DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Title of the dissertation
Constructing the tourist destination. A socio-material description.

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Goal and objectives of the dissertation
Goal: to offer a relational and socio-material description of how the tourist destination is constructed using the insights of Actor-Network Theory (ANT).

Objectives: to provide a new way of understanding how the tourist destination is continuously done and enacted through a multiplicity of human and non-human actors who either work to support and strengthen, or challenge and negotiate it. This challenges other ways of seeing the destination as a backdrop (within socio-cultural research) or as an empty spatial container (in management studies) for human activity. It also confronts the idea of the human entrepreneur as sole actor in the destination network and of identity and culture as a priori and stable essences of place.

Methodology
The research was carried out through fieldwork in the Polish mountain town and tourist destination of Zakopane during which participant observations, qualitative

interviews and visual documentation was undertaken in order to describe the activities and workings taking – and making – place at the destination.

Results
The thesis presented the tourist destination as a relational, heterogeneous and socio-material network. It was argued that the destination is ordered, constructed and enacted through a variety of doings, discourses and artefacts creating and supposing both the absence and presence of various practices, voices and forms of knowledge, hereby enacting it as multiple.

Theoretical conclusions
The thesis demonstrated that ANT may well be applied to the provinces of tourism and that a socio-material approach may help broaden our understanding of 'who (or what) acts' at the destination.

Practical application of the dissertation
The thesis challenges our understanding of destination entities such as culture, place identity and authenticity as *a priori*, instead demonstrating how these are constantly created and negotiated in and through the workings of the socio-material and relational destination network.
The thesis also suggest that the idea of the *multiple* destination may be used as an insight in branding and marketing by challenging the usual attempt to create *one simple image* of the destination.

Content of the dissertation
Abstract of chapter one
This chapter offers a brief introduction to Zakopane, my field of investigation, and an introduction to common ways of perceiving the destination as a backdrop or an empty container for human activity. After this presentation, the understanding of the destination as relational and socio-material is introduced and the thesis is outlined.

Abstract of chapter two-four
A more thorough view of the destination as network is presented as well as an introduction to Actor-Network Theory. It is described how the tourist destination of Zakopane is seen as constructed and ordered, how it is 'done', through a variety of practices, discourses, artefacts and technologies. The methodology is unfolded as it is discussed how to delimit, frame and position oneself in a network. The thesis is positioned and contextualised within the studies of tourism, intercultural communication, both of whom are critically examined.

Abstract of chapter five

This first analytical chapter frames the ethnic term of Górale (Polish Highlander). Górale is described as an entity which identifies the destination as something different. It is shown how Górale is not – as claimed – a stable entity, but rather an active and very powerful construct working to delimit the 'us' versus 'them' at the destination. It is shown how Górale is engaged as a cultural explanatory agent in conflicts between identities and various types of agency at the destination. Instead of perceiving cultural conflicts and conflicts in agency as rooted in stable differences, it is suggested to see them – and Górale – as continuous effects of the workings and ordering of the destination network.

Abstract of chapter six
Looking into the spatial aspects of the destination, chapter six discusses how the destination is socio-materially constructed by a wide variety of actors, some of which are stronger and more visible than others. As is shown, this affects and is affected by, the spatial lay out of the town, its buildings and the landscape. However, it also shows, how the spatial may be used to contest hegemonic or dominant ideas of what the place is or should be.

Abstract of chapter seven
Taking the idea of the non-human actor to its (somewhat radical) extremity, chapter 7 describes the oscypek (a smoked cheese) as an unusual and unexpected destination actor. By following and tracing the networks of 'local', 'modern', 'tourist' and 'unique' cheese, it is concluded that these networks and their connected practices, discourses and materiality enact different cheeses which again connect to and affect destination practices such as authenticity and authentication, place branding and hygiene.

Abstract of chapter eight
In this chapter, other destination actors are introduced, such as the emblematic Górale houses and the land on which they are built. These are used as a focal unit of analysis in discussing how houses and land actively partake in opening possibilities and creating boundaries for ownership, entrepreneurship, spaces, objects and people at the destination. Hence, the notion of 'doing house' is introduced as are the strategic, flexible and negotiable roles of the houses and land of the destination. Based on these analyses, it is further discussed what it is that acts, works and defines the destination by creating differences or presences.

Abstract of chapter nine
Many of the above analytical chapters have in different ways touched upon the notion and identity of Górale, encompassing it as a relational effect. In this last analytical chapter, the reader is introduced to Górale as strategies of *doing Górale*. The enactments of Górale are negotiated through a multiplicity of objects, practices and connections in settings such as – for example – the Górale restaurant.

Abstract of chapter ten
Apart from case close insights drawn from the above chapters, the closing chapter presents general reflections on how a tourist destination might be studied and understood. Hence, the general conclusion is that the destination construct is always based on the heterogenic practices of its (both human and non-human) socio-material actors and that it is through the work of these actors that the destination is constructed and enacted.

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