Introduction
Tourism can be seen as “a very literal sort of geography”. It writes the earth by inscribing meaning onto places via the communication of narratives, myths, and dreams that effectively construct the destinations tourists consume (Crang, 2014, p. 68). At the heart of this semiotic process lie “tourism imaginaries”, which are used as meaning making and world shaping devices (Salazar, 2012, p. 864). Thus, tourism constitutes a powerful cultural force that can provide a window into the cultural organization of societies and intercultural power differentials on a global scale (Wilkes, 2013, p. 33-34). This presentation is part of an ongoing dissertation project, investigating the construction of destination images in popular guidebooks and independent travel-blogs. It traces matters of power and identity in a regional Southeast Asian context.

Problematic
Conflicts about the “terms of recognition” in tourism and elsewhere (aka: How do we understand the world?)
Tourism provides a “window on how the cultural understanding of societies is organized”, so that existing power-differentials between cultures and societies can be better understood (Wilkes 2003: 338).

Aim of this study
Investigate issues of power and identity in popular Anglophone guidebooks and independent travel-blogs, focusing on a Southeast Asian regional context.

Tourism research and research gaps
➢ “Traditional” tourism-texts influence our understanding of places “top down” (e.g. guidebooks, brochures, film & media, etc.) (Urry 1990; Urry & Larsen 2011; Mac Cannell 1976; Jenkins 2003; Bhattacharyya 1997).
➢ Research focuses mainly on “authorial / institutional representations” (Norton 1996).

Research gaps
➢ Little understanding of touristic interpretation in the field (e.g. Norton 1996: 358; Crang 2014: 74).
➢ Little understanding of how tourists use participative media systems (e.g. web 2.0) after / during a visit and how they negotiate cultural and communicative potential as they generate their own media contents (Mansion 2011: 1640) – “bottom – up”.

Research Questions
How are notions of „destination“, „Western self“ and „otherness“ negotiated with regard to power and identity?

Representational
➢ Which discourses can be identified in „top-down“ accounts?
➢ Is there discursive transformation / continuation between historical and contemporary texts?

Interpretational
➢ Which (new) discourses emerge in experience-based accounts (Blogs), is there resistance / continuation?
➢ Power and Identity
➢ Which power-relations / models of identity are privileged from what perspective?

Methodology – Critical Discourse Analysis (DHA)
➢ Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault 1972: 49).
➢ Discourses do not emerge out of nothing, they productively link historical and recent events (Foucault 2012: 149):
   a. present concerns are negotiated in terms of available ideas and existing cognitive anchor points;
   b. and are made strategically comprehensible via systems of communication (e.g. the media) to serve particular interests (Wodak & Forchtner 2005:235).
➢ Analysis is therefore possible at the interface between discourse and multimodal text (e.g. travelogues, guide books, blogs…)

Analytical Steps
Structural Analysis
Historical Sources / Lonely Planet:
Identification of Macrostructures, that are legitimated by discourses about power und identity (e.g. colonialism, neoliberalism, hedonism…).

Historical Sources / Lonely Planet:
Identification of Topics
(e.g. modernisation, chaos, tradition, order, responsible travel, volunteering, exotic, crime…).

Lonely Planet:
Identification of most popular tourist hot-spots (e.g. South East Asia’s Top 20).

Blogs:
Hot-spot and topic oriented search for representative entries (qualitative Sampling ➔ Interpretation & negotiation).

Discourse Analysis
Which actors feature in the texts?
What is said about these actors?
Which practices are associated with specific actors?
Which models of identity result?
How does this relate to a specific macro-structure (reproduction / subversion)?

Example Analysis

Conclusion
➢ Partly significant discursive convergence between historical and contemporary tourism texts;
➢ Western perspectives dominate narrative landscape in all media under review and local voices are rarely included in these texts;
➢ Participative media (Blogs) offer insights into tourists’ experiences that would otherwise be difficult to get.
➢ However, blogs appear to rather sustain than subvert hegemonic western assumptions of self and other.