by forum participants concerning their backpacking activities is conducted.

Mobilising the Gaze in Tourism and Backpacking

The connection between mobility and the tourist gaze is an important one. Both concern the workings of power within tourism. Such Foucauldian founded analyses on discourse, imaginings and tourism experiences are on the rise (see e.g., Bochaton & Lefebvre, 2009; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Hollinshead, 2009; Law, Bunnell, & Ong, 2007; Teo & Leong, 2006) but so too have their critiques. Critiques of the concept of the gaze in tourism or the 'tourist gaze' have focused tourism academia's attention on the Eurocentrism of the concept's historical roots and its uncritical application to Asian tourists and tourism (Winter, 2009) and the dualism—gazed and gazer—it evokes (Maoz, 2006). These critiques can tend to focus on the mobile and mutual aspects of the concept: the backpacker and tourist subjects as travelling gazers and together with residents and workers of places toured, they form mutually gazing tourism encounters. It is also important to recognise the concept's utility in identifying how power in backpacking and tourism is embedded beyond the confines of tourism industry and entangled in the social-constructedness of everyday living (Hollinshead, 1999). In Urry's words:

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze (2002, p. 3).

However, like Foucault's medic in *The Birth of the Clinic*, such a backpacker gaze is not a trivial one as it is authorised by an array of 'scientific' discourses and is one that rationalises and calculates:

But the medical gaze was also organised in a new way. First, it was no longer the gaze of any observer, but that of a doctor supported by and justified by an institution, that of a doctor endowed with the power of

decision and intervention...it was a gaze that was not content to observe what was self-evident; it must make it possible to outline chances and risks; it was calculating (Foucault, 1994, p. 89).

Chiefly operated by the backpackers and backpacker tourism industry, the backpacker gaze is “supported and justified” (Foucault, 1994, p. 89) by adventure travel guides, popular and beach/rave party cultures, lifestyle magazines and other everyday cultural authorities. Foucault’s *le regard* or ‘the gaze’ is made mobile when researchers apply it to the tourism context. When applied to tourism, it reminds tourism researchers that tourist imaging and imaginings are tied to and shaped by broader societal ideals and discourses.

While tourism researchers have responded to Urry’s (2002) application of Foucault’s concept in tourism and have uncovered different forms of gazes and investigated their implications for the tourist self and setting in tourism (Bruner, 1991; Galani-Moutafi, 2000; Hollinshead, 1999; Law et al., 2007; Maoz, 2006; McGregor, 2000; Ong, 2005; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000) the ways in which the tourist gaze actually travels is still relatively unknown. This paper seeks to understand the ways in which different discourses were enrolled into post-Mao gazers and gazes including the cinematic discourses, media and political discourses and discourses the post-Mao generations construct. In doing so, this analysis seeks to go beyond the more static view of cultural values of Chinese tourists (see e.g., Mok & DeFranco, 1999) and of development discourses of Chinese tourism (Xiao, 2006) to investigate how post-Mao gazes in Chinese budget tourism are shaped by shifting discourses in contemporary Chinese society and to consider the ways in which individual backpackers make sense of and negotiate their tourism subjectification. As such, this analysis concerns itself with the social-constructedness behind the touring, viewing and sensing subjects as they travel into a postcolonial space. Building upon the mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006), it tries to understand more of the thinking behind the post-Mao generation’s movements and travels. In particular, this work seeks to discover the ways in which such gazes are constructed and performed as Chinese backpackers travel to and negotiate a formerly ceded territory. How will post-Mao gazes work in China’s formerly colonised territories? In doing so, this paper seeks to provide a more mobile conception of the touring and backpacking gaze in tourism and contribute to a broader, burgeoning corpus of work interrogating citizenship, identity and mobilities in contemporary societies (Bunnell, 2004; Ong, 2000, 2003).

Understanding Post-Mao Society in Chinese Cyberspace

Post-Mao policy reforms have greatly pluralised Chinese society and contemporary Chinese youth (Lee, 1999; Rosen, 2009; Wang, 2003, 2005). Up until mid-2008, it was common to find Chinese youth under attack from media and academia characterised as a ‘me-culture’ (Rosen, 2009; Sima & Pugsley, 2010; Zimmerman, 2010) and criticised for being dependent, rebellious, cynical, pragmatic, self-centred and

equality-obsessed (Rosen, 2009; Sabet, 2010; Sima & Pugsley, 2010). Contemporary Chinese youth are also said to have fuelled widespread middle-class aspirations and consumption (Wang, 2005) or given China its first generation of sedentary couch potatoes addicted to online gaming, American fast-food and Hollywood movies (Rosen, 2009). However, the media stance on Chinese youths changed after a group of Chinese youths valiantly rescued and helped victims of the Sichuan earthquake of May 12, 2008.

Backpacker tourism research provides a good window into such a phenomenon. Research on Chinese backpackers (Lim, 2009; Shepherd, 2009) and Chinese youths on self-organised domestic and international tours (Chan, 2009; Nyiri, 2009), have to date, helped reveal some aspects of this post-Mao generations. For example, it has been found that Chinese backpacking has two distinctly Chinese characteristics: a dependence on cyberspace space interactions in backpacking forums to help constitute the backpacking activities in real space, and a distinctive code of ethos and language that foster community spirit and teamwork (Lim, 2009). Chinese backpackers also tend towards the spectacle and the superficial; preferring to dwell on the exotic images of a destination rather than seeking authenticity (Shepherd, 2009).

The mutually constitutive nature of cyberspace interactions and real space backpacking in Chinese backpacking make the cyberspace a good field site for Chinese backpacker research. Researchers conducting studies of the Internet have distinguished between virtual ethnography and cyber-ethnography (Beaulieu, 2004; Hart, 2004; Hine, 2000, 2005; Rybas & Gajjala, 2007; Teli, Pisanu, & Hakken, 2007). While both are derived from anthropological roots, virtual ethnographers are more concerned with the use of the cyberspace as a site of social interactions and cyber-ethnographers are more interested in the ways in which the cyberspace is constituted in real, everyday life. Both approaches are beneficial for backpacker and tourism research. Virtual ethnography is particularly relevant for tourism as it allows for unobtrusive study of backpackers and tourists.

Study Methods

Much has been written in the last three years on the usefulness of tourism forums and online diaries of tourists for tourism. Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts (2007), for instance, have considered the usefulness and implications of travel blogs as destination marketing tools. Other tourism researchers, in turn, have looked to tourism blogs as research materials and spaces for understanding tourist characteristics, motivations and preferences (Carson, 2008; Wenger, 2008), tourists' decision-making (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2007; Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2008) and the ways in which destination images are framed (Pan & Ryan, 2007). Existing research has also considered the role of tourism blogs as tools for facilitating tourists' travel planning (Sharda & Ponnada, 2008), for educating hospitality students (Cobanoglu, 2006) and

tourism blogging as social media for human interactions (Thevenot, 2007). Furthermore, current research on Chinese backpackers has shown that the Internet, through the development of Web 2.0 (that supports social media networking platforms), now provides opportunities to form cybercommunities for these alternative tourists (Chan, 2009; Lim, 2009; Sparkes & Pan, 2009).

Accordingly, post-Mao generation comprises the *jiulinghou* (born after 1990) and to a lesser extent, the *balinghou* (born after 1980), who can be characterized by their extensive usage of the Internet, so the cyberspace is an appropriate place to study Chinese budget tourists. This paper builds upon such endeavours and looks upon tourism blogs as representational spaces for observing communication, interactions and motivations of Chinese tourists.

To help probe the intricate qualitative aspects of the tourism motivations and practices of such a niche form of tourism, this study adopted a 'distanced virtual ethnographic approach' in Chinese internet forums and web-blogs (Morton, 2001, p. 6). Such an approach focuses more on the textual, leading Schwara (1999, p. 271) to term the approach as "discursive and communicative." Virtual ethnography in Chinese internet forums and web-blogs is meant to serve as a less intrusive platform for understanding the nature of Chinese tourists' gaze. Chinese tourists, like most Chinese citizens, are articulate people who are likely to alter and censor (intentionally or unintentionally) their responses when they are conscious of being researched (Report on the Development of Beijing Youth, 2007; Rosen, 2004, 2009). Thus, the advantage of using a distanced virtual ethnography lies in its ability to reveal insights unaltered by the researcher's presence. Ethically, internet forums are public domains and although research intention was not announced in virtual space, the researchers have not used private and sensitive materials. This lack of disclosure is done in view of helping Chinese tourists to reveal themselves at their most candid and in-situ pre-travel and post-travel states.

However, not all Chinese travel forums are active and many are created by people with considerable marketing interest rather than those who are sincere in sharing travel information, knowing fellow tourists and sharing post-trip gossip, photographs and stories. Hence, Mofang ('The Mill') was chosen as this is a long established forum having first grown out of SINA (www.sina.com), a pioneering travel forum. This forum was the most active and reputable/genuine travel forum at the time of the research. By this it is meant that the travel forum is set up by real tourists and not marketers and a considerable amount of information sharing, rapport and culture have evolved in the Mofang community. The forum also has an active Macau section where a group of regular backpackers discuss, initiate contact and share stories of their travels, unlike other smaller and less active Chinese travel forums. Finally, as the study is observational and non-participatory, it is not possible to probe and prompt salient themes when they emerge. While internet forums provide a less intrusive means to observe tourism motivations and practices, the approach taken cannot pay attention to body language, gestures and behaviours.

Three times a week, one of the authors would log on and observe the interactions online. The texts articulated by the forum members were copied, coded and annotated. Thematic analysis is applied to analyse key themes within the data-set (Holliday, 2007; Patton, 2002; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Such an approach differs from a content analysis perspective. Instead of looking out for frequencies or occurrences, a thematic analysis focuses on tracing and understanding the meanings social actors inscribe to objects, ideas, events, encounters and interactions. First, the authors worked on “discovering the themes” within the datasets (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85). This was done by following patterns of meanings that formed during the time of ethnographic observation and reading and re-reading fieldnotes. In this case, the forum postings were read and reread by one of the authors until categories of meanings emerged. This was then followed by a process of “winnowing themes to a manageable few” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85) by considering which themes were most important for the research. The selected themes were then recorded in a codebook. The authors then worked on a hierarchy of themes and reflected on the ways in which these build into or construct concepts and theories. In this case, the authors found the themes that emerged from the dataset speak to concepts of, for example, the gaze, mobilities, community and gender. Such a thematic approach builds on the epistemological foundations of social constructionism (Hollinshead, 2004; Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007; Ryan & Collins, 2008; Ryan & Hall, 2001) and symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 2001; Goffman, 1982; Ryan & Collins, 2008) and helps empower qualitative inquiry (Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001).

POST-MAO GAZES IN MACAU

Exoticising and Negotiating Postcolonial Spaces

The tendencies for tourists to see destinations as liminal spaces (Ryan & Hall, 2001) and for the tourist gaze to exoticise or eroticise spaces toured are well documented (see e.g., Law et al., 2007; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000; Shepherd, 2009). However, what happens when the spaces toured were spaces formerly ceded to colonial powers? What happens when post-Mao gazers travel in postcolonial spaces only just returned to the ‘motherland’ in 1999?

Macau Peninsula joins Gongbei in Zhuhai in the north and Hac Sa Beach on Coloane Island is furthest south in Macau (see Fig. 1). To many Chinese backpackers residing in the neighbouring cities in Guangdong, the postcolonial spaces of Macau were appropriated as budget leisure spaces. Led by experienced backpacker FBI008, a group of five to seven Chinese backpackers visited Macau regularly. Most of these trips were scheduled on weekends or coincided with special holidays and events in Macau: for example, the fireworks festival and Macau Grand Prix. A typical trip for this group of Chinese backpackers would start with the crossing of the Gongbei Border immigration on foot. Then they either travelled on public transport or peddled around on their foldable bicycles. For those travelling with bigger or heavier

backpacks, the casinos would be where they head for first as a free and secure bag deposit service was available there. Then they visited the World Heritage attractions, particularly the St Paul's Ruins area where they not only experience some cultural heritage (a mixture of Portuguese and mostly Chinese elements), but also have a free tasting of almond biscuits, barbecue meat slices and other food products popular with package tourists.

Following that, forum entries described how they would travel with their backpacks to Hac-Sa (Black Sand) Beach in Coloane Island. This is a rare naturally occurring black sand beach and a public park with a host of quality camping facilities and barbecuing facilities. There, the budget tourists would spend their evening barbecuing fish balls, chicken wings and sausages on sticks, playing on the beach and pitching their tents. By camping overnight, they not only enjoyed an outdoor experience, they also avoided paying the high hotel tariffs, because affordable backpacker accommodation is currently lacking in Macau.

Besides the general use of Macau's postcolonial spaces as affordable leiscapes, Chinese backpackers were also found to have exoticised Macau. To the Chinese backpackers who were nearly all ethnic Han Chinese, Macau, with its Portuguese and Catholic heritage, is cast and gazed upon as a cultural other. Macau's slower pace of urban redevelopment has also provided old vernacular landscapes that contrast romantically with the more sanitised and modern urban spaces in Chinese cities. While recent tourism research (e.g., Larsen et al., 2007) has uncovered some instances of de-exoticised and everyday tourism, Chinese backpackers have been found to focus on making Macau sites spectacular and exotic in the forum entries. One entry by the backpacker Wanderer is particularly illustrative. Drawing upon the images and narratives of *Isabella* (Pang, 2006), a Hong Kong made film set in Macau, Wanderer wrote:

Isabella! Isabella! Isabella! I can't forget the scenes in the movie Isabella...scenes of the female protagonist running in search of her beloved missing dog in the streets of Macau... the search, the pursuit...I am very touched...after watching the film, I have always wanted to retrace the settings of the film and immerse in the same romantic ambience (Posted by Wanderer, 15 May 2006).

It is not possible to reproduce Wanderer's entire forum posting. Wanderer went on to introduce the places he had visited: The Ruins of St Paul's, The Guia Lighthouse and Penha Church. These were all key settings of the film and as Wanderer narrates and reflects on his experiences at these sites, he interspersed them with recollections of the film, appearing to use the film as a tool for exoticising these places:

Suddenly a church appeared before me... Maybe Isabella is hidden within such religious splendour? Entering the church, the serenity and peace one experienced in the church was in stark contrast to the bustling streets outside. As I turned away, I saw a lady praying with great dedication. She reminds me of the female protagonist in *Isabella*. (Posted by Wanderer, 15 May 2006).

However, not all attempts at consuming Macau as a space of spectacle and splendour relied on cinematic devices. An account by Country Bumpkin illustrates how Chinese backpackers view the cultural heritage as beautiful backdrops for their touristic consumption:

Saturday afternoon, it looks like the weather is pretty good, a little grey and hazy, let me take a gamble and visit Macau

Of course, this trip is not for gambling. ☺

[Picture of Penha Church in Macau] Here I am, just arriving in Macau.

This is the Penha Church. We made it a point to come to this place so we can get to see the sunset. Many lovers and couples come to this church for their wedding pictures. I wanted to take a picture of the bride but was spotted by her friends. ☹

(Posted by Country Bumpkin, 21 Jan 2009).

In Country Bumpkin's recollections of his trip to the less accessible Penha Church, what was emphasized was the beauty of the place and how it forms a backdrop not only to his own photographic desires but also to the gazes of wedding couples and their friends and families. He also took a romantic view of the everyday landscapes of Macau, exoticising what was a common streetscape:

After getting off the public bus, what caught my attention was this old ruined house. On this street, we can find many unique and stylish houses. However, I find these houses a little strange. The evening made the ruins appear melancholic (Posted by Country Bumpkin, 23 Jan 2009).

This is congruent with what Shepherd (2009) has found in his study of Han Chinese in Tibet and is a case of 'orientalising' a comparatively 'ruined' and 'quaint' Macau on the part of Chinese backpackers. While such superficial engagement with Macau's culture and heritage can be said to conform to what McKercher and du Cros (2003) describe as the practices of 'sightseeing cultural tourists', it also speaks of the ways in which the touristic and urban identity of Macau is tied to its cinematic representations and connects post-Mao gazers' experience of exoticising and negotiating Macau's postcolonial spaces to a broader spectrum of city and cinematic engagements (see e.g., Donald & Gammack, 2007). Rather than eliciting unpleasant and difficult narratives of Macau's colonial past, a post-Mao gazer's experience with landscape articulating Macau's colonial history is intertwined with her/his cinematic encounters. The use of filmic representations to exoticise Macau can be seen as post-Mao gazers way of negotiating Macau's postcolonial spaces.

Besides the feel-good factor of exoticising Macau, negotiating the postcolonial spaces of Macau does conjure some frustrations and ill-feelings for these Chinese backpackers as well. As noted by researchers in tourism and mobility research, not everyone and not every tourist have similar access to mobility. Border crossings between Mainland China and its two Special Administrative Regions (SAR) have brought out some social differences and hierarchy

within post-Mao society as some Chinese citizens are allowed to travel more freely to the two SARs than others. One blogger even laments that if residents from the two SARs (Hong Kong and Macau) can be said to be first class citizens of China based on their freedom to travel and international mobility and if residents of coastal cities in China can be seen as second class citizens of China based on their privileged access to the two SARs, then inland city and rural dwellers must be the third class citizens of China. In a thread posted in January 2007 after a Macau weekend trip to review and share post-trip photographs, tales and experiences, the issue of freedom, equality and citizen rights surfaced. The forum discussion between forum members Direct Action, Snowman on a Sunny Day, Extraordinary Unusual and FBI008 posted on 9 Feb 2007 is reproduced below:

Direct Action: I envy you Guangdong people. You are second class citizens [of China]. You can go to Macau and Hong Kong whenever you fancy.

Snowman on a Sunny Day: Just go back to your residential place, apply for your Macau and Hong Kong pass and upon arrival in Guangzhou, present your temporary residence permit and you can get your visa. What's there to envy? ☺

Direct Action: Indeed a case of second class citizens failing to understand third class citizen affairs. Non-coastal city-registered residents, even with a Macau and Hong Kong pass, would not be able to freely visit Macau and Hong Kong. We would have to join a package tour and travel as a group. Understand?

Extraordinarily Unusual: Aren't all of us first class citizens? Why the segregation into second class and third class citizens? In your view, who are the first class citizens?

FBI008: Hong Kong and Macau residents are first class citizens. Second class citizens are residents of major Chinese cities. As for third class and fourth class, you can follow this logic and make your own judgments.

Currently, Chinese nationals face travel restrictions, even to the two SARs. In many Approved Destination Status places, Chinese nationals commonly have to undergo tedious paperwork and are allowed only to travel in group package tours. Independent travel to the two SARs, however, was made possible on July 28, 2003 under the Individual Visit Scheme. This scheme contained some geographical biases, which caused the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the above-mentioned forum exchange. When the scheme was first initiated, only residents from Guangdong's Zhongshan, Dongguan, Jiangmen and Foshan cities are eligible. It was later enlarged under the framework of the Mainland and Macau Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and its supplements, and extended to include the whole of Guangdong, Beijing and Shanghai in May 2004, and to nine other cities in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian in July 2004. By January 2007, 17 more cities were

added to the list taking the total to 49. The Individual Visit Scheme makes independent travel and backpacking easier for residents from the more affluent Chinese cities but excludes those from the economically less developed ones. Hence post-Mao travel is a highly differentiated and regulated one.

While one may equate this differentiation of post-Mao travellers and their gazes with their obsession with equality, backpacking's ethos of freedom makes such travel restrictions ironic. In addition to differentiating the post-Mao gazes of various residential origins, border-crossing between what Chinese backpackers see as different places of the same country frustrates them as well. For instance, in a posting named 'independent tour in Macau: The joy and pain', respected Macau-based forum pioneer FBI008 laments the irony of border crossing for fellow Chinese nationals:

Allow me to comment on this posting . . .

The joy and happiness comes from knowing Macau is a great place
The pain lies in the immigration control . . . it has been 10 years since the handover, do we still need to do two immigration checks (between Gongbei and Macau)? Afraid of Chinese people sneaking into a Chinese place? Afraid of Chinese people smuggling personal items into a Chinese place?

(Posted by FBI008, 12 Dec 2007).

FBI008's frustrations were likely to have come not only from the inconveniences of immigration controls between Gongbei and Macau but also from the emotional hurt he felt from being excluded from what he thinks is a "Chinese place". As the Chinese cyberspace is still a regulated and policed sphere, FBI008's comments are worth noting and may point to a rising sense of nationalism or changing attitudes towards China's formerly ceded territories amongst the post-Mao generations. It also illustrates the fragmented and unequal ways in which the post-Mao generation travels and the constrained freedom to travel for citizens from certain geographical locations of the China and the privileged mobilities of the citizens of the two SARs.

Maintaining and Building Community

As post-Mao gazers travel into the postcolonial spaces of Macau, the social and communal nature of the tourist gaze becomes more apparent. This brings to the fore some commonalities and contradictions with traits alleged of the post-Mao generations. While most Chinese backpackers who participated on the forum demonstrate tendencies towards self-expression and identity exhibition, they do these with an audience in mind and constantly sought peer-affirmation. For example, many would post travel pictures and while compliments were not explicitly sought, they were usually bestowed. The same can be said about travel narratives. Very often, Chinese backpackers will reaffirm each other's sense of adventure and backpacking style when responding

to forum postings of those who ‘triumphantly’ returned. In other cases, they seek socialisation more directly, seeking to make new friends, maintain friendships and build communities. To a certain extent, such cyber-activities and communities also forged a form of mobile self-regulation (Molz, 2006). Hence, the social networking component of their travels is very evident as well.

Second, in addition to getting to know new people, as can be observed from many personal calls for new travelling mates, emphasis is also placed on fostering and preserving old ones. In this case, the correspondences between Green Light Bamboo and FBI008 are most illustrative. FBI008 is organizing a tough cycling-cum-camping trip and has posted a notice gathering able cyclists and well-equipped campers. Not having the fitness and cycling skills, FBI008’s friend, Green Light Bamboo asked:

Can I take a bus there? Let me cycle only when I am in Macau. I want to reserve a ‘broken’ bicycle from FBI! Also, it is fun to play cards by the beach. I will bring two packs of poker cards. Hopefully, there is someone else keen on playing cards! (Posted by Green Light Bamboo, 25 Nov 2007).

Such networking and maintenance of community was shaped within Confucian-endorsed gender rules and roles. In Confucius’ teachings, women are to play supportive rather than leading roles in family and society (Tang & Tang, 2001). The thread ended with the women who wanted to join the trip by bus agreeing to cook for the men who are cycling over. They also agreed to spend just one night there playing cards by the beach, because one of the women who had her eyes on cosmetics shopping encouraged the other women in the group to join her. These actions demonstrated that in cooking for the men they were following traditional Confucian gender roles (in contrast to post-Mao stereotypes); and in seeking out high-priced consumer goods they were flouting traditional backpacker values.

The post-Mao One-Child Policy has created several generations in the cities of China that have grown up as the only child in the family. This has resulted in a degree of isolation from peers. Backpacking, as observed from the forum, appears to serve as an outlet for socialisation and close friendships and budding romances appear to be on the cards on these trips. While no one openly flirts over the internet forum (tough sanctions would be applied), the virtual ethnographers can feel the close friendships and budding romances through the speed and eagerness of some internet exchanges and responses, through the subtle show of support and encouragement and through the body language displayed in the photographs published on the forum after the trips.

Third, far from being ‘pampered emperors’ (Zimmerman, 2010), the post-Mao backpackers demonstrate that, they too, can be up for some adventure and transgression. However, such displays have a Confucius-shaped gender bias too and are usually made only by the male backpackers. Hence, what is formed is a gendered community

where male and female backpackers fulfil and play to their Chinese gender roles. For example, forum members Panluo and Paoyong embarked on a long-distance cycling trip between Hac Sa Beach and Guangzhou via Hengqin after completing the Macau Marathon. They had first run the gruelling marathon, camped the night at Hac Sa Beach and decided to push their bodies and sense of adventure further by riding back to Guangzhou.

Overall, Panluo and Paoyong's adventure included cycling in low light conditions and strong headwinds, navigating the rural and urban landscapes, dealing with a punctured tire, many illegal bridge crossings and a significant distance covered for time they said it took. They took numerous pictures to commemorate their adventure (including a picture of the Sun Yat-Sen's Former Residence and Memorial Museum) and the resultant travel story had quite a number of MMs (*meimeis*, or younger sisters, the generic name for female travel bloggers) praising their courageous and athletic feats. It is interesting to note how such adventures are commonly gendered. They were usually undertaken by male backpackers and when successful, were praised for being courageous, competent and manly by female bloggers. In these gendered backpacking communities, Chinese women backpackers were not expected to engage in these physically strenuous and dangerous activities. It also points to the ways in which these post-Mao gazers' mobilities were gendered. While post-Mao gazers of both genders appeared equally active and mobile in the virtual spaces of the forum, posting and responding to comments, it is the men who were authorised by the post-Mao backpacking culture, both genders co-created who were scripted to conduct more adventurous and transgressive activities in real physical spaces.

CONCLUSION

In seeking to provide a less static view of the cultural values of Chinese independent tourists, this study has drawn upon insights from the mobilities paradigm and applied a new approach to studying how mobility across national borders is perceived by the Chinese backpackers attracted to Macau. Also, to show that the discourse on backpackers needs to be broadened to take into account that regarding the cultural values of those from developing countries, where travel is becoming more affordable and desirable with a growing middle-class sensibility. While artefacts, products, ideas and people appear to be crossing borders and traversing physical spaces with increasing ease and velocity, it is important for tourism academia to be reminded that such new mobilities are fragmented and unequal; and also reminded that post-Mao Chinese society has undergone rampant changes.

However, Chinese outbound tourism still remains a tightly regulated phenomenon. At the time of writing, it is still frustratingly tedious and complex, and in some places impossible for Chinese

tourists to travel independently as very few countries grant individual visas to Chinese tourists. Macau, one of China's two Special Administrative Regions, provides a rare opportunity for Chinese backpackers to experience independent travel and understand the tourism experiences of this group of not-so-free backpackers. Using a thematic analysis of virtual distanced ethnographic data, this paper has uncovered some of the ways in which the Chinese backpackers' post-Mao gazes work as they travel into the postcolonial spaces of Macau. This type of analysis has proved efficacious in showing that Chinese backpackers appropriate Macau, a territory formerly colonised by Portugal, as an exoticised leiscapescape and a form of liminal space. Future studies using this approach, could investigate whether other segments of the Chinese independent market also tend to appropriate Macau, Hong Kong or even Taiwan as an exoticised leiscapescape with a unique postcolonial viewpoint.

Appreciation of Macau's culture, nature and heritage were conducted by the forum participants studied at a more superficial sight-seeing level with emphasis being made on film sites, nostalgia and the aesthetics. Instead of prompting anti-colonial feelings or inquiries into Macau's colonial past, gazes were found to be alighting on photogenic scenes less associated with a deep or authentic experience of Macau's culture. Significantly, it was found that maintaining and building communities is a crucial feature of these post-Mao Chinese backpackers and that such social dimensions of their backpacking revealed a gendered nature of post-Mao mobilities. It should be emphasised, that the post-Mao gazes are not individualistic constructs, even with the individual views expressed in the backpacker forum, as evidenced by the numerous displays of elaborate travel narratives and photography. They were communally constructed through a sharing of travel experiences and ways of gazing at the postcolonial landscape. Thus, understandings of post-Mao *balingzhou* and *jiulingzhou* generations should include a more nuanced consideration of how post-Mao self-expression is constituted through group peer affirmation.

Unexpectedly, such socialisation has also been found to be gender-biased. It is shaped by Confucian ideology commonly interpreted as Chinese traditions, male and female backpackers were expected to fulfil their gender roles: men to be assertive, adventurous and rugged and women to be submissive, domestic and gentle. This finding can assist future tourism studies in understanding more of post-Mao Chinese society than what is commonly portrayed in the media, and for investigating more deeply the nature of social interactions and gender in this generation's travel ethnographies. While post-Mao generations were commonly described in the popular media as possessing a self-obsessed and materialistic me-culture, it was revealed in this analysis that the real situation could be quite the opposite. That is, that peer-affirmation is important and that it is built on maintaining and developing friendships and communities, both virtually and through lived travel experiences. **A**

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